

Dancing the In-between. The Emergence of Dance from Pathicity, Suspension, and Atmospheric Resonance

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to propose a case study of a neo-phenomenological analysis of a contemporary dance work. After presenting the ‘suspended dance’ *La Spire*, created by Chloe Moglia in 2017, the words used by Moglia herself and the dancers in the choreography will be brought into dialogue with Strausian notions of ‘pathicity’ and ‘tonicity’. They will make it possible to grasp the relevance of the adoption of a ‘pathic’ attitude in the emergence of a dance characterised by multiple constraints. This will be manifested in the analysis of the dancers’ attitude towards gravity, which is far removed from that of everyday life and from that of acrobats. Finally, the neophenomenological notion of the ‘felt body’, the categories linked to it and the concepts of ‘atmospheric affordances’ and ‘atmospheric resonances’ introduced by Tonino Griffero will make it possible to show that the creative dimension of ‘*La Spire*’ is based on the ability to expose oneself to the affective stimuli present in a way that is not marked by fear of falling but by a spirit of playful complicity.

KEYWORDS

suspension, pathicity, tonicity, gravity, atmospheric affordances, atmospheric resonance

1. *A Suspended ‘Portex’*

In this paper I will analyse the choreography *La Spire* (*The Spire*) realised in 2017 by the French choreographer Chloe Moglia for her company *Rhizome*. The analytical tools I will use are the phenomenological psychologist Erwin Straus’ notions of pathicity and tonicity, as well as the categories and the lexicon provided by the ‘new phenomenology’. The idea is to foster a mutual contribution between dance and philosophical aesthetics, in which dance reorients our way of analysing the dancer’s experience and, while benefiting from philosophical concepts that highlight aspects that may contribute to the dancers’ own creative process.

Born from the desire “to be at the bottom of the sky and to be in a common space”, *La Spire* can be considered one of the

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most representative choreographies of the ‘suspended dance’ of the dancer and acrobat Chloe Moglia. In fact, this choreography has neither a narrative intention nor a desire to show spectacular acrobatic figures. Rather, it shows of what motivated Moglia to invent the practice of suspension: “the pleasure of working in the midst of extreme constraints and seeing how in these constraints, life and a dose of joy mixed with a lot of attention can unfold.”¹ *La Spire* makes tangible the aim of turning the sharing of being in life’s dangerous moments into an opportunity to ‘build community’, under the sign of joy and wonder to succeed, even in these extreme conditions, in connecting with each other.²

In *La Spire*, the state of precariousness is created by hanging without straps on a “structure-sculpture, at once light and monumental, the horizontal elevation of a steel spiral with three successive circles of seven metres in diameter and eighteen metres in length.”³ Moglia and four female dancers retrace these circles, while being accompanied by several musicians, sometimes by a saxophonist, whose slow and serious music seems to underline the danger of the situation and to provide a kind of ‘support’ for the dancers, since the “elastic unfolding”⁴ of the musical text seems to reproduce the spiral-like course of the scaffolding and help them stay focused.

Moglia’s choreography is based on the image of a spiral, a line that, clinging to the floor, rises in a loop of three circles, as if it were a large ‘door’ articulated in a cyclical pattern. The latter recalls the cyclical progression of the days, in which the descending lines connecting one circle to the next, in the ascent that follows, leave space “for another day, another action or another inhaling and exhaling.”⁵ A place of transition, it is therefore the index of something that evolves, that renews itself each time; it is, as a young spectator says, a ‘portex’,⁶ a door and a whirlpool; rather, they make a ‘crossing’ into the very steps that mark the constitution of every relationship. They insist on the condition of the ‘threshold’, understood not as a transitory place of passage, but as a place of exchange, of reciprocity, of mutual transformation, from which impulses can be drawn for a new development of the established bond.

In *La Spire*, none of the dancers is in a hurry to reach the end of the spiral; they do not save their energy to move without hurt-

¹ *La Spire, teaser* (2021). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGa-x5ot6vc&t=6s>. All quotations from the videos are translated from French by the author.

² “The intention is to find ourselves connected”. *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

ing themselves, but rather all their efforts are directed towards using this state of suspension to discover playful and joyful ways of moving that seem to arise much more spontaneously than on the ground: “Sometimes on the ground you lose control and up there this is not there [...] Yes, it really is a form of freedom in the air [...] You move with a slowness that gives others the impression that it is easy”⁷ say two dancers. What is most striking is the lightness that these dancers exude thanks to their slow movements, which are always due to the extreme concentration required by the precarious state in which they find themselves. The constraints imposed by this condition, which are absent on earth, are what allow one to be freer; where on earth it is possible to lose control and fall, here the loss of control is not possible, because one is already in a state of “out of control”. As Moglia says of another of her choreographies, *Aléas (Random)* (2014), “the more you move towards the absolute control that such a state implies, the more clearly you see everything that escapes us.”⁸ What escapes us are precisely all the possibilities of feeling, moving, connecting that the concentration on not falling prevents us from experiencing; the point is not to stop being afraid of falling, but to turn this attitude into a creative resource.

2. To Train the Sense of ‘Intranquillity’. Pathicity and Tonicity

Moglia’s dance, in fact, appears as a defence of “the right to intranquillity, which is a cousin of uncertainty, which is the thing that teases a bit; I think I like to train it.”⁹ The ease with which the dancers dangle from the curved poles that make up the portex,

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Chloé Moglia – Rhizome: Aléas* (2015). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOXmYM8Bfsg> (Accessed: 22 July 2024). The renunciation of absolute control over the movements, in favour of waiting for the movement to find one’s own way according to one’s own feeling in the particular circumstance, leads one to characterise it as an improvisatory practice. Moglia prefers not to call her dance as improvisational because she identifies improvisation more with freedom of movement in space than with an unexpected action arising from extremely restricted circumstances (see <http://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/l-invite-e-de-la-dispute/la-circassienne-chloe-moglia-9727639>, Accessed: 13 October 2024). However, this does not prevent us from identifying an inescapable improvisational component in her choreographies, especially if we adopt a concept of improvisation that emphasises the link between unexpected action and constraints (essential in Moglia’s dance). On the fundamental role of constraints in dance improvisation, see at least Boissière A., Kintzler C. (dir.). *Approche philosophique du geste dansé. De l’improvisation à la performance*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Villeneuve d’Ascq 2006.

⁹ *Chloé Moglia réinvente le trapèze* (2022). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOtGCoWM_B8&t=24s (Accessed: 22 July 2024).

or stand on one foot on pedestals, is the result of keeping the sense of 'intranquillity' alive throughout the performance. This means that the dancers' attitude towards the fear of falling has changed significantly, being replaced by an attitude of curiosity and discovery. In fact, the feeling of insecurity resulting from their precarious condition is no longer experienced by them as something to be ended by seeking safer poses, but as a space free from prescribed modes of movement, and therefore as a condition of possibility for experimenting with new ways of feeling and moving. Such a discovery is only possible if the dancers continue to be aware of the state of instability in which they find themselves. They do not shy away from this state, but rather seek it out, driven by a sense of unprecedented security in performing the movements that they feel are 'right' in terms of leading them to discover unprecedented affective and motor modalities at that moment and for that circumstance, rather than because they are safe. The sense of complicity and playfulness that pervades the performance is, in fact, the result of a constant search for this feeling of insecurity, which keeps the dancers in a state of tension sufficient to generate the urge to experiment with new poses and movements, but not high enough to escape this state of precariousness: it is a state of intranquillity.

To keep this state of tension alive dancers attempt, several times during the performance, to free their action from the imposition of 'doing', of being a 'productive' action, and to let it become, as Giorgio Agamben puts it, 'inoperable'. For Agamben, 'inoperosity' is

an activity or power that consists in deactivating and rendering inoperative human works, thus opening them up to a new, possible use [...] Inoperativeness is not another action alongside and beyond all actions, nor another work beyond all works: it is the space [...] that opens up when the devices that bind human actions in the combination of ends and means [...] are rendered inoperative.¹⁰

The 'artistic gesture'¹¹ is the inoperative gesture par excellence, because it not only proposes an alternative to productive action; it 'makes space' for the very possibility of finding alternatives to it. In this way, the state of suspension becomes emblematic of the suspension of the productive-instrumental dimension, which the dancer's resistance does not occur once and for all, but must continue for the duration of a performance:

¹⁰ Agamben G., Karman. *Breve trattato sull'azione, la colpa e il gesto*, Bollati Borin-ghieri, Torino 2017, pp. 138-139; my transl.

¹¹ For an analysis – also in comparison with Agamben – of the processual and medial nature of the artistic gesture, we refer to Viglialoro L., *Die Geste der Kunst. Paradigmen einer Ästhetik*, transcript, Bielefeld 2021.

In suspension there is something that places outside the world one is passing through, but deep down I sometimes have the impression that it is where I am most present. It is also a situation in which the fact of having our hands busy (we can't do anything) of having our feet that are no longer on the ground that allows us to run, is a situation that puts us out of the flow of agitation, of doing this or that [...] So, it is something that is really of the order of suspension, it is to be suspended from one's functions, it is to suspend agitation.¹²

La Spire is characterised by the fact that, through the constraints it imposes, it forces the dancers to resist the productive dimension of gesture; this is evident in the fact that it prohibits the free use of the part of the body par excellence associated with doing: the hands. In fact, it is almost always limited to the instrumental function of supporting oneself, but this makes it, so to speak, a 'heuristic' instrument through which to discover and experiment with body movements that are not subordinated to the need to support oneself. Constraints are functional to the withdrawal from productive action because they make tangible the illusory character of being masters of our actions and their consequences, and of not being primarily subjects *of* action but rather subjects *to* the action of what surrounds us.

In fact, the condition that underlies the sense of intranquillity that Moglia speaks of seems to be that of "pathicity", introduced by Erwin Straus to characterise the qualitative moment of our perception, that which concerns the mode rather than the object of our perception. According to Straus, our initial communication with the world is pathic because it is an "immediate communication [based on] the changing sensible manner [of things]."¹³ This way of giving oneself to things manifests itself in the form of a movement of 'grasping' (*Ergriffenheit*); what we perceive takes hold of us, in our way of feeling and moving, and 'disposes' us according to 'certain laws'. However, this should not be interpreted as the imposition of movement by a cause external to us, but rather as the awakening of our capacity to generate our own movement. This is a very precise phenomenon, which Straus calls 'lived rhythm'; it is "the living experience of self-moving."¹⁴ The example Straus uses to characterise this phenomenon is that of a column of soldiers whose

¹² Chloé Moglia *réinvente le trapèze* (2022). Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOtGCoWM_B8 (Accessed: 22 July 2024).

¹³ Straus E., *Die Formen des Räumlichen*, in "Nervenarzt", 11/3 (1930), pp. 142-178; transl., *Le forme della spazialità. Il loro significato per la motricità e per la percezione*, in Straus E., Maldiney H., *L'estetico e l'estetica. Un dialogo nello spazio della fenomenologia*, a cura di Pinotti A., Mimesis, Milano 2005, pp. 35-68, p. 40, my transl.

¹⁴ Boissière A., *Chanter, Narrer, Danser. Contribution à une philosophie du sentir*, Delatour France, Sampzon 2016, p. 80, my transl.

stride is immediately ‘animated’ by the sound of marching music; the music does not dictate any movement, but elicits a dynamic of ‘dynamization’, of ‘setting in motion’, which affects the body as a whole; “the bodies stretch and straighten, and the step is completely transformed”¹⁵ emphasises Anne Boissière. The urge one feels is not to perform a particular movement, but to move, or rather to be caught up in a movement that permeates the whole body. The whole body is, in fact, in the grip of a ‘dynamising effect’ that penetrates it and manifests itself in a change in the way it moves, not mechanical but animated, characterised by a sudden increase in energy, vitality.

It is – with Straus’ words – a phenomenon of ‘tonicity’, and it is referred to the increasing of ‘tonus’, here understood as the ‘vital energy’ that we feel pervaded by when we are affected by something with a peculiar intensity, which has a revitalising effect on us, which is expressed at the muscular level as a kind of stretching and increasing of elasticity. This creates space for a “dynamism” that pervades all the movements, giving them a vitality, as if one movement spontaneously drew the impulse for the next from the previous one. This dynamism is inherent in the very meaning of the Greek word ‘tónos’, which means ‘to tend’;¹⁶ it shares with the word ‘dance’ the Indo-European root **tan*, which means precisely ‘attention’ and ‘tone’.¹⁷ Dance itself seems to be born out of a dimension of tension, a turning towards an otherness – a leaning out and therefore an “emergence” understood as a “coming into the light”¹⁸ – thus revealing its relational and emergent nature.

For Straus, this state of tension, through which the lived rhythm is completed, is the signal for entering the ‘acoustic’ space. The latter is the space that opens up as soon as we are affected by something, a case emblematically represented by sound, listening

¹⁵ Boissière A., *Filosofia del sentire, spazio, ritmo*, a cura di S. Massimo, Mimesis, Sesto San Giovanni 2023, p. 104, my transl., p. 93.

¹⁶ *Ivi*, *op. cit.*, 104.

¹⁷ Cf. Bigé R., ‘How Do I Know When I am Dancing?’, in Shottenkirk D., Curado M., Gouveia S. (eds.), *Perception, Cognition, Aesthetics*, Routledge, London-New York 2019, pp. 319-332. This aspect is also emphasised by Jean-Luc Nancy, when in *Corpus* (1992) he focuses on the body as tension, where the act of tensing is indicative of its vitality: “A body is therefore a tension. And the Greek origin of the word is tonos, ‘tone’. A body is a tone [...] When the body is no longer alive, has no more tonus, is either passes into *rigor mortis* (cadaverous rigidity), or into the inconsistency of rotting. Being a body is being a certain *tone*, a certain tension. I’d also even say that a *tension* is also a tending.” (Nancy J.L., *Corpus*, Métailié, Paris 1992; *Corpus*, Fordham University Press, New York 2008, p. 134).

¹⁸ Cf. Bertinetto A., *Improvvisazione ed emergenza. Risonanza espressiva e making sense dell'imprevisto*, in “Studi di estetica”, 2 (2022), pp. 37-53, p. 39.

to it is already ‘obeying’¹⁹ it or, more precisely, its ‘tone’.²⁰ The tone of the sound, in fact, “has an activity of its own, it rushes upon us, grabs us affectively, takes possession of us.”²¹ To perceive a sound is to perceive at the same time the opening of a space in which the sound resonates with and through our body, which begins to experience an immediate impulse to self-movement. It is an immediate induction “into life, into presence”²² that manifests itself in ‘presential’ movements, emblematically represented by those of dance.

The movements of the dancers in ‘La Spire’ are precisely this kind of movement, which, by participating in it, reflects the change in ‘feeling’ brought about by the movements of the other dancers and the components of the scaffolding. The physical movements are, in fact, an integral part of the manifestation of this ‘affective’ change: “Feeling [...] is a relationship that is directly expressed in movement. The spontaneity of movement, of ‘moving’, is based on a listening that involves [engaging,] being in the world in its entirety: it is on this condition that one is dealing with a ‘mode of communication.’”²³ The communication between the dancers and between the dancers and the ‘portex’ is dictated precisely by feeling, which is transformed according to the motor responses that each of the dancers gives to the affective requests that they are subjected to, and which deprives their gestures of any instrumental function. This makes so that the dancers move to maintain and intensify the sense of curiosity and play that arises from the unexpected reactions they see in the other dancers or feel in themselves in contact with the ‘portex’, which affects them differently according to the poses they assume.

3. *Doing Less to Feel More, Embracing Gravity to Create*

Through the constraints imposed by the scaffolding, the dancers of *La Spire* train their ‘intranquillity’, because they are immediately made aware of their being ‘prey’ of constraints that engage them on an affective and motor level in relational entanglements that

¹⁹ Straus emphasises the link between hearing and obeying, which can be found in German (*bören, horchen, geborchen*).

²⁰ In Straus’s thought music is considered not as an artistic genre an essentially ‘spatial’ phenomenon; the link between dance and music refers rather to the intimate relationship between “music and the spatial structure it generates” (Boissière A, *Musique, Mouvement*, Manucius, Paris 2014, p. 44).

²¹ Straus E., *Die Formen des Räumlichen*, op. cit., p. 46, my transl.

²² Boissière A., *Musique, Mouvement*, op. cit., p. 40, my transl.

²³ Boissière A., *Le mouvement à l’œuvre. Entre jeu et art*, Mimesis, Sesto San Giovanni 2018, p. 31, my transl.

they would not have been able to discover otherwise. Hence the importance of getting rid of the trapeze, the instrument with which, in a circus context, suspension is usually dealt with:

When one withdraws [from the trapeze] the more acrobatic part this gives back to this situation its surprising, vertiginous character, where when one works as a trapeze artist it is more normalised; I have tried to ‘peel’ this situation to arrive at what it poses as suspension.²⁴

Unlike the acrobat, Moglia and the other dancers do not venture into the void with the intention of demonstrating their already acquired skills, but to refine their ability to grasp the ‘connections’ in which they find themselves and to draw from them the clues to develop poses and movements that intensify the sense of ‘play’, the feeling of being totally involved in what they are doing, a “feeling of being alive” in a space where “everything” seems possible.²⁵ Access to this state is through a twofold movement: on the one hand, a withdrawal (a “peeling”) from all preconceived ways of acting (be they ordinary or the ‘normed’ ones of the acrobat) or those invented by reaction movements at times when one feels one’s life is in danger. On the other hand, as this peeling takes place, the more receptive one becomes, the more one refines one’s listening, one’s attention to what is happening.

This is a phenomenon analogous to what Marito Olsson-Forsberg refers to when Argentinean tango students who are too “cerebral” in their approach are invited to think about “not doing” anything. This helps them, because if they remain driven by the imperative of ‘doing well’ or ‘doing something special’, they do not realise that this something is ‘not doing anything’:

Is not about doing, but about letting go and feeling. In many cases it is the lack of understanding of this paradoxical fact that prevents a more fluid and pleasurable dance. The extra-daily body of tango is not built by adding an extra ‘doing’ to the daily body, an extra tension, an extra demand, but by taking away from it: by doing less but feeling more; by paying more attention.²⁶

The image of ‘not doing’ puts one in an affective state that favours the release of the stiffened muscular tone associated with a ‘must give’ attitude; this release produces an immediate increase

²⁴ Chloé Moglia *réinvente le trapèze* (2022). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOtGCoWM_B8&t=24s (Accessed: 22 July 2024).

²⁵ This aspect of ‘play’ lends itself to further exploration. Cf. Boissière A., *L’Art et le vivant du jeu*, Presses Universitaires de Liège, Liège 2023.

²⁶ Olsson-Forsberg M., *Construire l’état de danse à travers l’empathie kinesthésique. L’exemple de l’apprentissage du tango argentin*, in “Staps”, 102 (2013/4), pp. 89-102, p. 100, my transl.

in the “capacity for sensory, proprioceptive and kinesthetic perception”,²⁷ which triggers a ‘kinesthetic empathy’ that enables one to understand the motor intentions of one’s partner in the management of gravity. These observations make it possible to understand the essential difference between rigidity and tension; only the affective state of relaxation, conveyed by the image of ‘not doing’, makes room, at the muscular level, for self-movement according to the impulse felt in response to the demands of the music and the partner. Achieving this state is also essential for the dancers of *La Spire*, who are confronted with a very strong muscular stiffening due to the force with which the gravitational attraction makes itself felt in the state of suspension in which they find themselves:

When I am about to release one hand to take another I feel this area contracting, this other one contracting where it is not necessary so I release it because there is no need. I feel that I’m perceiving something, then I notice something I hadn’t seen before, I hear a noise here [...] There is an amount of events taking place every second that is immense provided that the focus of attention is opened to these kinds of events.²⁸

The self-elimination of an excess of rigidity at the muscular level is therefore part of the process of eliminating the motor reactions that would spontaneously arise in the state in which Moglia finds herself and that would inhibit tonicity insofar as they would be dominated by this rigidity due to resistance to the force of gravity. What seems to happen in *La Spire* is what the analyst of movement Christine Roquet says about the relationship between dance and gravity. According to Roquet, one begins to dance when one accepts our ‘fundamental imbalance’, that is, when one stops resisting gravity and, surrendering to it, discovers in it a drive no longer downwards but towards the space around him: this is “a magnetisation of perception towards space and towards others”²⁹ called ‘motor orientation’ by Roquet. This echoes the words of budo master Kenji Tokitsu according to whom,

In order to move, instead of giving an impulse from the ground, one must eliminate the force from the legs in order to let the heaviness act, so that the expression is transformed into a horizontal displacement [...] It is then possible to feel an impression of immersion in the heaviness [...] It is a matter of rediscovering the sensation of gravity as an existing force to be used and no longer, as one is used to, as a force to be fought against.³⁰

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Chloé Moglia *réinvente le trapèze* (2022). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOtGCoWM_B8&t=24s (Accessed: 22 July 2024).

²⁹ Roquet C., *Vu du geste. Interpréter le mouvement dansé*, Centre National de la Danse, Pantin 2019, p. 64.

³⁰ Tokitsu T., *La longévité et la pratique en karate et en art du combat à main nue*, in “Les Cahiers de l’INSEP”, 12-13 (1966), pp. 161-168, pp. 162-163; my transl.

Removed from contact with the floor, the dancers of ‘La Spire’ derive the impetus for their movements not from the floor but from the driving direction, which they perceive by shedding, like a snake shedding its skin, the excessive rigidity that inhibits tonicity. As soon as this happens, control gives way to pathicity, the fear of falling is transformed into ‘intranquillity’: the state of tension, which, instead of making one resist the force of gravity, draws from the instability in which it places the impulse to take advantage of the affective and motor opportunities surrounding the dancers. It is in this hybrid state of “active abandonment and relaxed presence”³¹ that the dancers can support the ‘pathic’ abandonment to a ‘suspended’ attention that fluctuates, that is, from being ‘focused’ on one’s own individual sensations and overall affective state to being ‘peripheral’, i.e. focused on the activity being performed.³² It is thanks to the alternation of these two forms of attention that the dancers of *La Spire* seem to be able to grasp and reject how the horizontal development of the gravitational force that each of them performs varies their way of being connected. This, however, seems only possible if the dancers stop focusing on ‘doing’ and open themselves to what they are feeling, trusting the process of discovery of unexplored motor and affective potentialities.

4. *A Felt (Dancing) Body*

To better understand the role of the affective dimension in the creation of the dance movements of *La Spire*, I will use a ‘new phenomenological’ approach. Developed by Hermann Schmitz (1918-2021) with the intention of “scanning the field of possible experiences in order to find ways of anchoring the will to live in the present”,³³ the new phenomenology is centred on the notion of the ‘felt body’, understood as

whatever someone feels in the vicinity (not always within the boundaries) of their material body as belonging to themselves and without drawing on the senses of

³¹ Doganis B., *Pensée du corps: la philosophie à l'épreuve des arts gestuels japonais (danse, théâtre, arts martiaux)*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2012, p. 44.

³² On the distinction between focused and suspended attention, see Gombrich E., *The Sense of Order: A Study on the Psychology of Decorative Art*, Phaidon, Oxford 1979, and, for a neo-phenomenological approach, Eberlein U., *Leiberfahrung in kulturellen Praktiken*, in Sohst W. (hrsg.), *Die Globalisierung der Affekte*, Xenomoi Verlag, Berlin 2013, pp. 89-110.

³³ Schmitz H., ‘Hermann Schmitz, “the New Phenomenology”’, in Tymieniecka A.T. (ed.), *Phenomenology World-wide. Foundations – Expanding Dynamics – Life – Engagements. A Guide for Research and Study*, Springer, Dordrecht 2002, pp. 491-493, p. 491.

seeing and touching as well as the perceptual body schema [...], derived from the experiences made using the senses.³⁴

The felt body has a peculiar dynamic that results from the intertwining of the tendency to constriction and the tendency to expansion. The way in which the felt-bodily dynamic is formed becomes apparent as soon as we experience a particularly intense affective involvement, the sudden onset of which manifests itself in the form of a contraction that immediately provokes an expansive response; in this way, contraction and expansion become intertwined and generate the felt-bodily dynamic. Our movements are an integral part of this expansive response to the contraction caused by affective involvement; the dance, alternating moments of pause and moments of gliding momentum, shows the 'basic antagonism' between contraction and expansion that gives rise to the felt-bodily dynamic. They show on the spatial plane what is destined to disappear on the temporal plane: the 'active' development – the momentum – of the 'breaking' event of duration, marked by the intrusion of the 'new' – represented by the moments of 'pause' – into the amplitude of space.³⁵

In doing so, they prove to be an integral part of the unfolding of one's own bodily dynamics in bodily communication: an interplay with partners who need not be human. Depending on the way in which we are affected, the communicative partner assumes the pole of contraction either in a fixed way – this is the 'one-sided antagonistic' encorporation, such as that which is established when a stone is aimed at us and immediately provokes in us an expansive reaction of avoidance – or in an alternating way. It is the 'antagonistic mutual encorporation' that informs the movements of a couple's dance, which arise as an expansive response to the contraction now provoked in the other.

³⁴ Schmitz H., *New Phenomenology. An Introduction*, Mimesis International, Milano-Udine 2019, p. 65.

³⁵ Cf. Schmitz H., 'Leibliche Bewegung auf dem Grund der Zeit', in Fischer M., Alarcón M., *Philosophie des Tanzes. Denkfestival. Eine interdisziplinäre Reflexion des Tanzes*, Freiburg 2006, pp. 18-30. This idea of dance as the "active unfolding" (*ivi*, p. 25) on the spatial plane of the event that is about to disappear on the temporal plane – the sudden intrusion of the 'new', i.e. affective involvement – lends itself to emphasising dance's capacity to show the processual nature of felt-bodily movements. A dance such as *La Spire*, centred on the discovery of gestures and poses that cross the three spirals that make up the 'portex', lends itself to showing the coincidence of dance with the staging of movement as a passage and transformation from one affective state to another, irreducible to a mere displacement from one point of the physical space to another in two relative moments that are interchangeable. On the contrary, the temporal unfolding of movements are marked by 'becoming', by its being, that is, composed of the passage from 'not yet being', to 'being', to 'no longer being', and so on. This aspect is worthy of further study, which I propose to do in future articles.

Such incorporations emerge as a further unfolding and declination of the affective requests coming from the space underlying the geometrical space composed of relative states: the ‘absolute’, ‘felt’ space, marked by the presence of ‘synesthetic qualities’ and ‘motor suggestion’. The former are “intermodal properties of specific sensory qualities”;³⁶ in *La Spire*, for example, they are the slipperiness of the scaffolding, the level of brightness, the nature of the silence, the dancers’ touch, which influences the quality of their movements. The latter are ‘gestalt’ processes, prefigurations of movement that we experience both in our own bodies and in the objects we encounter by stimulating a peculiar way of articulating our limbs. According to this approach, the movements of the dancers in ‘La Spire’ are a continuation and declination of the motor suggestions coming first from the scaffolding with which a unilateral antagonistic body is created. Its spiral shape is the result of the rhythmic alternation between concave and convex forms, where the former create a high sense of expansion, while the latter create a sense of contraction. This rhythmic pattern is mirrored in the saxophone’s musical phrases, which seem to solicit and emphasise the expansive and contracting responses of the dancers to the scaffolding. The way in which the responses to the concave and convex shapes of the scaffolding are articulated seems to operate in the background, so to speak, in the tendency to privilege contracting or expansive physical postures in response to the other motor stimuli present (the movements of the other dancers, the music, the gaze of the audience). For example, when two pairs of dancers are suspended from the top of two adjacent circles, a mutual antagonistic incorporation emerges through the sharing a pendulum-like oscillating movement, an expansive response to the concave shape of the spiral. Moreover, the whole performance is dominated by a play of gazes; it is under the gaze of an observer straddling the circle that the two couples engage in an oscillating movement, as if this amused and complicit gaze prompted them to create this figure and to respond to it in mirror image.

5. Dancing the In-between. Atmospheric Affordances and Atmospheric Resonance

Indeed, it is this complicity, this sense of playfulness mixed with curiosity and a desire to experiment, that permeates the forms of incorporation that take place between the dancers and between

³⁶ Schmitz H., *New Phenomenology. An Introduction*, op. cit., p. 68.

the dancers and the scaffolding. An effective way of highlighting this is to characterise the motor suggestions and synaesthetic qualities as ‘atmospheric affordances’. This is term introduced by Tonino Griffero, author of a neo-phenomenological ‘atmospheric’ approach³⁷ and of a ‘non-activist’ perspective on the notion of affordance introduced by the psychologist James Gibson. Gibson coined this term to refer to the qualitative properties that result from the encounter between the percipient and the environment – and that vary according to the characteristics of each³⁸ – and that take the form of ‘invitations to act’ in a certain way. On the contrary, for Griffero, affordances are “invitations to feel” exercised through motor suggestions and synaesthetic qualities, by atmospheres, understood – in line with Schmitz³⁹ – as “feelings poured into lived and pericorporeal space”,⁴⁰ acting as ‘quasi-things’, “half-identities that, because of their intrusive expressiveness, affect us like partners.”⁴¹

They establish a relationship with the body that refers to the in-between that ontologically precedes the distinction between subject and object that one experiences whenever one is intensely affected by something. These are the moments when we become aware of what we might call, with Straus, the ‘pathic’ dimension of our existence, that is, the fact that we are not so much subjects of action as subjects of the action of what happens to us.⁴² The notion of atmospheric affordances emphasises precisely the fact that our planned actions cannot disregard an affective nature, where even goal-directed movements betray – in more or less obvious ways – that they are responses to invitations to “feel” in a certain way in a certain circumstance. In dance, where the focus is on the felt body, dancers seem to be fully aware of the coincidence of our bodies with “perfect seismographs of the emotional situation”⁴³ that resonate with the atmospheres that sur-

³⁷ Cf. at least, Griffero T., *Atmospheres. Aesthetics of Emotional Spaces*, Routledge, London-New York 2014; Griffero T., *Atmospheres and Felt-bodily Resonance*, “Studi di estetica”, 1 (2016), pp. 1-41. Griffero T., *Quasi-things. The Paradigm of Atmospheres* (2013), Suny Press, Albany 2017; Griffero T., *Places, Affordances, and Atmospheres. A Pathic Aesthetics*, Routledge, London-New York 2020.

³⁸ For example, a surface of water is “walkable” to a water bug, but not to a human.

³⁹ Griffero’s approach differs from Schmitz’s mainly in that he introduces a classification between atmospheres (proto-thematic, derivative-relational and spurious).

⁴⁰ Griffero T., *Places, Affordances, and Atmospheres. A Pathic Aesthetics*, London-New York, Routledge, 2020, p. 97.

⁴¹ Griffero T., *Atmospheres and Felt-bodily Resonance*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁴² For this reason, Griffero places his atmospheric approach within the framework of a ‘pathic’ aesthetic, with an explicit reference to Straussian pathicity. (cf. Griffero T., *Estetica patica. Appunti per un’atmosfera neofenomenologica*, in “Studi di estetica”, 1-2 (2014), pp. 161-183).

⁴³ Griffero T., *Being a Lived Body. From a Neo-Phenomenological Point of View*, Routledge, London-New York 2024, p. 157.

round them. While dancing, it appears clear that our feeling is not simply “accompanied by a felt bodily experience, but *is* this felt bodily experience”.⁴⁴ The latter manifests itself through the activation or formation of certain ‘felt-bodily isles’, ‘felt’ areas, irreducible to the anatomical zones to which they correspond, which arise when tension prevails over expansion. Some of them are more stable (as in the case of the chest or the soles of the feet), others are of more variable duration depending on the duration of a sensation (as in the case of the head in the case of a headache). The appearance of these isles is particularly manifest when a ‘discrepant’ atmospheric arises resonance, in correspondence with an inhibition of “fluid bodily behaviour [which] can induce [...] contractions and stimulate the emergence of felt bodily isles previously unknown to the subject.”⁴⁵

This is an apt description of what lies at the heart of *La Spire*: its ability to recreate airborne ‘communities’ depends on responding to the atmospheric possibilities offered by the constraints present in a way that is unusual in everyday life. The ‘peeling’ operation through which the dancers enter the state of ‘intranquillity’ takes place precisely as soon as they, by focusing their attention on the way they feel – their pathicity –, become aware of the reawakening of areas of the body that, if not stiffened by the fear of falling, open up to tonicities that gives way to experimental, joyful movements thus reflecting the emergence of an atmosphere of ‘playful’ complicity. It is thanks to this atmosphere that the dancers discover that the scaffolding is not a handhold to prevent falling, but a swing,⁴⁶ a slide, a partner in an embrace shared with the other dancers. Poses such as these or others of ‘abandonment’ of one’s own weight to others are indicative instead of the presence of a syntonic atmospheric resonance marked by the sense of well-being “that momentarily prevents the emergence of certain isles or promotes their harmonious alignment with external reality.”⁴⁷

As with the dancers, the spectator’s experience is one of intertwined discrepant and syntonic resonances. The former seems to predominate, corresponding to the prevalence of fear for the danc-

⁴⁴ Griffero T., *Better to Be in Tune. Between Resonance and Responsivity*, in “Studi di estetica”, 2 (2020), pp. 9-18, p. 108.

⁴⁵ Griffero T., *Being a Lived Body. From a Neo-Phenomenological Point of View*, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

⁴⁶ The discovery of being able to move as a pendulum is induced precisely by the discovery of the emergence of a series of felt-bodily isles corresponding to the parts of the body affected by the ‘grip’ on the scaffolding, the arms and shoulders that gave the necessary support to slender the rest of the body.

⁴⁷ Griffero T., *Being a Lived Body. From a Neo-Phenomenological Point of View*, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

ers' safety, or the sense of dizziness from which a spectator might suffer. However, dancers and acrobats may also resonate discrepantly with the dancers, whose dance may evoke in them feelings related to the parts of the body most involved in the moments of performance they may experience. On the other hand, those who know Moglia's works or have experience of aerial dance may resonate syntonically, allowing themselves to be diffused by the ease of the dancers – the same ease which, on the other hand, in those not used to this dance, may discrepantly make emerge felt-bodily isles linked to states of anxiety. Such forms of resonance influence the dancers, who perceive the affective state of the spectators from the nature of the glances directed at them or from the silence that spreads. Dancers and spectators thus find themselves collectively involved – but each in their own way – in traversing a space that, through the affective and relational potential unleashed by a dance such as *La Spire*, becomes a dance.

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