

# A Somaesthetics of Performative Beauty

## Tangoing Desire and Nostalgia

Falk Heinrich

First published 2023

ISBN: 978-1-032-40917-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-40918-4 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-35531-1 (ebk)

## Chapter 6

### *Eros* and objectivisation

The funder for this chapter is Aalborg University.

(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003355311-6



**Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
NEW YORK AND LONDON

## 6 *Eros and objectivisation*



*Figure 6.1* Tango dancers. Photograph by Marc Honoré.

The previous chapter was based on the observation that Argentine tango makes promises to us dancers. Tango is a cultural activity that attracts dancers by promising the fulfilment of certain desires. Historically, these desires were dependent on a culture's socio-historical structures and values, and the desires of the people of the Rio Plata delta were distinct from the Europeans dancing in the Golden Age of tango. Today, Argentine tango has become a global subculture, and I claim that tango's current main promise is the promise of beautiful somatic experiences of moving together with another person, which entail some kind of liberation. To unravel the somatic dimensions of this promise, I embarked on a journey that led me from a critical investigation of the aesthetics of dance movement in the eighteenth century (Hogarth) through the aesthetics of movement in the late nineteenth century (Souriau) to an investigation of the experience of movement and time based on Schmitz's new phenomenology.

Psychologically, promises are understood as projections of individual wishes, which tango seems to invite and to be able to fulfil. This chapter is about the other side of the coin: desire. Desires constitute strong forces behind our actions in everyday life, and vice versa, certain social activities incite and make it possible to feel distinct desires and even point them

out by making them operational forces. Desire is a driving force in tango, and desire shapes tango's promises to each of us. Tango promises the satisfaction of desires that I assume most of us have: physical closeness to and tactile encounters with another person, moving harmoniously with another person almost as one performative entity, and many more. Many of these are sensuous desires. Furthermore, tango makes us aware of these desires by simultaneously making them motivational forces and limiting the gratification of these desires to a socially acceptable level.

Let me show this with the tango embrace as an example: on the one hand, the embrace is a formal technique of tango that sustains this distinct style of dancing in couples, permitting a certain degree of sensuous intimacy. It depends very much on the individual dancers whether the sensuous side of the tango embrace and moving together is explored or not. The close embrace offers more physical intimacy than the open embrace. For instance, in the close embrace, one can most often feel the partner's breast and chest. On the other hand, each form of the embrace is also a *sine qua non* for dancing this specific dance. It is an operational feature through which sensuality is transformed into movements. Embraced dances are cultural expressions that have developed to afford, among other things, socially accepted intimacy between two persons, including strangers. There are various examples that show that the development of embraced dances serves to facilitate framed and controlled meetings between men and women (the two dominant and socially accepted genders during the past 300 years, when couple dances emerged). Dance events, whether in rural communities at seasonal feasts, at the aristocratic courts, or in the ballrooms of the bourgeoisie, established liberal spaces through a momentary elimination or, at least, suspension of otherwise restrictive social norms. This can be seen by "moral" reactions to these "wicked" dances, which were accused of promoting the downfall of cultural virtues into uncontrollable lust and loss of honour and standing (see, e.g. Knowles, 2009). In principle, couple dances allow for various kinds of encounters, not only between men and women but also between different social classes and cultures, building bridges across all kinds of differences.

The history of Argentine tango shows that it developed through disruptions and clashes between different social groups. The *gaucho* of the *pampas* moved to the urban areas of Buenos Aires and became the *compadrito*, the delinquent dandy of the suburbs, bringing their song contest (*payada*) and its rhythmic foundation (*milonga*) into a world that consisted of many different races and classes. The *payada* fused with the *habanera* that was brought by Cubans to Buenos Aires (Knowles, 2009, p. 108), bringing about the *milonga*. Moreover, the development of the tango at the end of the nineteenth century is said to have been pushed forward by *compadritos* mocking black people, the descendants of African slaves, by incorporating their styles of dancing the black *candombe*,

which was danced separately and consisted of many break patterns, into the *milonga*. Subsequently, still in the nineteenth century, the *milonga* of the competitive and macho *compadritos* was again transformed by the

young black dancers, and the whites and mulattoes who copied them, [who] achieved the culturally impossible when they pitted together the early tango move, *canyengue*. This was a combination of one position in the classic dance of Central Africa—feet flat on the ground, bottom out, torso bent forward, face frozen—with the cheek-to-cheek, arms-around-the-partner romanticism of European embrace dancing.

(Thompson, 2005, p. 9)

Chasteen describes how white carnival groups, *the back faces*, mocked black people by imitating their dances. Black people fought back by establishing alternative black face groups ridiculing the whites' ones (Chasteen, 2004, p. 63 ff). The genealogy of Argentine tango harbours several clashes between diverse societal communities and social interests. Yet clashes and confrontations must also be understood as processes of integrating formerly disparate dance forms, norms, and moral values. From the beginning of the twentieth century to today, *milongas* have been based on a framework of agreed-upon behavioural forms and codes regulating the expectations and behaviour of tango dancers. The *milonga* establishes a ritualistic space within which meetings and transformations might occur on many levels, ranging from the personal to the social and political. The codes of tango allow for intimate interactions between lovers, friends, acquaintances, and strangers alike. They allow us to get in touch with desires that are never completely gratified and to ride the wave of desiring desire. In this sense, a tango *milonga* is (partly)<sup>1</sup> nurtured by *eros*. It is said that to tango is to have a three-minute love affair (Taylor, 1998).

## 6.1 Eros

The first investigatory step of this chapter on desire in tango is to look into the notion of *eros* and its significance for the beautiful experience of tangoing. This is in line with one of tango's most pertinent, social images, which portrays it as an erotic, sensual, seductive, and thus wickedly dangerous dance. In our time, the erotic connotes love, sex, escapism, and passion, and is often linked to physical beauty. Thus, my journey must begin with Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, where he elaborates on the relationship between *eros* and beauty.

Konstan writes that it might be impossible to fully understand the notion of beauty in Antiquity since it covered a different semantic field than our Western usage of the term. "Surprising as it may sound, leading

scholars have in fact questioned whether any word in classical Greek corresponded to the modern idea of beauty” (Konstan, 2014, p. 7). Nevertheless, Konstan shows that most modern expositions of beauty somehow rely on Plato’s notion of *eros*. He defines *eros* as the ultimate human desire: surpassing life’s finality by reaching out for the recognition of the beautiful *per se*. To capture the idea of the beautiful is supreme wisdom because it captures the phenomenon’s real, eternal identity. On an earthier level—and conveniently, I might add—the beautiful also ignites our carnal desires.

The Western concept of beauty is correlated with the Greek term *kalón*, which is translated by terms such as “fine,” “admirable,” “beautiful,” “morally right,” “praiseworthy,” “good,” and “pleasing.” According to Konstan, scholars disagree on the term’s appropriate meaning and its semantic amplitude and usage. This is not the place to engage in such discussions—it does not serve my purpose (and I am not a linguist). What interests me is the polysemantics of this notion, which implies indeterminacies, associations, and comparisons; it permits me to look for traces of a different, namely *poietic*, understanding. Konstan writes that

there is in fact a classical Greek word that comes much closer to the modern notion of beauty. Indeed, if *kalón* is too broad in its signification, this other term is rather more narrow in its application than the English *beauty*. The word in question is the noun *kállōs*, etymologically related to *kalós* but distinct from *kalós* in its usage.

(Konstan, 2014, p. 35)

He continues, “The primary meaning of *kállōs* refers to physical beauty, above all the beauty associated with erotic attraction” (Konstan, 2014, p. 7). Although Konstan takes this understanding as the semantic core of *kállōs*, the term also refers to “a birth token” (Konstan, 2014, p. 86) of the upper class. Upper-class people were beautiful simply because they belonged to this social class. *Kállōs* was also a sign for courtesans (*hetærae*) who used their bodies as trading goods. Furthermore, Konstan shows that *kállōs* could also be used to describe great deeds and actions: “The collocation of beauty and magnitude in the descriptions of great achievements is not unusual” (Konstan, 2014, p. 84). It is not clear whether the *kállōs* of a (male) person shows the virtue of good and honourable deeds or whether the term *kállōs* serves as a metaphor for a good deed. Either way, the application of the term *kállōs* shows that beauty, while firmly rooted in physical attraction, already marks a transition from purely physical attributes to virtue and virtuous actions.

To argue for this transformative aspect of *kállōs* is Plato’s objective in the *Symposium*: he presents the desires of carnal *eros* as forces that enable the recognition of eternal ideas. It is well known that Plato identifies *eros* as the desire for immortality. Men desire beautiful women to procreate and continue living through their offspring. Plato writes that

by recognising a beautiful woman or adolescent man, we (men) also recognise and desire the beautiful as such; we seem to recognise a generalised beauty potentially to be found in every human. This broadens the meaning of human *kállos* to also entail *kalón* (and Konstan tells us that Plato, in the central passage of the *Symposium*, used *kalón*). *Eros* (desire, love) inspires us to seek not only beautiful persons but also the ideal of beauty in every soul and behaviour. The experience of a particular beautiful object seems to cause the beautiful as a specific consummating feeling that can be linked to the very idea of beauty. The realisation of the idea of the beautiful, Plato asserts, yields a much deeper and more satisfying pleasure than the pleasures of beholding a beautiful woman (or adolescent man) because it connects us with eternity. However, every level of the recognition of the beautiful is an expression and ambition of *eros*, of desire and love. Sartwell writes, “In the *Symposium*, Plato relates beauty to *eros*. Beauty is the end of desire, both its purpose and its satisfaction. . . . Hence, beauty and wisdom are erotic and also the satisfaction or surcease of the erotic.” He continues, “Among the many sweet aspects of this thought is its connection of truth and knowledge to *eros*; its acknowledgement that rationality itself is an object and a satisfaction of desire” (Sartwell, 2006, p. 88).

In the *Symposium*, Plato lets Diotima explain that the love of the beautiful is always a desire for happiness, which she equates with the good. Happiness in Plato is not equivalent to how we understand happiness today, i.e. as mere gratification of needs or hedonistic pleasures; happiness is associated with the desire for eternity and immortality. Diotima asks Socrates what the object of human love is, and she answers herself: “The object which they have in view is birth in beauty, whether of body or soul” (Plato, 1998, p. 323). The desire for procreation is an act of beauty because it touches eternity: “Because for the mortal creature, generation is a sort of eternity and immortality. . . . Therefore love is of immortality” (Plato, 1998, p. 323). The beauty of conception and birth concerns bodily desires and happiness. Nonetheless, there are other forms of love.

But souls which are pregnant—for there certainly are men who are more creative in their souls than in their body—conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or contain. And what are these conceptions?—wisdom and virtue in general. And such creators are poets and all artists who are deserving of the name inventor.

(Plato, 1998, p. 323)

Diotima goes on to describe even more promising desires that ultimately would lead to the realisation of “beauty absolute, separate, simple and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted in the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things” (Plato, 1998, p. 326). Love and desire for beauty and

happiness are yearnings for an immortality that lies beyond mortal existence. What is interesting for my investigation is not Plato's well-known notion of beauty as a recollection of the divine and immortal ideas from which all phenomena derive. Contemporary science, including aesthetics, does not subscribe to eternal ideas but seeks explanations founded in matter-based systems and their operations. Today, love and desire denote our very earthly and secular drives and their gratifications. On a foundational level, basic physiological drives and needs shape our activities and desires. This also applies to leisure activities, such as Argentine tango. These desires harbour promise. Tangoing is not seen as a means of achieving immortality but as a route towards intense and integrative somatic experiences.

This is not to say that Plato does not have anything interesting to say concerning human experiences of beauty. I am interested in the fact that Plato begins his treatises on beauty with human desire and love for such palpable and earthly "things" as another human being—a desirable woman or, in the case of the mature philosopher, also an adolescent boy—or the desire for righteous actions. Furthermore, Plato's desire for eternal and infinite beauty and happiness is creational; it creates children, artworks, virtuous actions, and philosophical thoughts that exceed their creators. Plato's *eros* is a desire for the beautiful that emerges in a *poietic* somatic experience. Plato himself elaborates on this.

According to Diotima, *eros* is not beauty. Beauty is a god, but *eros* is a daimon, a great spirit, "and like all spirits he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal" (Plato, 1998, p. 321). *Eros* is a mediator, a means of obtaining something and partaking in something. Diotima tells Socrates that *Eros* is the child of *Poros* (Plenty) and *Penia* (Poverty) and a follower of Aphrodite. At first sight, *Eros* seems "poor, rough and squalid," but he is also "bold, enterprising and strong . . . keen in the pursuit of wisdom, fertile in resources" (Ibid.). *Eros* entails tension between two unlike qualities, but it (he) also embodies transition, transformation, and not least, creation and emergence.

In Plato's *Pheadrus*, Socrates identifies *eros* as madness. He praises a kind of *mania* or madness like that of prophetesses, who achieve fine things (*kalá*, 244B1: cf. *kalá erga*. 245B2). But *eros* too is a fine madness, for the sight of beauty here below evokes the memory of true beauty (*kállos*); a lover is one who, under the influence of such madness, loves things that are *kalá*.

(Konstan, 2014, p. 122)

The divine madness was subdivided into four kinds, prophetic, initiatory, poetic, erotic, having four gods presiding over them; the first was the inspiration of Apollo, the second that of Dionysus, the

third that of the Muses, the fourth that of Aphrodite and Eros. In the description of the last kind of madness, which was also said to be the best, we spoke of the affection of love in a figure, into which we introduced a tolerably credible and possibly true though partly erring myth.

(Plato, 2008, p. 73)

For Plato, desire links beauty to madness (*mania*). The *mania* of love lets us potentially see true beauty by transcending the beautiful found on earth to achieve the recognition of an eternal truth that is truly beautiful. This is possible because the human soul brings to its earthly life a remembrance of divine truth and beauty. Through the fine madness of *eros*, humans can again gain access to this knowledge. Surely, Platonic madness does not have much in common with contemporary concepts of mental illness. Most of us know this feeling of not being quite ourselves when we are infatuated. Platonic madness is a kind of displacement or transgression of our everyday discourse; it is an immersion into a realm of unintended ideas, actions, feelings, and recollections. Perhaps Nietzsche's notion of "rapture" (German: *Rausch*) comes phenomenologically closest to this madness.

Plato says that "the soul which has seen the most of truth shall come to birth as a philosopher, or artist, or some musical and loving nature" (Plato, 2008, p. 72). Philosophers and artists seem to be more responsive to the fine madness of *eros*. They are more easily inspired by earthly beauty to (re-)discover true eternal beauty; they are "rapt in amazement" and "initiated into a mystery" "when they behold here any image of that other world" (Plato, 2008, p. 73). In the *Phaedrus*, *eros* is not only a sexual drive but also a spiritual one. Erotic *mania* transcends mortal life and opens a glimpse of eternity. Not surprisingly, Plato and other ancient Greek philosophers advise adopting an ascetic lifestyle and not engaging in sexual gratification (unless it enables procreation), but only to use our carnal desires to aim higher on the ladder of wisdom. Shusterman, in his book *Ars Erotica*, traces the art of erotic practices in classical Greece and elsewhere. In classical Greece, the art of lovemaking had to be refined by conscious and deliberate practices that did not blindly follow biological drives.

Teaching both self-knowledge and knowledge of others, erotic love trains us in virtue both through self-control and through uplifting self-abandonment. Indeed, love's self-abandonment paradoxically provides a superb opportunity to train higher levels of self-control by testing self-mastery in the very process of losing one's normal self-possession when possessed by erotic desire provoked by beauty emanating from its divine source.

(Shusterman, 2021, p. 71)



Becoming aware of desire itself is a step towards (Platonic) wisdom; to be aware of desire means to desire desire. According to Sircello, our desires aim at continuing to do what we desire doing. “When lovemaking is enjoyed, it perhaps satisfies a desire precisely to make love, but it also generates a desire—for making love” (Sircello, 1989, p. 18). This desire to continue is a desire for desire itself. The aesthetic appreciation of desired objects emphasises desiring desire by throwing the recipient into a recursive circle of feeling the desire and its content (the desired object or action) and refraining from the physical realisation of the desired, permitting the observation of the desire as a feeling. Evidently, to be aware of one’s desire immediately pushes one to focus again on the desired object. Desiring desire is a potentiation of desire, simply because it never obtains the fulfilment of the originally wished-for; it must find other modes of gratification, such as the aesthetic play of imagination, association, and creation. Where Platonic philosophy sees *eros* as a springboard towards the realm of ideas and realisation of truth, I see *eros* as a somatic anchor that ties the sentiment of the beautiful to embodied existence without being consumed by it.

Another difference is that the Platonic *eros* is primarily connected to the visual appearances of human beings and objects and thus to the visual sense. “For sight is the most piercing of our bodily senses” (Plato, 2008, p. 72) and “the flow of beauty going back towards the beautiful one by ways of the eyes” ((Plato, 2008, p. 73). Konstan explains that “Platonic beauty, then, retains a close connection with the visible, evident in the very term *idea*, which derives from the verb meaning ‘see’” (Konstan, 2014, p. 123). The identification of objects as constituents of our world on the basis of the visual sense appears straightforward. Seeing a young woman or a red rose puts the seer at a distance remote from the object. Other senses demand closeness. One must be fairly close to be able to smell or touch a (beautiful) woman—and her visual beauty just might disappear at close view. Seeing means keeping a distance and identifying closed forms as conceptual entities.<sup>2</sup> Seeing purports to assume an objective, disembodied perspective: a “view from nowhere” (Jay, 2005, p. 156). The classic predominance of the visual sense defines the Western notion of beauty as the transcendence and transformation of erotic, carnal desires towards aesthetic ideas. It is no surprise that these ideas are describable by visual metaphors, such as harmony and unity. Visual metaphors work as stasis machines that slice the world into static concepts that are also applied to time-based arts, such as music and dance. Again, this demands an external viewpoint.

Dancing, on the other hand, is a corporeal activity of moving the body, experiencing tactile sensations of the partner’s body, and smelling our dance partner’s natural odour or fragrance. According to Santayana, sensations of these “lower senses” are far “too unrepresentable to be called beautiful” (Santayana, 1955, p. 42). Social dancing, such as Argentine

tango, can even be seen as a kind of mating ritual in which interactive movements, common rhythms, and so on are a means of intensifying sensuous desires.<sup>3</sup> Tangoing does not make it possible to transcend these (so-called) lower-level sensations, which, for customary aesthetics, elicit immediate but, according to Kant, only agreeable sensations without the potential to ignite aesthetic reflections. Yet tango does not allow for the consummation of erotic desire through sex but emphasises the experience of desire and thus the borderline between desire and fulfilment. Yes, dancing Argentine tango might spur sexual desires (as does contemplating painted or sculptured nudes), but they do not get satisfied by dancing. According to my experience as a dancer, dancing transforms these desires into shared movements. Sometimes, dancing feels like lovemaking, but it is not sexual; it is loving by means of the dance for the length of a song. Here, love is not directed towards the dance partner with the objective of feeling the aroused self but is experienced as a distinct quality of movement and interaction.<sup>4</sup> I claim that experiences of these kinds are beautiful because they yield—and require—a heightened somatic awareness of dancing.

This kind of awareness in action would not be enough for the Platonic tradition of beauty, simply because it is stuck in motion. Theories of the beautiful seem to require some kind of objectivisation of a feeling that transcends immediate sensations into the reflective recognition of something beautiful. Aesthetic recognition can come in many forms, such as Kant's demand for communicability (*sensus communis*) as an intrinsic yet generalising part of the judgement of taste, Hume's demand for a standard of taste, or much more recently, Santayana's claim that beauty always entails a process of objectivisation. Santayana's notion of objectivisation is one of the most explicit demands for externalisation and abstraction from the sensuous *sine qua non* of human experience.<sup>5</sup> Objectivisation is more than a process of externalising an experience by attributing it to an object or event. Santayana distinguishes between physical and aesthetic pleasure, defining the latter as transparent in regard to our bodies:

The pleasures we call physical, and regard as low, on the contrary, are those which call our attention to some part of our own body, and which make no objects so conspicuous to us as the organ in which they arise. There is here, then a very marked distinction between physical and æsthetic pleasure; the organs of the latter must be transparent, they must not intercept our attention, but carry it directly to some external objects. The greater dignity and range of æsthetic pleasure is thus made very intelligible. The soul is glad, as it were, to forget its connection with the body. . . . This illusion of disembodiment is very exhilarating, while immersion in the flesh and confinement to some organ gives a tone of grossness and selfishness to our consciousness.

(Santayana, 1955, p. 24)

According to Santayana, aesthetic objectivisation moves the object of consciousness out of the confinement of our bodies, with their selfish carnal excitements. These quotes show that Santayana is one of the most ardent advocates of a beauty whose essential feature is the transgression of bodily dependences and the importance of an objectivisation of pleasure. Objectivisation generates ideals that are guidelines for our aesthetic pleasure. Unlike Plato, however, Santayana does not believe in eternal ideas but thinks of ideas as emerging from experience, as a residuum of experience. “Our idea of an individual thing is a compound and residuum of our several experiences of it” (Santayana, 1955, p. 74). An idea becomes an ideal through practical interests—in our case, aesthetic interests; we invest in this idea. “To praise any object for approaching the ideals of its kind is therefore only a roundabout way of specifying its intrinsic merit and expressing its direct effect on our sensibility” (Santayana, 1955, p. 78). Santayana identifies pleasure as aesthetic interest that validates aesthetic ideals.

Pleasures, as I have shown in Chapter 2, are intrinsically somatic, and this complicates philosophical aesthetics’ insuperable distinction between contemplation and action, reception and creation. But Santayana’s theory is not at all coherent when he, on the one hand, programmatically disregards the body, with its parts, organs, and movements, and on the other hand, claims that the foundation of aesthetic ideals is the effect on our “sensibility” (which, in my wording, is embodied awareness). In any case, aesthetic ideas and ideals cannot be somatic. They spring from and are enacted in a subject’s particular context-sensitive relationships with its surroundings.<sup>6</sup> It seems odd that so many Western theories of beauty negate or diminish the aesthetic pleasure of soma. My elaborations, on the contrary, are intended to make it an essential part of beautiful experiences, simply because the beautiful as an aesthetic judgement depends on our corporeality.

Even though I insist on the possibility of experiencing one’s own movements as beautiful, I also acknowledge that the experience of beauty requires some kind of objectivisation that allows aesthetic reflection. At a basic level, there must be a recognition that the experienced is beautiful. The experience of beauty demands a reflective judgement because it is a summarising and evaluative feeling as, for example, described by Menninghaus et al. (2019). An emerging sentiment of the beautiful depends on the performance of actions, and it creates a distance from one’s own actions. Just as the recognition of a beautiful object enhances the reflective distance, the beautiful object also attracts and subsumes the onlooker.

So far, this chapter’s investigation has scrutinised *eros* as desire and love folded into our somatic being and actions. I embraced Plato’s willingness to initiate his search for beauty by looking at

our somatically experienced live context, but I have rejected his demand for a transcendence that is based on the domination of the visual sense and somatic asceticism. However, my main question remains. If the sentiment of the beautiful necessitates—or even brings about—objectivisations, what could the objectivisation of one’s own movement look like? Asked differently, how can tangoing transcend private subjectivity without being trapped in Platonic disembodiment? One obvious topic to investigate in this regard is the interaction between dancers.

## 6.2 Interaction

Tango is a partner dance; two dancers interact with each other in a distinct manner. Its particular movement techniques and its characteristic body postures are relational tools that allow for moving together. Learning tango takes some time and a good amount of practice. We tango dancers learn combinations of steps and elements as prototypical interactions. We learn how to interact with each other. We learn how to initiate movements and how these impulses are conveyed to the partner. We learn how the other might react and how to follow up on these movement initiations. As we practice, we build up a repertoire of moves and incorporate tango’s distinct rhythmical manner of moving together. We practice integrating all this into our personal somatic and interactive structures. Dancing tango is and feels like action–reaction circles.<sup>7</sup> Learning how to interact within the framework of tango is key to any successful dance. Yet the dream of tango dancers is to move as one entity: “the beast of four legs” (Kimmel, 2019, p. 569). This means that *something* (the beast) must emerge from dancing together and that this *something* also exerts agency.<sup>8</sup> The individual dancers become integrated organs and muscles of the four-legged beast.

No doubt, this entity can be considered a metaphor or theoretical construct that expresses a subjective feeling while dancing. Nevertheless, tango dancers experience the four-legged beast as something real that, in beautiful moments, does shape the dance. Schaaf expresses this as a paradox:

Today, I had danced a dance of presence and absence, a dance simultaneously visceral and ethereal, a fully embodied out-of-body experience, a paradox. How was it that I could be so completely immersed in the profound physicality of the experience, and at the same time feel as weightless as a summer’s breeze? . . . But I danced in spite of myself, as if I had nothing to do with it. . . . I had tasted a mystery . . . it was exquisite, beautiful, intoxicating, and definitely not safe.

(Schaaf, 2013, p. 66)

One of my autoethnographic notes can serve as another example:

An unknown, good dancer. After the first dance, which we used to get accustomed to each other's body, energy, level of mastery, the next two dances went very smooth. Nothing extraordinary in terms of figures, but very tight and easy, at times a feeling of fusion. Fusion understood as a de-subjectivation, a transcendence of individuality, nothing erotic in a sexual sense. Pure aligned movements, dance of energies almost without bodies.

(Heinrich, autoethnographic record, 2019, July 19)

An earlier record reads, "The challenge is to find the points of variability. The points of continuation are those points of empty souls/bodies" (Heinrich, autoethnographic record, 2018, December 30). By "the point of continuation," I mean instances in which the dancer does not initiate learned combinations of elements but allows for variations and surprises to emerge. These points are, in principle, empty and not filled with one's own volition. My diary entries do not directly invoke an emergent something—the four-legged creature—but rather discuss the feeling of an empty body that is a mere form without any affective and expressive content that could animate the movement. The first record even invokes a dance without a body. These two records indicate that pleasurable dancing relates to the sentiment of an emergent agency that is felt (at least by me) as an emptying of my agential body. Expressed differently, my volition to act or react gets (partly) substituted by *something* else, leaving me with the sensation of my body as a shell. The body as a shell, as formed material, manifests itself in kinaesthetic awareness. I observe my own actions rather than performing them. My body acts and reacts to external impulses (my partner's movements, the music, etc.) and the agential I merely observes. The dance happens to elicit a sentiment of fusion between my partner and I: the beast of four legs. Again, this is a metaphoric description of how I have experienced these rare and beautiful moments of dancing together. Western scientific discourse based on the causality of actions must reject this description because an autonomous entity cannot initiate an action without agency. Nevertheless, my experience is that the interaction between dance partners can occasion an autonomous level of agency that transitorily determines the course of actions. How can this be explained? And can such an explanation contribute to a theory of performative beauty? An assumed autonomous level of interaction can be approached by an experiential–phenomenological first-person perspective and a social–anthropological third-person perspective. For the rest of this chapter, I will switch between these two approaches: the latter contextualises the former, whereas the former validates the latter.

Interaction consists of situated actions and reactions: an agential entity exerts agency by initiating an action, and another entity reacts to this

impulse. But before any reaction happens, the *other* participant in the interaction experiences the agency of the first participant. The first participant acts as an agent exerting agency, and the second receives this agency by being a patient. The anthropologist Gell has written on the functions of agency and patiency in art. His premise is that art can be understood in anthropological terms as a social relation, exchange, and interaction (Gell, 1998, p. 10). Art objects are *relata* transmitting agency. Social dancing is neither art nor a material artefact. Nevertheless, I find Gell's theoretical approach interesting and applicable to social dancing because it can clarify how the (inter-)act(-ion) of dancing gains agency.<sup>9</sup>

Gell's theory contains the usual players in art: the artist, recipient, and work of art. His focus on material artefacts allows him to see the artwork as a configuration of an index and a prototype. The index is the material artefact that, through the process of abduction, refers to something else. Gell is interested in the abduction of (social) agency, not in the artwork as a semiotic sign in a broader sense. Thus, "the index is itself seen as the outcome, and/or instrument of, social agency" (Gell, 1998, p. 15). The index can (but need not) refer to a prototype. This is normally treated as representation. A portrait painting or a human sculpture is an index representing a person: the portrait of Queen Victoria, for instance. The index-prototype relation is established not necessarily by pictorial or sculptural verisimilitude but also by knowledge or the creational process. Because Gell's model presents art as means of exerting social agency, there is always an agent with social intentions to cause something. Agential causation only works if there is something or someone receiving it. Gell calls this the patient: "To be an 'agent' one must act in respect to the 'patient'; the patient is the object which is causally affected by the agent's actions" (Gell, 1998, p. 22). The allocation of the function of the agent and patient is not static. Any patient can be transformed into an agent, and just as importantly, any of the identified constituents of the art nexus can act as either an agent or patient. To mention one example, the prototype can be the agent when somebody commissions a portrait from the artist. The artist is now the patient but acts as an agent regarding the index because they paint the portrait. As another example, the index is the agent when the materiality of the artwork dictates its artistic expression. To take yet another example, the recipient is not doomed to only act as a patient by consuming and contemplating an artwork; the recipient can also be the agent and the cause of the artist's working. A curator or patron can order a piece of art that meets determined specifications. Or, in the case of interactive art, the audiences' actions determine the artwork (index). Gell's interesting innovation is not the semiotic distinction between relational constituents of art (artist, recipient, index, and prototype) but the flexible attributes "agent" and "patient." This gives his model a performative dimension that can reflect the complexity of social relations instigated by art.

Social dancing does not manifest itself as a material object; it is a pure movement performed by two dancers on the dance floor. Nonetheless, and this is important, the dancer and their actions cannot be conflated. The dancing is the index, and the dancers (in Gell's model, the artist and recipient) perform the index. Said plainly, the dance is the action, not the human beings carrying out the movements.<sup>10</sup> We do not dance just anything; our movements are determined by a distinct technique of moving and relating to each other and the movement. Dancing is formally framed (which does not mean that there is no development of the dance or personal liberty to develop one's own personal style; the formal framing secures continuity and the personal liberty to experiment). According to Gell's ethnographic perspective, the dancers are functionally distinct from their dancing. The interaction in social dancing is the index; it is the performance of abstract but ephemeral patterns in space and time. In the following, I will focus on the dancers and their possible *modi operandi*.

The fact that social dancing conceptually works not with an audience but only with dancers actively participating in the dance does not mean that there are no recipients. It means that the dancer plays both roles: the dancer creates and receives (experiences) the movements. The dancer perceives their own movement (as proprioception) and the movements of their partner. The variable attributes "agent" and "patient" describe the interactional process as consisting of two modes.

The first mode is the creational, *poietic* process of dancing. As already explained several times, the proposer initiates dance steps—in this moment, the proposer is the agent and his partner (the interpreter) is the patient because the partner receives the impulse. Right after the initiation of the movement, the patient transforms into an agent because the interpreter is now actively transforming the impulse into movements. The former agent (the proposer) takes on the *modus* of the patient following the interpreter's movements, and so forth. The roles of "agent" and "patient" can shift several times during one single step. At the *poietic* level, both dancers are creators (Gell's artists) creating the dance together by interactively switching between agent and patient. The distribution between agent and patient is not equal, however. Argentine tango is still a fairly traditional dance in terms of gender-based roles. The proposer is mostly the agent and the interpreter mostly the patient, especially when the partners follow traditional combinations of steps. This is not to say that this scheme does not allow for beautiful experiences on both sides, just that they are different. But I am getting ahead of my argumentation.

There is yet another dimension: the *aesthetic* dimension. Here, both dancers are recipients of their own and the partner's actions. This function is theoretical and especially practically difficult. There is no doubt that we proprioceptively perceive our own actions, yet this sense perception most often operates on a pre-reflective level (e.g. Colombetti, 2011), where movements and postures are automatically regulated in terms

of, for example, maintaining balance or accomplishing everyday tasks. This level comes to the fore when the dance is not going well (e.g. when losing balance) or when we learn new sequences and techniques. Contrarily, incorporated, learned movement patterns often unfold without one's somatic awareness, although this sense cannot be shut off either (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012). Somatic practices, such as yoga, tai chi, and dance, practice awareness in action. Somatic awareness of dancing tango requires practice as well. The more advanced I become, the more aware I am of my moving body in space and of my kinaesthetic body.

Tangoing is made up of extra-daily body postures and movement techniques; learning them means overwriting somatic schemes we use in everyday life. Simply walking together to music, one forward and the other backwards, is not what we do when shopping, cleaning our homes, or walking to work in the morning. Learning to dance (tango) means creating kinaesthetic memories that we instantiate in dancing. Sheet-Johnstone applies the term "kinaesthetic melodies"<sup>11</sup> to indicate that kinaesthesia is a form of procedural memory concerned with actions that have beginnings, transformative elements, and endings. The concept of kinaesthetic melody does not adhere to the "pointillist conception of movement" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012, p. 63), which sees movement as an array of postures. "Kinaesthetic memory is structured along the lines of 'kinaesthetic melodies,' and familiar 'kinaesthetic melodies' are inscribed in kinaesthetic memory" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012, p. 63). The interesting part is that initiating a memorised movement requires a volitional impulse whereupon the kinaesthetic melody unfolds: "One can readily see how the dynamic series of coordinated movements unfolds as a kinetic melody: once initiated, the movement flows on by itself" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012, p. 52). In the same vein, "Turning attention to our own movement in continuation of an initial volitional impulse, we attend to a kinetic melody in progress: as noted, any time we care to pay closer attention to our tactile-kinaesthetic body, there it is" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2012, p. 53).

The concept of the kinetic melody explains how dancers can observe and be aware of their own actions. This accords with my understanding of somaesthetics as the awareness of the soma's positions and actions in space and time. The emphasis lies on aesthetic awareness, which is a responsiveness that harbours an aesthetic judgement: does the movement feel pleasurable or not? The aesthetic judgements, however, must not be understood as final verdicts but as inherent parts of the unfolding action. Aesthetic judgements are ongoing micro-regulations of one's own movement. To judge the valence of their own actions, the dancer activates two kinds of memory. According to Lutterbie, one kind "takes the form of control parameters, which are defined by previous encounters with art. The structure and intensity of these can be defined in terms of competence or mastery of the techniques of looking at art, however these might be



personally defined” (Lutterbie, 2017, p. 305). Evidently, this is also valid for social dance or any aesthetically perceived actions and not only for art. The dancer uses learned techniques and patterns to produce tango movements. Kinetic memory is a productive and creative means.

The other form of memory involves past experiences that are activated because they resonate, positively or negatively, with the present event. Both will encourage the observer to pay attention to certain details that reinforce the expectations established by them or to grapple with the unexpected.

(Lutterbie, 2017, p. 305)

Kinetic melodies of tango moves not only describe movements in space but also entail already experienced qualities. To aesthetically judge an ongoing action relies on embodied sentiments of comparable movements that are re-evoked by the action at hand. Thus, aesthetic awareness is a discovery on the basis of the already somatically known. Expressed differently, dancing Argentine tango depends on learned and somatically sedimented experiences that form the necessary background for each new aesthetic experience. The mere mechanical repetition of learned moves (if that were possible) is, in the long run, dull.

Thus, aesthetic awareness of dancing contains both of Gell’s modalities: agency and patiency. As a patient, the dancer experientially follows the unfolding of kinaesthetic melodies; as an agent, the dancer’s aesthetic judgement is an internal motivation to either accept or micro-modulate the initiated melodies. This is the seed of tango improvisations, which, as already mentioned, typically require not the invention of new steps and sequences but rather variations on learned movements during the interaction with the dance partner. Since these two functions are part of one system (at least as perceived by consciousness), they are only analytically differentiable. Somaesthetic awareness is not merely passive observation; observation is always already also agency. The fact that each tango dancer is both a creator and recipient of the tango movements (index) complicates the issue further. The agency of the proposer entails a patient role that permits the aesthetic judgement of the initiated action. Meanwhile, the interpreter plays both a receptive and an agential role in that she actively prolongs and realises the proposer’s impulses. Likewise, the interpreter actively shapes the dance to which the proposer must somehow react. Dancing tango is a multifaceted activity in which the operational and experiential functions of agent and patient oscillate on a macro level and on a micro level. The macro level consists of the roles of the proposer and interpreter; the micro level is made up of the intertwining of *aesthetic* and *poietic* aspects of dancing. Expressed in the language of *eros*, dancing tango is a free interplay between desiring to move (with) the partner and being desired by being moved by the

partner. Both functions (the proposer and the interpreter) are driven by this double desire, but to unequal degrees.

My elaboration so far has analysed somaesthetic dimensions of tango interactions, but it has not produced a theory of the “one beast of four legs” that emerges in “magic moments” (Kimmel, 2019, p. 582). These moments are often described as flow experiences (mostly with reference to Csíkszentmihályi, e.g. 2013) or as emergent effects of self-organised systems. For my purpose—which is the objectivisation of experiences of dance—the idea that self-organised systems take over the agential part of the interaction between dance partners seems a more promising approach than the notion of flow. Flow, at least as described by Csíkszentmihályi, entails a loss of “reflective self-consciousness” (Csíkszentmihályi & Nakamura, 2001). However, this does not concur with my experiences of the beauty of dancing. On the contrary, these moments are characterised by a heightened awareness of my interacting self.<sup>12</sup> This is no surprise because somaesthetic practices focus on the bodily self, where I am working with myself and cannot lose reflective self-consciousness as I might in activities that create or manipulate external objects (as described by Csíkszentmihályi).

The idea of interaction as an emergent entity that acquires an agency of its own can be found in different academic approaches. I will, as mentioned, focus on phenomenological and anthropological perspectives. Enactivism is a specific phenomenological approach that sheds light on the significance of a subject’s embodied situatedness in interaction processes; the anthropological perspective looks at the framework that facilitates interaction as agential organisations.

I will begin with the enactivist theory, which interprets interaction as an emergent organisation on the basis of participatory sense-making processes. De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2007) define social interaction as follows:

Social interaction is the regulated coupling between at least two autonomous agents, where the regulation is aimed at aspects for the coupling itself so that it constitutes an emergent autonomous organization in the domain of relational dynamics, without destroying in the process the autonomy of the agent involved.

(De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007, p. 493)<sup>13</sup>

According to this quote, interaction itself acquires an agential, autonomous potency. Interaction (partly) regulates and sustains itself through the action of the participant without compromising their agency. Torrance calls it “a self-perpetuating dynamic structure” (Torrance & Froese, 2011, p. 28). De Jaegher and Di Paolo propose that the autonomy of interaction can unfold on various levels: metabolic, neural, cognitive, and social (De Jaegher et al., 2010). The weak point of

their approach is that they are not able to theoretically explain how interaction acquires, and particularly how it sustains, this autonomous agency because their theoretical approach is committed to the notion of subjectivity as an operationally and cognitively closed entity. Not surprisingly, their solution is enaction. Participatory cognition evolves in and as part of action. Only action can prompt “mutual modulation” (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007, p. 504) on a sensorimotor level and thus sustain a coupling of agents (persons). According to Gallagher, mutual modulations are grounded in an innate emotional and attitudinal resonance and understanding between (human) beings (Gallagher, 2010). Still, this does not explain the autonomy of interaction but only increases its enigmatic agential existence: interaction fashions a participatory sense that is pre-reflective yet sensed. This participatory sense must be self-sustained.<sup>14</sup>

Torrance and Froese see the condition of the emergence of interaction as an agential force in “perceptual crossing,” a term that “denotes social situations in which the perceptual activities of two agents interact with each other (e.g. mutual touch or catching another’s eye)” (Torrance & Froese, 2011, p. 30). They propose that interaction gains agency through perceptual crossing. “When the agents interact with each other, the mutuality of the interaction means that they essentially serve as each other’s sensor interface, and this mutually and interactively re-established coherence of the individuals’ sensorimotor loops reinforces the interaction as a whole” (Torrance & Froese, 2011, p. 35). This constitutes the phenomenological ground for the objectivisation of one’s own movement.

Alphen applies the findings of enactivism regarding participatory sense-making to Argentine tango by underlining that interaction must be understood as a “mutual incorporation” and “mutual affection” that leads to “joint creation” (Alphen, 2014). However, his application does not add novel aspects to the experience of tangoing. The feeling of jointness and oneness between tango partners has long been promoted as the sensual trademark of Argentine tango (Olszewski, 2008 and many others). Nor does Alphen’s approach contribute to the theory of participatory sense-making; this remains an enigma placed at a pre-reflective level of shared affection.

To be able to explain this occurrence, one must look at Argentine tango as a formalised interaction system. At first sight, this can be seen as a hindrance to the emergence of “mutual modulations” in action simply because formalised interactions often consist of already pre-modulated movements. This is the case when we learn to dance or rehearse. But, as every stage performer knows, predetermined forms (decisions about style, theme, music that entail even obstructions) demarcate the interactional space of possibility, thereby taking the agential weight and creative expectation off the performers’ shoulders. Predetermined forms are proper interactional forces that support mutual modulations by specifying action

possibilities. The mechanisms of interaction (e.g. the theme, medium, and procedures) need not be established by the interacting subjects. In the case of Argentine tango, interaction as an agential force lies concealed in its technique. As Kimmel writes, tango postures and positions are designed to afford and even demand interaction (Kimmel, 2019, pp. 570, 572): the tango walk, *sacada* (stepping into the partner's space), or *boleo* (a sudden change of direction that makes the partner's leg wave in the air). The tango technique already encompasses the agency of interaction that is released through its execution. The index entails the performance technique.

Thus, social dancing is designed as a mutual interaction that (among other purposes) enhances the acquisition of mutual sensorimotor sensibility. It requires mutual awareness. Somaesthetic awareness must also include the partner's actions. Actions can be understood as the outside of the dance partner's sense perceptions. Again, awareness is not just a passive attitude but also has a retroactive effect on dancing. Awareness builds up an attentive tension, a kind of waiting for the other, even while moving. I already cited Richards, a musician, in Chapter 2, but allow me to revisit this quote once more:

When you stop but hold the connection, something happens, something deeper, something almost mystical, some people call it, and this thing gets magnified in this moment. . . . It takes your total attention to hold it, to not let it fall, to sustain it. This is the secret; this is the magic. . . . This is the beauty of tango . . . this stop is the fundamental unit, the silence, the pause, the zero position.

(Richards, 2018)

The stop in motion is not a relaxing pause; on the contrary, it is an emphasising of aesthetic awareness, the kernel of interaction. Aesthetic awareness is radical openness, as Aneta Key expresses it in a TED talk:

Now, this close, you have to trust your partners, even if you just met them, they can sense your every move and emotion. You can close your eyes, if you want to, but your arms and your heart are open. And this is radical openness. . . . Tango offers creative self-expression in an intimate interaction with another human being. . . . Time slows. And that is flow.

(Key, 2012)

Radical openness influences the sensation of time. Time slows. In my experience, moments of intensity broaden the bandwidth of my sensorial apparatus, filling time with more detailed sensations of myself, the other, and the qualities of our movements. Time slows because it grows dense with qualia. In my perception, our movements become virtual objects

composed of semi-stable lines in space. It is like the contrails of an aircraft that materialise the last part of the flight, eventually to dissolve themselves. Mutual awareness is a prerequisite (and a result) of somaesthetic objectivisation.

Mutual awareness empties the dancers of private concerns and ambitions precisely because awareness requires the will and ability to take on the role of the patient. A patient in interactions of this kind is an emergent part of the dance—for instance, in the form of a pithy tension that erupts into small or bigger movements. In moments of mutual awareness, I experience the spirit of tango. In my context, the term has no religious content; on the contrary, it is a clearing of personal preoccupations and an emptying of significance. One of my autoethnographic writings reports that the dancing one night did not go well because of my own preoccupations with private matters. It concludes as follows:

Beautiful experiences of dancing need emptying oneself to allow the dance to enter. . . . The tango steps' significance/function is an emptying of everyday preoccupations and thoughts in order to be filled with movement in alignment with the other, the music, and the dance hall.

(Heinrich, autoethnographic entry, 2018, Dec. 12)

Wills makes a comparable observation:

But whatever has been created in the movement of the dance has been created in the moment and it has no meaning beyond itself. The dance is empty of meaning, and this emptiness too is addictive. What might look like self-expression is actually a way of practicing absenting ourselves.

(Wills, 2020)

Wills' last sentence has affinities with Plato's recognition that *eros* wraps artists and other sensitive persons in a creative madness and with Nietzsche's much more physiological notion of rapture (*Rausch*) as an augmentation of "the excitability of the entire machine" (Nietzsche in Heidegger, 1984, p. 96). However, Wills explains "absenting ourselves" as a negation of self-expression, not as a loss of reflective self-consciousness. Dancing does not refer to anything beyond the activity proper. A beautiful experience of dancing tango requires surrendering to the interactive dynamics of the dance and shedding personal measures of protection. The beautiful in dancing tango is not engendered by expressing feelings, convictions, or values through the dance. "Unclothed of the routines and rituals of everyday life—no speech, no distraction, no accidents of style—you become naked in your own body. You are reduced to body, and all the more so because you are body framed by the dance—body squared"

(Wills, 2020). This reduction to a framed, de-subjectivised body presents the dancers with the opportunity for pure somaesthetic awareness.<sup>15</sup>

So far in this subchapter, I have tried to get a grip on the necessary objectivisation of one's own dancing. I scrutinised the idea of interaction as an agential and sense-making entity (or organisation), thereby removing the agential obligations from the dancing subjects. To illuminate the emergent properties of social interaction, I applied Gell's two anthropological attributes *agency* and *patiency* to the interactional constituents of tango. This lets me present tango dancing as an index that, first, is created by the participating subjects (the dancers), and second, that also determines the dancing by attributing two modalities (active and receptive). I then switched to a phenomenological–experiential perspective to concretise the experience of mutual perception as moments of tension spurring the emergence of the agency of dancing, which enables an experienced objectivisation of one's own dancing. The challenge of the phenomenological approach, however, is that it cannot transgress the subject; a phenomenological explanation of social action and cognition is always on the verge of mysticism. Here, an ethnographic perspective has more explanatory power. The last subchapter will examine Argentine tango as an interaction ritual and its relevance for beautiful experiences of dancing.

### 6.3 Interaction ritual

Adopting Gell's theory of art as social *relata* does not mean accepting the semiotic distinction between index and prototype. Of course, I could declare that social dancing conflates the distinction between index and prototype because (as already said) dancing tango does not refer to anything else than to itself—that is, to the rhythmic movements of two persons accompanied by tango music. Dancing aims at annihilating all distinctions by fostering the experience of being consumed by dancing. Interestingly, Gell also mentions an example where a prototype does not exist: decorative art. The geometric patterns of decorative art do not refer to something external but point towards the act of their creation and reception. Patterns are not representational but performative. Gell mentions the synaesthetic nature of graphical patterns and its aesthetic relationship to dance. “It is surely useful to consider the act of drawing as akin to dancing, and the design as a kind of a frozen residue left by this manual ballet” (Gell, 1998, p. 95). Conversely, improvising tango can be compared to writing on space. Each dance creates a graphical form that can be recorded or shown in various ways: as lines on the dance floor, as lines in space, or even as a sculpture in time that entails all the postures and lines of transition of the dancing bodies. Such recordings display a materialised index. Hogarth's serpentine line is one example of such as index.

Evidently, we cannot see the virtual patterns created by the movements of dancers. And even if we could, tango steps depicted on the floor would not look like graphic embellishments of everyday or religious objects found in many cultures (e.g. Viking, Celtic, or Muslim). These patterns are repetitions of a limited number of core forms. Unlike other dances—for instance, court or line dances—tango dancing does not follow such choreographic patterns. Nonetheless, tango consists of a limited number of basic steps and paradigmatic combinations that are repeatedly instantiated and varied and that together constitute a performance framework.

One characteristic of rituals is that they are often structured by a determined sequence of events or even by predetermined recitations or songs and choreographed movements. Dancing Argentine tango can therefore be considered as participation in a secular ritual. The tango ritual is primarily determined by the music and the specific way of moving to it as a couple. Additionally, there are other codes—*dos* and *don'ts*—regulating the participants' behaviour at *milongas* and *practicas* (more information is given in the appendix; see also Olszewski (2008)). All aspects of the tango ritual are brought to life at the *milonga* (tango ball), where this dance unfolds as an entirety in all its complexity. The tango ritual is first of all an interaction ritual simply because the dance regulates and is brought forth by people interacting. In the following, I will have a look at some features of both religious and secular rituals that are important for a theory of performative beauty.

Durkheim identified ritual as “effervescence,” mostly in situations of crisis and change. This concurs with the genealogy of tango, which shows that it formed at the end of the nineteenth century, when many different groups of people came to Buenos Aires. These groups had to manage to live together under poor and emotionally difficult conditions. The tango was shaped as one means of facilitating multicultural interaction on a direct, somatic level. Durkheim points to several functions of rituals: one is shared action and awareness; another is shared emotion.

It is by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in regard to some object that they become and feel themselves in unison. . . . Individual minds cannot come in contact and communicate with each other except by coming out of themselves; they cannot do this except by movement. So it is the homogeneity of these movements that gives the group consciousness of itself. . . . When this homogeneity is once established and these movements have taken a stereotyped form, they serve to symbolize the corresponding representation.

(Durkheim, 1965, p. 263)

Durkheim writes specifically about religious rituals, where shared movements yield emotional exaltation; he does not write about secular rituals,

which often, like tango, contain an element of play or playfulness. Religious rituals are normally not experienced as play. Nevertheless, two topics found in both religious and secular rituals are important for my thinking: first, Durkheim's assertion that people need to come "out of themselves" by adopting a distinct type of movement, and second, that alignment through shared movements enables a mutual focalisation and focal point supporting a shared consciousness. General, secular interaction rituals also entail these features. Collins summarised them in the following way:

The central mechanism of interaction ritual theory is that occasions that combine a high degree of mutual focused attention, that is, a high degree of intersubjectivity, together with a high degree of emotional entrainment—through bodily synchronization, mutual stimulation/arousal of participants' nervous systems—results in feelings of membership that are attached to cognitive symbols; and result also in emotional energy of individual participants, giving them a feeling of confidence, enthusiasm, and desire for action in what they consider a morally proper path.

(Collins, 2004, p. 43)

Collins is interested in the emergence of interaction rituals; I am interested in interaction rituals' function of externalising agency. Social dancing is a secularised, preestablished interaction ritual. It can be understood as societal effervescence through its focus on the somatic interaction between individuals. Partaking in this social activity elicits somatic experiences of emotional alignment through shared movements. This is a nonverbal and non-intellectual way of dialoguing and acting together (Tateo, 2014). Supposedly, tango was once an efficient way to communicate and to form novel communities for dissimilar groups of people in the Rio Plata delta. Today, the tango ritual sustains a culturally neglected form of being together that emphasises experiences of interpersonal alignment on the somatic, emotional, and pre-analytical levels through shared attention and emotions. The oscillating transference of energetic, rhythmically structured impulses of tango elicits an emotional synchronisation between the dance partners for the duration of a dance. The tango interaction ritual is initiated when a dancing couple accepts the peculiar, tradition-formed way of moving together to music. The dancers then become members of the community of tango dancers.<sup>16</sup>

The question is, how can an understanding of tango as an interaction ritual contribute to a theory of performative beauty? Any ritual consists of an adopted framework that regulates the actions and behaviours of its participants. Tango structures and frames a bodily, playful, and seemingly purposeless synchronisation between individuals. Interactions are thus not only emergent phenomena but also already existing procedures



that gain agency by being somatically incorporated and executed.<sup>17</sup> I have already written about motor memory and kinetic melodies as enactments of somatically sedimented movement through which the interactions themselves gain agency. I still need to clarify whether other elements of Argentine tango contribute to the externalisation of agency, thus allowing for awareness of one's own actions.

One major constituent of tango, of course, is music. Tango music is the promiscuous third partner of each dancing couple on the floor. The music dances with every couple simultaneously. Unlike the dancing, tango music is generally not improvised but composed and rehearsed. Today, most *milongas* and *prácticas* use recorded music, and most often, a DJ oversees the selection of music pieces and *tantas*. Live orchestras are seldom hired. The music is a stable and recognisable partner. We still dance to pieces composed 100 years ago, and we dance to newly composed pieces that refer back to the old hits. Tango music presents a common rhythm and creates a melodic atmosphere. All dancers must at least align to the basic beat. Evidently, this creates a shared rhythmic realm supporting the alignment not only between the two dance partners but between all the dancers on the dance floor. Dancers, particularly novices, sometimes have difficulty recognising and aligning to the basic rhythm, thus disturbing the flow of movements and creating frustration on the dance floor. Conversely, accomplished dancers can vary their movements by rhythmically following not only the different beats but also the melodic lines of the different instruments.

Music, specifically rhythm, is a means for entrainment. Entrainment means “the mutually dependent synchronisation of otherwise autonomous rhythmic behaviours or processes either across individuals, or within the brain, or between the brain and the rest of the body” (Starr, 2015, p. 88). The theory of rhythmical entrainment processes requires “that we tend to spontaneously (albeit variably so) associate whatever sensory input we have, be that of sound, vision, or motion, with some mental image of body motion” (Godøy, 2019, p. 146). Starr makes this notion the very bedrock for her theory of beauty; she uses the term “motor imagery” (Starr, 2015, p. 82). However, entrainment is also said to be a much more fundamental alignment between living and non-living entities: “Furthermore, mutual entrainment of oscillations is a general principle of physical systems, both biological and nonbiological, suggesting that entrainment of motor systems by sensory systems may be a default rather than an oddity” (Wilson & Cook, 2016, p. 1647). There seems to be no need for a “mental image of body motions” or “motor imagery.” At least in Godøy's writings, the term “mental image” must be taken partly metaphorically as

the spontaneous activation of motor areas of the brain when listening to speech or music . . . in fact, research from the last couple of

decades seems to suggest that links between sound and body motion, besides being intertwined on a behavioral level, also are “hard-wired,” that is, they are found on a neurophysiological level, hence part of our basic biological constitution.

(Godøy, 2019, p. 146)

He proposes a theory of sound-motion objects, which are “entities that fuse sensations of sound and motion into salient and holistically perceived units in musical experience” (Godøy, 2019, p. 146). He argues that both auditory perception and motor activation can be understood—and more importantly, experienced—as dynamic shapes. Both the playing of an instrument and the perception of music crystallise into perceptual shapes. They combine many features of sound/music and motion. This is supported by research proposing a direct, neurological relationship between sound and motion (e.g. Kohler et al., 2002; Gallese & Metzinger, 2010). According to Godøy, shapes can represent auditory and kinaesthetic features, such as speed, direction, frequency, harmonics, and rhythmical patterns. In this regard, shapes have affinities with topology, the study of invariants of changing geometrical objects. Sound-motion objects can not only represent dynamic features, such as change over time, development, and starting or ending, but can also facilitate perceptual experiences.

It is important to note that shape perception is not static; shapes “need to be enacted, put into motion” (Godøy, 2019, p. 155). Seen from a phenomenological perspective, in moments of music and sound perception or of sound production, these shapes are not objects (if an object is understood as a demarcated entity that can be observed from a third-person perspective) but rather dynamic volumes that transgress the borders of the physical body. For instance, performing musicians experience themselves as an agential unity that integrates the performers’ physical bodies and instruments (e.g. Bertinetto, 2021). In another case, a dancer not only experiences their performing body but also acts in relation to other objects in space and to space proper (e.g. Foster, 2003; Ravn, 2021). My inquiry into beautiful experiences while dancing necessitates a different understanding, namely, that sound–motion relationships are experienced as dynamic, performative schemes. Here, Schmitz’s new phenomenology reappears in my investigation to propose that sound-motion objects should not be understood as perceptual objects at all but as motoric body schemes. Music and sound are not external forces that animate human bodies; they are inherent components of the motor scheme and vice versa.

Clarke (2005) proposes that motion in sound and music cannot solely be understood metaphorically as an extra cognitive layer between music and motion. He argues that the connection between music and the perceiver is real and direct because music is composed of musical sounds that inevitably have various characteristics of real (natural) sounds—as if the sounds were emitted by entities in the material space of the perceiver.

These features determine music's somatic relationship to the perceiver. This is the classical paradox of the perceptual reality of fiction, which is especially puzzling when artistic creation is presented in abstract but nevertheless concrete forms, as it is in music. Music emulates and derives from natural sounds, which means that the sounds are incorporated and form an indissoluble unity with the sensation of one's own bodily motion. Clarke refers to Todd's notion of "self-motion" (Todd in Clarke, 2005, p. 75) due to the neurological connection between sound and motion. Self-motion must entail real or imaginary moving emitters of sound.<sup>18</sup>

Godøy's and Clarke's theories—I have already mentioned neuroaesthetic approaches in previous chapters—also propose that human physiology includes motion as a constituent of, for example, music listening. Being in a contemplative mode thus means sublimating and transforming our natural tendencies for motion in favour of aesthetic reflection and interpretation. Applying Schmitz's vocabulary, the listener "incorporates" (*Einleibung*) (Schmitz, 2011, p. 35) the music. Listening to music means somatically following sonic shapes. We often partake in the occurrence of music with small movements, such as tapping our feet in rhythm or letting our bodies follow the melodic lines with micro-movements. But the quality of music can also be confrontational (in the case of intensifying, massive sounds or sudden, outstanding sounds). These sounds are incorporated by eliciting an immediate, physiological reaction. Incorporation is the reception of "Bewegungssuggestion" (movement suggestions; Schmitz, 2011). Contrary to Schmitz, I claim that listening to music must also be understood as an excorporation (*Ausleibung*) that projects the felt body into the auditory space and lets the body be moved *with* the sonic shapes. In my view, these experiences of the felt body oscillate, yet with variable emphasis on either incorporation or excorporation depending on how the music alternates between expansion and contraction.<sup>19</sup>

On the face of it, dancing tango seems very different from listening to music. Tango does not consist of immediate, undetermined reactions to the sounds of music. The connection between music and motion is framed in that the dancers select and modify "movems" (Kimmel, 2019) that somehow follow the tango music. The music creates the rhythmical and atmospheric framework for tango movements. A causality-based conception defines this relationship in terms of cause and effect, agent and patient: the music is the agent, and the dancers comply by aligning the qualities of their movements to selected musical features. This is precisely how we normally learn to dance; we try to catch the main rhythms and align our dancing to them. Conscious listening and intentional alignment certainly are good starting points, but fluent dancing, where the music is prereflectively an intrinsic part of the movements of both partners, is certainly more pleasurable. The cited theories on music and motion show that the perception of music surpasses the causally defined action–reaction sequences of our normal understanding of interaction. Motion

and music form an agential unity in which motion cannot be allocated exclusively to the dancer. Of course, the music does not determine the dancing, but the dancers are inevitably influenced by the music. The dancing does not change the music, at least not when it is prerecorded, but it can be understood as adding an extra layer to the music. For example, the *caminada* (walking together) can make inherent but omitted beats of the music tangible or highlight the steady structure underlying rhythmic syncopations, which activates neuronal reward centres (Witek et al., 2014). The dancing of steps and combinations becomes a part of the music.

Seen from the experiential perspective of the dancer (and here, once again, I switch to the pronominal I), I am danced—not *by*—but *with* the music. This means that I do not lose the possibility to exert agency. I *am moved with* the music—in freedom. This is done through oscillating incorporation and excorporation. Incorporating music means letting the auditory impulses of the music fill and modulate my tango steps; excorporation means expanding my moving body into the sonic time-space. The oscillating motion organises the distributed agency. The accompanying feeling can best be described as a pleasurable, deliberate surrender to the music through movement.

My elaboration of the relationship between tango movements and music must be seen as one element of my understanding of tango as an interaction ritual. The important thing is that the tango interaction ritual integrates the dancers into the dance. This causal mechanism is a common figure of thought. Gadamer uses the notion of the “structure” (German: *Gebilde*; Gadamer, 2004).<sup>20</sup> Another term that comes to mind is Schmitz’s “schema,” although Schmitz is talking about the motor schema of the lived body and not, like Gadamer, the structures of cultural artefacts. Regardless of their different philosophical approaches, I return to these authors’ notions because my task consists of showing how the experience of movement is an integrated part of cultural events, and vice versa. In the context of discussing the de-subjectivising nature of the artwork, Gadamer identifies the essence of art as play: artworks are works of play. “The movement of play as such has, as it were, no substrate. It is the game that is played—it is irrelevant whether or not there is a subject who plays it. The play is the occurrence of the movement as such” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 104). The audience participates in the play of art by becoming players. But becoming players means becoming parts of the structure of the artwork through performing (playing).

The structure of play absorbs the player into itself, and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain of existence. This is also seen in the spontaneous tendency to repetition that emerges in the player and in the constant self-renewal of play, which affects its form (e.g., the refrain).

(Gadamer, 2004, p. 105)

Once involved in the “work of play,” the structure—which includes the player—takes initiative. Gadamer’s approach is applicable to tango even though it is built on a hermeneutical foundation. For Gadamer, playing is always an act of interpretation (Romagnoli, 2022). There can be no doubt that the interaction ritual of tango can be seen as a form of play that creates its own “playground” (Huizinga, 1949). And precisely because the play of tango consists of movements, Gadamer’s and Schmitz’s different notions must be combined to indicate that motor schemes form part of the structure of tango, and vice versa. They determine each other. Thus, the dance movements of the dancers are also initiated by the structure. In the moment of dancing, I *am moved with* the structure. Again, I use the term *with* to indicate that agency is distributed between the dancer and the structure.

The structure is not Gell’s prototype, yet it contains the aesthetic idea of tango. This idea is immanent in the music, body techniques, and codes of tango. Argentine tango certainly entails many other ideas (e.g. the ethical idea of a bodily yet secure form of communication between different people from different cultures, the social idea that dancing tango releases social tensions, or the idea that dancing tango contributes to well-being and health). However, I claim that one important aesthetic idea of tango is that the dancers can experience their own dancing as pleasurable and life-affirming. Dancing can create a performative unity between isolated entities, including persons contributing to and symbolising the emergence of life. I have elaborated on the aesthetic relationship between beauty and life in Chapter 4. The aesthetic idea is immanent in tango’s performance structure. This means that the aesthetic idea is only present in the act of dancing *as* the act of dancing. The dancers’ awareness of the structure that is the experience of being danced is the aesthetic idea of tango. We aesthetically experience our own actions as part of a distinct context and prior to the differentiation between subject and object.

The dancers constantly renew the play of tango by repeating and modifying steps and figures to keep the idea of tango palpable. Sartwell also points to repetition as one important element in the sentiment of beauty. The structure of rhythm is repetition, and repetition “is itself the very principle of unity for beings who are condemned to live in time” (Sartwell, 2006, p. 67). The rhythmic repetition of the music and the dance encapsulates our experience of the unity of and with live.

What is spiritual in music is above all tempo: the structure of its development and return through time that becomes our own development and return. The music itself is an exemplar, an agent, and an element in union, showing its beauty. It is always a return, and always a sequence of returns. But when these returns are as emphatic as a heartbeat and almost as simple, we get the sensation of seeing

the center of unification itself that we long for, and of coming to be, moving and dancing with it.

(Sartwell, 2006, p. 67)

Beautiful experiences are moments of a somatic awareness of being moved: to be aware of oneself by being out of oneself is pleurably *erotic* and life affirming. On that note, I want to end this chapter by once again referring to Kant and his notions of sensible knowing and aesthetic pleasure. Risser writes, “The feeling distinctive to aesthetics is the ‘feeling of life,’ . . .” (Risser, 2015, p. 424). Kant defines life as the alteration between pain and pleasure; the latter is directly connected to the promotion of life (Kant, 2000, §1).

It all comes down to life—whatever vivifies [belebt] is pleasurable. Life is unity; taste has as its principle the unity of vivifying sensations. . . . thus that which furthers the feeling of universal life is the cause of pleasure. Do we feel ourselves at home in universal life? (Kant, 2005, p. 443)

(Kant in Risser, 2015, p. 424)

According to Risser, this universality is “an as-if order of connectedness to the whole” (Risser, 2015, p. 426). Social dancing certainly establishes a playful as-if order that connects the dancers to selected aspects of life: movement, intimacy, interaction, and entrainment, just to mention a few. However, in Argentine tango, the as-if order is bound to generality through the concreteness of movement and somaesthetic awareness. Tango is a playground for concreteness. The feeling of life is found in dancing, moving, being there with my partner, and the rhythms and melodies of music. In tango, Kant’s spiritual feeling (*Geistesgefühl*) is still based on reflection, but now in the form of a basic somatic awareness of one’s own actions. This awareness connects music, space, and all the other participants into an experienced unity. This awareness is possible because the interaction (of which the dancer is an integrated part) properly performs the movements.

My approach could be accused of reestablishing the Western distinction between the spirit (consciousness) and the body. However, this allegation is erroneous since the somatic awareness of the body is dependent on the body’s movements: there is always a recursive dependency between awareness and bodily motions (Varela et al., 1992). This does not mean we cannot be aware of our motions but rather implies an observational distinction between an action and the kinaesthetic awareness following the action. Without this distinction, we could not possibly be aware of the beautiful of and in our own actions. Gadamer plays with the polysemantic feature of the German term “Wahrnehmung” (awareness), which

means to be aware of and thus recognise the truth—for instance, the truth of moving here and now as part of and within the structure of Argentine tango. Beautiful experiences of dancing spring from an undivided awareness of one's own dancing.

## Notes

- 1 *Milongas* and *practicás* have always also been platforms for business and self-promotion. Take the *campadritos*, for example: machos who loved to engage in dance combats and did not hesitate to engage in physical fights as a bonus. And there was the *milongueta*, the “rebellious broad” (Savigliano, 1995, p. 47), who did not easily accept gender, class, or economic roles. From the past to today, there are many different reasons to dance Argentine tango. I claim, however, that the longing for simply moving intimately with another person is one of the most basic purposes of social dancing, although this intimacy can be used for many purposes.
- 2 According to gestalt theory, the human visual perceptual apparatus identifies closed outlines as objects even if the visible outline is not closed. Our cognitive systems intervene to produce objects by differentiating them from a background.
- 3 There are (contested) tales of the history of tango that claim that tango was used by prostitutes as a selection heuristic when accepting costumers. The situation at the beginning of the twentieth century was that Buenos Aires was packed with male immigrants (mainly from Europe) and not many women. According to this narrative, dancing tango was a necessary skill to attract the few, coveted women and thus a route to sexual success.
- 4 Taylor says that while dancing tango with another person, the dancer “relive[s] their disillusion alone” (Taylor, 1998, p. 11).
- 5 As a reminder, my elaborations do not take into account the analytic tradition that locates beauty in attributes of objects rather than projected cognitive occurrences. Evidently, proponents of the idea that beauty is an attribute of a beautiful object or artefact (e.g. Langer and Scruton) and advocates of biological and evolutionary notions of beauty need to deemphasise the transcendence of subjective judgement since, in their view, beauty is not subjective but fundamentally objective and thus perceivable and realisable for all. There cannot be any objective attribute attached to the experience of dancing; dancing is an activity performed and experienced by a subject.
- 6 As I argued in both the introduction and the chapter on methodology, all senses work together in bringing about the experiential world. Even the pragmatic, educational aspects of art identified by aesthetics as enhancing the capability to sense distinctly (Baumgarten already emphasised that we must exercise our sensory apparatuses) help lay the foundation for the poietic relationship between different (factual and imagined) sense perceptions: synaesthesia, imagination, and associations. Furthermore, conceptual thinking is insolubly tied to enactment and to our existential condition of being thrown into this world. In short, there is no reason to deny that physical pleasures can be aesthetic pleasures.
- 7 I have described this before: the proposer initiates steps by conveying an impulse indicating the direction, amount of energy, and type of movement. The interpreter follows up by enacting the steps and moves made possible by the impulse. The proposer is now following the interpreter's moves but must take the lead again to be able to bring the figure to an end.

- 8 Emirbayer and Ann Mische offer the following definition, which I find interesting because they situate agency within a structural and temporal context: “We define it as the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970).
- 9 Gell’s theory only deals with material artefacts and not, for example, performances. He admits that this is a reduction of the variety of existing artistic works, but his theory does not claim to be valid for other types of artworks than material artefacts. Social dancing is neither art nor a material artefact. Nevertheless, I find Gell’s theoretical approach interesting and applicable to social dancing because it can clarify how the (inter-)act(-ion) of dancing gains an agency that is not the dancers’ agency. I want to find theoretical models that can explain Plato’s *eros* as an operational *mania* in which the dancer loses self-possession without losing their mind, so to speak.
- 10 This distinction can be contested, yet it is the distinction between the actor and their role or, when considering performance art, the distinction between the performer and their actions. Even though much performance art tries to eliminate or complicate this theatrical distinction between actor and character, the recognition that actions are parts of a performance must inevitably be based on the conceptual distinction between the performer as a person and the performer as a function in a presentation (Heinrich, 2016). Social dancing is not a theatre performance since the function of the recipient (spectator) is not an inherent part of it. Normally, we dance for our own pleasure.
- 11 Sheet-Johnstone acknowledges the neuropsychologist Aleksandr Romanovich Luria, who used the term to describe pathological cases.
- 12 I mention this also in Chapter 5.
- 13 De Jaegher and Di Paolo refer to a controlled experiment that seemed to show that two interactors could discriminate between human encounters and encounters between human agents and virtual agents even though the experimental setting prevented the human participant from knowing whether they were interacting with a real person or a virtual entity (Di Paolo et al., 2008).
- 14 The authors do not explicitly say that self-sustainment constitutes the very sense of interaction, but it lies implicit in their claim that interaction emerges as self-sustained agency. That is not to say that external occurrences cannot stop social interaction or that human agents cannot interrupt it, but to leave a social interaction takes, in most cases, an act of volition.
- 15 The philosopher Morton claims that beauty must be understood as death. Beauty is no longer a taste-based judgement of a representation but the immediate experience of a thing proper. Moreover, the experienced thing takes place in me as “a not-me”: “It is however also the case that I cannot specify whether this ‘not-me’ is actually ‘in’ me precisely because it is not me: it is weirdly neither inside nor outside, but appears in a virtual, interstitial space that opens up between me and the thing. In other words, within Kantian thought itself, beauty threatens to become a boundary-violating, immersive process” (Morton, 2015, p. 157).
- 16 I am interested in neither the moral values nor the symbols. The moral values specify, for example, the distinction between physically intimate dancing and sexual behaviour. The symbols of tango are often ritualistic artefacts, such as tango shoes and distinct tango apparel.
- 17 Much sociological theory claims just this. See, for example, Mauss’ body techniques (Mauss, 1973), Goffman’s theatre metaphor (Goffman, 1959),



- and Bourdieu's (1986) notion of habitus, all of which describe the incorporation of social structures and values by the individual member of a social group.
- 18 Movement and sound are not only intrinsically intertwined for musicians, who manually activate their instruments. One could speculate whether movements are not always accompanied by inner sounds that are sometimes released as perceptible sounds—for instance, when we dance alone in our living rooms humming supportive sounds (humming a melody of an existing song is a different case), a physical reaction to a surprising event is accompanied by sounds of surprise, or we want to emphasise a movement's relational content.
  - 19 I have already written on the composition of tango dance figures as an alternation of expanding and contracting movements. The same applies to the melodic lines of tango music.
  - 20 Gadamer uses the German term *Gebilde*. *Gebilde* denotes something fabricated and visually observable (*bild* means picture). Clearly, Gadamer had in mind artworks that can be observed visually: a painting, a sculpture, but also a theatre play or dance performance. Dancing (tango), on the other hand, must be performed; it is not a *Gebilde* but ephemeral lines and rhythms in space to be sensed only in the moment. However, tango can be visualised as interwoven lines of an abstract pattern—as structured surfaces. Tango's structure is created through dancing but can also be seen as a virtual potentiality that makes dancing possible because we think and perform in patterns and because the dance consists of prototypical patterns.

## Reference List

- Alphen, F. van. (2014). Tango and enactivism: First steps in exploring the dynamics and experience of interaction. *Integrative Psychological & Behavioral Science*, 48(3), 322–331. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S12124-014-9267-1>
- Bertinetto, A. (2021). View of body and soul . . . and the artifact: The aesthetically extended self. *Journal of Somaesthetics*, 7(2), 7–26. <https://somaesthetics.aau.dk/index.php/JOS/article/view/6747/6030>.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *Distinctions: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.
- Chasteen, J. C. (2004). *National rhythms, African roots: The deep history of Latin American popular dance*. University of New Mexico Press.
- Clarke, E. F. (2005). *Ways of listening*. Oxford University Press.
- Collins, R. (2004). *Interaction ritual chains*. Princeton University Press. <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691123899/interaction-ritual-chains>
- Colombetti, G. (2011). Varieties of pre-reflective self-awareness: Foreground and background bodily feelings in emotion experience. *Inquiry*, 54(3), 293–313.
- Csikszentmihályi, M. (2013). *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. Harper Perennial.
- Csikszentmihályi, M., & Nakamura, J. (2001). The concept of flow. In *Handbook of positive psychology* (p. 89). Oxford University Press.
- De Jaegher, H., & Di Paolo, E. (2007). Participatory sense-making an enactive approach to social cognition. *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, 6, 485–507.
- De Jaegher, H., Di Paolo, E., & Gallagher, S. (2010). Can social interaction constitute social cognition. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 14(10).

- Durkheim, E. (1965). *The elementary forms of religious life*. Free Press.
- Emirbayer, M., & Misce, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), 962–1023.
- Foster, S. L. (2003). Taken by surprise: Improvisation in dance and mind. In C. Albright & D. Gere (Eds.), *Taken by surprise: A dance improvisation reader*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Gadamer, H. G. (2004). *Truth and method*. Continuum. <https://doi.org/Article>.
- Gallagher, S. (2010). Movement and emotions in joint attention. In *Habitus in habitat 1 — emotion and motion* (pp. 41–54). Peter Lang.
- Gallese, V., & Metzinger, T. (2010). Motor ontology: The representational reality of goals, actions and selves. *Philosophical Psychology*, 16(3), 365–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951508032000121760>
- Gell, A. (1998). *Art and agency: An anthropological theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Godøy, R. I. (2019). Sound-motion bonding in body and mind. In Y. Kim & S. L. Gilman (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of music and the body*. Oxford University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday & Company.
- Heidegger, M. (1984). *Nietzsche*. HarperCollins.
- Heinrich, F. (2016). Participation som kunst-værk. *Peripeti*, 25, 10–23.
- Huizinga, J. (1949). *Homo Ludens*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Jay, M. (2005). *Songs of experience: American and European variations on a universal theme*. University of California Press.
- Kant, I. (2000). *The critique of judgement: Library*. Cambridge University Press.
- Key, A. (2012). *My tango double-life*. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhdI3FNItHk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhdI3FNItHk)
- Kimmel, M. (2019). A cognitive theory of joint improvisation: The case of tango Argentino. In *The Oxford handbook of improvisation in dance* (pp. 563–589). Oxford University Press.
- Knowles, M. (2009). *The wicked waltz and other scandalous dances*. McFarland & Company.
- Kohler, E., Keysers, C., Umiltà, M. A., Fogassi, L., Gallese, V., & Rizzolatti, G. (2002). Hearing sounds, understanding actions: Action representation in mirror neurons. *Science (New York, N.Y.)*, 297(5582), 846–848. <https://doi.org/10.1126/SCIENCE.1070311>
- Konstan, D. (2014). *Beauty: The fortune of an Ancient Greek idea*. Oxford University Press.
- Lutterbie, J. (2017). Feeling beauty, time, and the body in Neuroaesthetics. *Poetics Today*, 38(2), 295–315. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-3868615>
- Mauss, M. (1973). Techniques of the body. *Economy and Society*, 2(1), 70–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147300000003>
- Menninghaus, W., Wagner, V., Wassiliwizky, E., Schindler, I., Hanich, J., Jacobsen, T., & Koelsch, S. (2019). What are aesthetic emotions? *Psychological Review*, 126(2), 171–195. <https://doi.org/10.1037/REV0000135>
- Morton, T. (2015). Beauty is death. In M. O'Neill, M. Sandy, & S. Wootton (Eds.), *The persistence of beauty: Victorians to moderns*. Pickering & Chatto.
- Olszewski, B. (2008). El Cuerpo Del Baile: The kinetic and social fundaments of tango. *Body & Society*, 14(2), 63–81.

- Paolo, E. A. Di, Rohde, M., & Iizuka, H. (2008). Sensitivity to social contingency or stability of interaction? Modelling the dynamics of perceptual crossing. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 26(2), 278–294. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.NEWIDEAPSYCH.2007.07.006>
- Plato. (1998). *The symposium*. Oxford University Press.
- Plato. (2008). Phaedrus. In *The complete works of Plato*. Akasha Publishing.
- Ravn, S. (2021, June). Improvising affectivity: Kitt Johnson's site-specific performances. *Philosophy of Improvisation*, 143–160. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003090076-12>
- Richards, J. (2018). *The number one enemy of musicality in tango dance*. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-6v2paV97c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-6v2paV97c)
- Risser, J. (2015). Sensible knowing in Kant's aesthetics. In *Proceedings of the European society for aesthetics*. The European Society for Aesthetics.
- Romagnoli, E. (2022). From a remote pedestal to everyday life the social role of art in Gadamer and Dewey. *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, 14(1). <https://journals.openedition.org/ejpa/2760>
- Santayana, G. (1955). *The sense of beauty*. Dover Publications.
- Sartwell, C. (2006). *Six names of beauty*. Routledge.
- Savigliano, M. E. (1995). *Tango and the political economy of passion*. Westview Press.
- Schaaf, S. V. (2013). *Passionate embrace: Faith, flesh, tango*. Clements Publishing Group.
- Schmitz, H. (2011). *Der Leib*. de Gruyter.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (2012). Kinesthetic memory: Further critical reflections and constructive analyses. In *Body memory, metaphor and movement* (pp. 43–72). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/AICR.84.05SHE>
- Shusterman, R. (2021). *Ars erotica*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sircello, G. (1989). *Love and beauty*. Princeton University Press.
- Starr, G. (2015). *Feeling beauty the neuroscience of aesthetic experience*. MIT Press.
- Tateo, L. (2014). The dialogical dance: Self, identity construction, positioning and embodiment in tango dancers. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 38, 299–321.
- Taylor, J. (1998). *Paper tangos*. Duke University Press.
- Thompson, R. F. (2005). *Tango: The art history of love*. Vintage Books.
- Torrance, S., & Froese, T. (2011). An inter-enactive approach to agency: Participatory sense-making, dynamics, and sociality. *Humana.Mente*, 15.
- Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. (1992). *The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience*. MIT Press.
- Wills, C. (2020). Stepping out. *The New York Review*, 67(13).
- Wilson, M., & Cook, P. F. (2016). Rhythmic entrainment: Why humans want to, fireflies can't help it, pet birds try, and sea lions have to be bribed. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 23(6), 1647–1659. <https://doi.org/10.3758/S13423-016-1013-X>
- Witek, M. A. G., Clarke, E. F., Wallentin, M., Kringelbach, M. L., & Vuust, P. (2014). Syncopation, body-movement and pleasure in Groove Music. *PLoS ONE*, 9(4), e94446. <https://doi.org/10.1371/JOURNAL.PONE.0094446>