

ON 'THE DANCE': A REPLY TO MARGOLIS'
 IDEAS ABOUT THE 'AUTOGRAPHIC' NATURE OF THE DANCE

Joseph Margolis is a professor of philosophy at Temple University. Two writers upon whose work he depends heavily (both for sources of discussion and criticism) are Mary Sirridge, an Associate professor of philosophy at Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge) and Adina Armelagos, who does research into dance theory at Amherst, Massachusetts. Their articles seem inseparable from that of Margolis (1981), as is an article written by Webster (1971). All of these authors are published in the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, edited by John Fisher, also of the Department of Philosophy at Temple University. One is therefore led to expect profundity, imagination and thoughtful and searching examinations into the nature of the dance. One also expects from scholars of this calibre who occupy positions of academic leadership to be acquainted, if not with some of the developments outside of their specialization, at least with international scholarship within their discipline.

It might be unfair to expect that a high-powered group of this kind (one that includes Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, who wrote one of the few books we possess on a philosophy of dance) to pay much attention to the writings of modern anthropologists on the subject, for that field might seem too far removed from the interests of philosophers. Indeed, because of an over-riding commitment to academic discipline specialization in the United States (and probably elsewhere as well), and because of an atmosphere of 'territory protection' and coincident distrust of interdisciplinary studies in general in recent years in American education, even a well-educated group of aestheticians such as these can hardly be faulted for their failure to foresee the present economic trend of academic recession that seems to have produced a move towards cooperation among disciplines and another look, perhaps, at the disadvantages of too narrow specialization. The newer view was emphasized, for example, by John Brademas, the new President of New York University in his Inaugural Address (1981).¹

Although the general attitude towards these matters seems to have been changing, one cannot but notice a closed atmosphere of intellectual provincialism surrounding the writings of Margolis and the other writers whom I have mentioned; an atmosphere that seems so dense that it prevents this group of undoubtedly concerned, dedicated people from seeing some of the problems that their theories generate for the dance and dance education world if they persist in their present course and if they are unwilling to deal with other points of view.²

It is simply untrue, for example, to say that "The salient, indisputable fact about philosophical studies of the dance is their conceptual poverty" (Margolis, 1981:419), even if we concede the author's next proposition that "...the dance is the single principal art that is very nearly unmentioned in comprehensive overviews of aesthetics or else treated (almost as a second thought) by way of adjusting arguments strongly and directly grounded in the other arts -- principally drama and music -- or, by way of notions of representation and expression, linked even with the analysis of the literary arts" (1981:419). If studies of the dance are "non-existent", or if the dance is "unmentioned",

then how can the studies, or the dance, be "conceptually poor"? If it is assigned the status of an 'also-ran', it would not seem to indicate that the studies are "conceptually poor", but that the authors are afflicted by an all-too-familiar false modesty regarding the subject that is rooted in the notion that because they are not practitioners of the ballet or a modern dance technique, they cannot say anything sensible about it.

Is it the case, then, that Margolis infers a "conceptual poverty" of the dance itself by drawing attention to the fact that (in the field of aesthetics and philosophy) writers talk about the dance from the standpoint of "adjusted arguments" from other areas of performance where other mediums of expression predominate? It is well-known that existing literature on the dance is, on the whole, notoriously poor, but one would have thought that this condition exists because of the general status to which 'the dance' is assigned; many see it as consisting of derivative forms of human expression, or see dances as isolated phenomena,³ or see dancing as a 'non-verbal' form of expression.

Then, too, one would want to say that the alleged "conceptual poverty" of dance studies would be better attributed to shoddy scholarship, perhaps, or to the fact that the literature is riddled with facile definitions, hasty generalizations, contradictions and unsupported assumptions rarely encountered elsewhere: "The readings are rife with unsubstantiated deductive reasoning, poorly documented 'proofs', a plethora of half-truths, many out and out errors, and a pervasive ethnocentric bias ... Most discouraging of all, these authors (i.e. DeMille, Haskell, Holt, the Kinneys, Kirstein, LaMeri, Martin, Sachs, Sorell and Terry) saw fit to change only the pictures and not the text when they re-issued their books after as many as seventeen years later; they only updated the Euro-American dance scene" (Keali'inohomoku, 1980:83).

By way of contrast, the literature includes the work of a few conscientious scholars who may blunder occasionally, but not in these ways. Margolis' overview of "the autographic nature of the dance" fails to address itself to the conceptual richness of the world's dances themselves, and he fails even to mention two other members of a 'troika' of philosophers of the dance who, in concert with Sheets-Johnstone, have not treated the dance as "a second thought" and who have not -- as Sheets does not -- merely use "adjusted arguments" in their treatment of it. I refer to Langer (1942 and 1957), and to the English philosopher, David Best (1974 and 1978). Margolis does address the work of another distinguished philosopher, Nelson Goodman (1969), but in ways that are unacceptable to many of us who monitor the writings of serious philosophers about the dance with extreme care. I will argue later on in this paper that Margolis simply misunderstands the import of Goodman's attempts to deal with the notions of technical languages and a viable script for movement. I am also convinced that his case for an "allographic ideal" regarding scripts of any kind is a nonsense.

We are asked to consent to Margolis' declaration that "...there can be no question that notational efforts at scoring a dance are radically less interesting intrinsically than musical scores or the texts of dramas ... Dance scores are primarily heuristic devices for recovering a minimal sense of the principal positions and movements of a given dance..." (1981:419 -- emphasis has been added). There may be no

question in Margolis' mind regarding the notation of dances or of other complex rituals (cf. the score of the Missa Major, Williams (1976), but he seems unaware of the storm of protest that statements of this kind might provoke from linguistically alert anthropologists,⁴ semasiologists,⁵ and linguists themselves⁶ who are interested in body languages and/or paralinguistics. Maybe this is not important to him or to writers in the fields of aesthetics and art criticism, but if this is true, then the intellectual provincialism mentioned earlier gains the status of fact, not mere surmise, nor is my mention of it to be understood as academic 'back-biting'. Moreover, one would hope to find some support from other philosophers regarding the attacks one might make on the 'intrinsicity' of the alleged "less interesting nature" of movement (including the dance), in which notation is characterized only as a 'tool'. That written texts of movement are anything but "heuristic devices" might be examined and addressed straightforwardly (See Williams, 1977, 1979, 1980a, 1982).

Difficult though it is for me to conclude that a well-qualified exponent of contemporary philosophy would view Goodman's relatively sparse comments on the dance in the larger context of a work that seeks to differentiate between scripts (or graphic formulations) that might qualify as real systems of writing as against script-like pictographs, drawings, maps and the like or written mnemonic devices as wrongheaded or misguided, this is the unsatisfactory and disappointing conclusion to which I must come. Difficult as it is, too, for me to conclude that a group of highly educated scholars (living in a world where even laymen are aware of the accelerated pace of international visual communication) would propose that no dance forms except the ballet possess "abstract constraints" (Margolis, 1981:420), or "spatial vocabularies" (Sirridge and Arnelagos, 1977:18) sufficient to accommodate adequate notation, this is the astonishing conclusion that presses itself upon me.

Here is an article written in 1981 about 'the dance'⁷ that treats of only a handful of idiolects of American Modern Dance and the Classical Ballet, but asks us at the end to devote some attention to "...the theory of how dance is produced and related to the expressiveness of human life itself" (Margolis, 1981:426 -- emphasis added). I doubt that two western idioms of dancing (ballet and modern) can qualify as 'the dance' in the first instance, if it is the world's dances that we are meant to take into consideration. And if we are not, then let us have mercy on future students by eliminating loose talk about "the expressiveness of human life". Far less does one expect that the ballet and American modern dance can provide us with adequate models for the understanding of other danced idioms of human body languages, e.g. Bharata Natyam (Puri, 1980 and 1981), social dancing (Myers, 1981), Hungarian folk-dancing (Kürti, 1980), and Tongan dancing (Kaepler, 1972 and 1978) and the numerous other forms that are mentioned in Kaepler (1978).

Here is an article by a philosopher on the dance that seems uninformed -- even by the history of western dance forms -- to the extent that we are asked to extrapolate from this evidence of a few American idiolects right the way out to (all?) human expressiveness. One is irresistably reminded of a report on the sexual behaviour of a portion of twentieth century American male population that is entitled Sexual Behavior in the Human Male. Thus Margolis, like many academics in other fields of

investigation, propounds an anthropologically (and historically) indefensible 'naiveté theory' with reference to 'the dance' that might be interesting if its culture-specific data-base were recognized.

In other words, one could more easily assent to many of the author's propositions if they were offered under the title, 'The Autographic Nature of American Modern Dance', for it is true that many American modern dance idiolects bear the 'autographs' of their creators. Indeed, Graham's technique bears not only her name, but the stamp of her individual choices of movements, as does Humphrey-Weidman's technique, Limon's, Cunningham's, Ailey's, Tharp's and others. What else could one legitimately expect as artistic products of individuals who reside in a culture that is democratic; that is defined by an economic system of capitalism and free enterprise and that places high value on individualism and all the rest? I submit that this does not provide us with warrants to talk of the world's dances (what anthropologists mean when they use the phrase 'the dance'), and, almost by definition, of the world's cultures or 'human life' in general as if it all possessed the same values, had the same historical backgrounds and as if it all emanated from French or English language.

But the really tendentious point raised by Margolis is this: "...there is no sense in which the perception of related positions and movements, ordered perhaps in an interesting way and legible from the notation itself, could possibly be grounded in an understanding of the deeper structures of the dance, by means of a closer attention to the notation itself: no such structures are there presupposed in any sense comparable to the structures of music and language" (1981:419). This simply will not do.

It will not do because Margolis assumes that Nelson Goodman (or any anthropologist of human movement, although he does not address any of our work in his article) postulates an "ideally allographic function" for a written script. Spoken language alphabets and musical notation evidently only partially conform to his ideal; Labanotation does not, but this is a fatal assumption on Margolis' part. It is fatal because it is simply a nonsense to imagine that the written expression of a spoken language, or a piece of music, or of a stretch of body language in any way 'replaces' or is a direct substitution for the spoken utterance, the musical phrase or the danced piece. This is not what the issue of literacy is all about. Furthermore, to declare, as Webster (1971) does in his title (and his work is cited with approval) that 'Music is not a 'notational system' only serves to place him (and anyone else who would argue such a silly point) squarely in a pre-language revolution era, somewhere before the beginning of the twentieth century, perhaps. Anyone who is aware of the work of Sapir (1949) or Saussure (1966) would answer Webster's question with a question: 'who ever thought that music is a notational system?'

Equally tendentious is the connection that one sees between Margolis' assumptions and the tedious old Yeatsian aphorism to be found at the end of his poem 'On School Children', i.e. 'how can we know the dancer from the dance?', but then, there are overtones of Yeats' poesy in Sheets-Johnstone's statement that "neither dance nor the lived experience of dance exists apart from the creation and presentation of the concrete thing itself" (1966:5). We would want to ask how it is

that we can recognize 'the language' from the speakers and 'the music' from the instrumentalists (See Williams, 1980 and 1980a for more thorough discussion). 'Dancers' are logically prior to 'a dance', just as speakers are logically prior to the notions of 'speech' or 'a language' and musicians are logically prior to 'the music'. Outside the realm of poetry, Yeats' question is absurd. How would Margolis respond to a paraphrase that is 'closer to home' perhaps, i.e. how can we know the philosopher from the philosophy?

Philosophers and aestheticians have played a dominant role, through their writings, in shaping curriculums of dance departments and studios, and in shaping the general contours of what the dance is all about. Since the inception of the dance department in Universities in this country, beginning at the University of Wisconsin in 1918, we have felt the influence, through H'Doubler, of Dewey's pragmatic instrumentalism, for example. At this writing and for some months prior, Best has exercised considerable influence on governmental policies regarding the dance in British educational institutions (See Best, 1978, 1979 and 1980). Langer became informally known as 'the dancer's philosopher' in this country in the early 'fifties' because she managed to extricate the activity of dancing from the positivistic limbo to which it had been assigned. Whilst she has been 'out of fashion' recently for a few years, there is a noticeable revival of interest in her theories of symbol (See Ferrara and Varela, this issue). Sheets-Johnstone's work in the mid-'sixties represented a strong phenomenological case against hard-core empiricism and radical behaviourism, so prevalent in quasi-scientific approaches to the dance. Best introduced language philosophy to the international movement world via his book on expression and movement in the arts and he dealt very sensibly with the Cartesian mind-body split in that work (See Williams, 1975a for review). His later volume, Philosophy of Human Movement, has made tremendous impact on the movement professions throughout Europe, Canada, Australia, and Scandinavia (See Williams, 1980b for review).

Goodman's inclusion of Labanotation into his exemplary work on languages of art was an out-and-out gift: his seven criteria of identity for a notational expression of human movement form the basis for a forthcoming text on Labanotation for Non-Dancers: An 'Ordinary' Approach to Movement Writing.⁸ We expect philosophers to continue to play a dominant role in the growth, development and explanation of movement fields, however, with due respect, one can only agree with Winch, who said that it is not philosophy's business to award prizes to science, religion or anything else. We expect, indeed we recognize, the enormous influence that the writers represented in the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism have, especially with regard to 'the dance' in the United States, but we are not willing to accept pronouncements on the nature of a human activity, dancing, that uses a medium of expression, movement, that was until recently non-literate which make so strong a case for non-literacy as Margolis seems to do. I would want, therefore, to summarize some arguments for the literacy of movement from a social anthropological view.

Elsewhere, I have addressed the many questions that are constantly raised about serious consideration of dancing as a worthy academic subject and about the credibility of a written script for movement.⁹

The issues are many and complex. In fact, the one point of solid agreement that I have with Margolis lies in his observation that there are "...natural difficulties in theorizing about the dance" (1981:419). A 'short list' of the issues includes (i) the distinction between signs, symptoms and symbols in movement; (ii) the public, conventional and intentional nature of human action signs;¹⁰ (iii) how and in what ways 'body language' differs from spoken language;¹¹ (iv) the differences that inhere between 'ordinary' and 'technical' languages;¹² (v) the notions of 'ambiguity' and 'open-endedness' in spoken languages (and in body languages). I would not, however, see these issues so much as 'natural difficulties' as I would see them as 'cultural-cum-linguistic' difficulties.

The major problem is, of course, that where we presuppose a real level of 'language' with regard to speaking, we do not tend to presuppose a level of 'language' or anything remotely resembling that with reference to dancing, the martial arts, liturgies or the great variety of ordinary structured systems of non-vocalised meaning to be found in the world.¹³ Interesting though these issues might be, we shall move on to the general notion of literacy, for there have been long-standing doubts as to whether or not human movement could be notated because of its complexity.¹⁴ Before Laban's system of notation was developed and became as widely used as it is now,¹⁵ body languages had similar status in western societies as did non-literate spoken languages. Non-literate spoken languages have had to justify themselves in terms of the credibility of scripts and oral transmission in that domain has only recently gained respectability.

For example, in the case of English folk music,¹⁶ when Sharp, Child and Vaughan Williams began to collect and write down songs, it was discovered that many that had been transmitted orally were of greater literary and musical merit than those few that had been previously recorded. It is true that the field of music has possessed notation systems for at least 900-1000 years, and because of this has not had to limp into the twentieth century encumbered by all the tedious disadvantages that accompany non-literacy, especially in an academic setting. However, in spite of the fact that scripts for both spoken and musical sounds existed, little attention was paid to 'folk' traditions or to the broad interests of the now flourishing field of ethnomusicology.

Although obvious to social anthropologists, the credibility of Swahili, Hausa and Twi (to mention only three African spoken language examples) was greatly enhanced when they became written instead of solely spoken languages. To some extent, by becoming written linguistic artifacts, a significant move was made towards the inclusion of a level of 'la langue' as an accompaniment to the level of 'la parole'; the languages became available for comparative purposes; they became internationally accessible to scholars for criticism. They acquired another dimension of reality -- precisely the dimension of reality that 'the dance' and human movement studies must acquire unless the medium is to be consigned to the disenfranchised status it has held in this and in other periods in the history of western civilization.

It is interesting to draw a comparison between the neglect -- especially academic neglect -- of the dance and other movement-based systems of human communication (due, no doubt in part, to nineteenth century religious interpretations) and the neglect of non-western, non-literate spoken languages, almost certainly affected by the then

prevailing theories of social evolution and other ideas that labelled them as 'primitive'.¹⁷ Paradoxically, perhaps, whilst the scripts of spoken languages have tended to achieve pre-eminence in our thoughts about more conventional mediums of communication (it seems virtually impossible for us to think of spoken languages without their scripts because we are so habituated to them), we find it difficult to conceive of scripts of body languages.

There is something more subtle at work here, however. The pre-eminence of scripts in the spoken language domain can probably be accounted for by recognizing our irrevocable associations of conventional alphabets and scripts with concepts of objectivity. That the study of structured systems of human movement partake of those concepts through the introduction of literacy is a state of the art that is greatly to be desired by many of us. Yet, Margolis seems to want to condemn the field, through his theory of the autographic (and ultimately un-reproducible) nature of the dance with his accompanying notion about "allographic ideals" into an explanatory paradigm wherein one detects a faint odour of positivism. The paradigm is presumably to be defined by a small circle of dance critics, 'dance historians', journalists and aestheticians who form a small cultural nucleus via their interest in 'the arts' (almost, one would say, rather than 'the dance') that exerts powerful influences on the whole field of movement studies; one that is not by any means free of snobbery, stemming in part from the old familiar 'verbal-non-verbal distinction'.¹⁸

In fact, it is this seeming willingness on Margolis' part to promote some brand of intense subjectivism (and an accompanying total relativism) that one protests against. No one would deny that much work has yet to be done regarding our knowledge about the implications of the enshrinement of a tradition in a script in contrast to its existence solely in a living system of communication; between linguistic 'artifacts', i.e. books, scores and writing, and the 'tongue' or living language.¹⁹

A case chosen at random that gives rise to interesting reflection in this connection is the pre-eminence of written Latin over the variety of ancient British and Celtic spoken languages in early Britain and the later evidence of 'civilized' French as an overlay on 'rude' Anglo-Saxon and Celtic. There are modern cases familiar to Africanist anthropologists concerning the struggles for linguistic pre-eminence in the form of choices of lingua franca in the new political entities emerging on the continent.

In the domain of body languages, similar considerations arise in the blatant privilege of position given by Margolis to the ballet, and in the easy assignments of privilege given by many to 'technologically advanced' societies evident in suggestions, however well-intentioned they may be, to film as many African or other dances and rituals as soon as possible so that they are not 'lost'. 'Lost' in what ways and to whom? The implication is that once they have been recorded on film or videotape, it does not really matter what happens to the oral, visual, linguistic and kinesthetic traditions they reflect.²⁰ But all that aside, the mere mindless recording of rituals, dances and other manifestations of the body language of a people on film or in notation with no knowledge of what these systems mean or of how and in what ways they are related to the wider cultural contexts in which they exist, and how they might compare with other material of the same or similar kind throughout the world amounts to nothing more than mere 'butterfly collecting' of a particularly invidious kind.

Semasiologists believe that we can avoid some of these more obvious errors with a script that places us in the same position with reference to movement that literacy and the possession of scripts places us with reference to sound. This does not mean, of course, that we 'solve all the problems' of movement analysis, or that Labanotation is presented as a panacea, or that anyone thinks that a score replaces the experience of a performance. No more claims can be made in these respects for the literacy of body languages than could be made for the literacy of spoken languages or musical notations. We would insist, however, that Laban notation is not simply a practical aid to production for dancers and choreographers; its theoretical role and significance is much deeper than that.²¹ We simply reject Margolis' declaration that "...there is no sense in which the perception of related positions and movements ... could possibly be grounded in an understanding of the deeper structures of the dance, by means of closer attention to the notation itself..." (1981:419).

We possess detailed and thorough research on Goodman's criteria for a notational expression of systems of human action. The criteria are these: (i) syntactic or semantic disjointness, which involves (a) character indifference and (b) rules for making compound elements; (ii) finite differentiation; (iii) compliance, both with (a) score and (b) context; (iv) specific scoring; (v) constituent and contingent properties; (vi) requisite antecedent classification of a work and (vii) identity of 'behaviour'. We can deal with each criterion and can adduce quantities of evidence in support of each. We believe that the notion of 'deeper structures' of the dance are, to Margolis, somewhat opaque. Is reference made to Chomsky? If this is the case, we would suggest Myers (1981) for an application of Chomskyan 'deep structures' to the social dance. If the reference is to Williams (1976a) then we would be interested in the reasons for an easy dismissal of theory that underlies one of the major contemporary approaches to human actions, including the dance, i.e. semasiology. But, these are writings outside the field of aesthetics, therefore they may have been overlooked.

The most anxious-making and troublesome aspect of Margolis' writing (shared by many dance scholars) is the lack of intellectuality and (to a lesser extent) collegiality, that is reflected in the total absence of references to advances made in the field of interest by those in related disciplines. One can understand this from people who are not academics and scholars, to whom journalism, perhaps, represents the epitome of educated, well-informed, writing. One can even meet very well-educated people from all walks of life who will vehemently defend the cause of literacy, for example, lacking any knowledge whatsoever of the development of language studies in this country, of the 'language revolution' in the sciences, the effects of recent linguistic theory on education and the influence of language philosophers on human movement studies in western civilization. The expectations that one might legitimately have, one would have thought, from writers in a leading journal of aesthetics and art criticism are different, but we find much of the material offered under these headings to be testaments to a lack of intellectuality and to some of the profound problems facing the dance and dance education fields.

Theories, methodological systems, analytical techniques and research findings in a field do not just establish or maintain philosophical linguistic, social anthropological or historical 'perspectives' disassociated from 'everyday life' and the on-going flux of events: they shape our various understandings of who we are and what we are right now. In particular is this true in the struggling worlds of dance conservatories or dance education departments; thus writings connected with the dance, especially those included in one of the relatively few journals that devotes much space to consideration of the dance and human movement, shapes not only our view of ourselves, but our understanding of others: 'others' in our own culture, and in the rest of the world.

If writers in any field connected with the dance choose to abdicate intellectualism, movement literacy and depth of scholarly research in favour of ethnocentrism, historical contingency and aesthetic pluralism, then they make it plain that they are not interested in some of the difficult and troubling problems facing dance departments in Universities in particular. Why, for example, do the innovations, breakthroughs and discoveries of other scholars remain unapplauded, unrecognised and unacknowledged by those who consider themselves to be the doyens or savants of 'the arts' or 'the dance'? David Best, for instance, has been shamefully ignored by aestheticians and philosophers on the American side of the Atlantic. Why is it taking so long for a 'cognitive', a 'linguistic' or a structuralist approach to reach the American aestheticians' and dance critics' scene? Where are the writings that students can turn to for comparisons of aesthetic theories in connection with the dance, past or present?

Meaningful, significant periods of development in any field are usually characterised by definable intellectual systems and by faculties, societies, journals and groups of well-informed people who are committed to them, not by vacuity, superficiality and lack of commitment to anything except the 'me-cult', and a general aura of defensive humility that defers to specialists to the extent that critical, commonsense thinking has virtually ceased to exist.

My critique of Margolis' writing and some other authors' contributions to the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism is admittedly provocative and because of this it is in some respects possibly vulnerable to attack, but behind the rather 'heavy weather' I have made about an article that Margolis may consider minor, there lie critical issues that can deeply affect the growth and development of the field of dance in America. These problems will not go away simply because acknowledged leaders in the intellectual 'driver's seats' of the field choose to ignore them or because they busy themselves with mutual comfort operations or widen the moats around the towers in which they seem to reside.

That many kinds of studies of the dance are "conceptually poor" and that the state of the literature on the subject is, on the whole, defined by mediocrity is obvious -- and it has been painfully obvious for the last thirty years that I know of. One would want to ask, however, just how useful are pastel palliatives regarding "conceptual poverty", the vagaries of "personally shifting powers" of individual human beings and a re-affirmation of cultural and aesthetic pluralism?

The dance and its many devotees of whatever academic persuasion have spent long enough in my view tactfully bemoaning its disenfranchised estate, playing upon the 'mystique of the individual' whence it derives its sense of some kind of power; embroidering upon its appeals to emotional charisma and paying tribute to outmoded, outdated and overblown definitions and ideas. None of this will attract graduate students of sufficient calibre to improve the situation, therefore the 'mystique' becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of the future -- and if it does, it is a dreary future indeed that lies ahead, even from the vantage-point of the current 'neo-iron age' of education, characterised, oddly, by anti-intellectualism; a legacy, in this country no doubt, from the 'seventies.²²

Waiting for some 'revolution' to take place from outside is like waiting for Godot. He never comes. Nor will it do to wait for 'social forces' of some kind to change, or for non-existent governmental grants. There are powerful concepts of rationality, morality, obligation, transaction and creative interpretation inherent in 'human actions' and the studies of human systems of meaningful movement. This seems to indicate that a 'revolution', if there is to be one, has to take place from within, through the cooperation and pooling of interests of conscientious scholars who are concerned with the medium of movement and with some of the most powerful codes of human movement we possess: dances.

Even a minimal political radicalization²³ of this kind, based on cooperation, not competition, might offer the field of interest some hope of surviving in an inhospitable atmosphere where everything about us, inside the academy and outside of it seems to be falling into disarray. But, it must be a 'revolution' of the combined intellectual prowess of equals in different disciplines: it could not be a 'revolution' if composed of a company of those who borrow their ideas, as on an installment-purchase plan, and who can neither pay the price nor 'produce the goods' when the time comes.

Drid Williams

FOOTNOTES

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1. The Inauguration was held on October 14, at Lincoln Center, N.Y.C. The address is published in the N.Y.U. Annual Report, 1980-81.
2. The 'other points of view' to which I refer emanate from disciplines outside of the field of aesthetics: "Specialization is the intellectual equivalent of the economic division of labor ... As a systematic way of ordering our intellectual lives, specialization had its origin in

the nineteenth century and its great development in the twentieth ... The result has been the knowledge explosion, with its attendant technology, and the consequent increase in the speed of social change" (Ross, 1970:8). The trouble is, we seem to produce more and more discipline-specific 'knowledge', but with less and less capability of understanding its relation to the total configuration of the segment of the larger society to which it is presumably related; in this case, the dance and movement professions. Without some grasp of the whole, one is poorly placed to suggest directions or controls, or to make pronouncements about the nature of 'the dance' or the validity of its transcription into texts, yet this seems to be what is happening here. I am interested, for example, in the price the movement professions would have to pay for adopting Margolis' views and would want to think that he has given some thought to this as well. I think he might agree that the dance has paid an enormous price in time, energy, money and wasted effort for its non-literate condition in an otherwise literate society in the past. One wonders, then, how he expects his "autographic theory of the dance" to otherwise compensate its followers?

3. See Williams, 1976 for a thorough discussion of the social anthropological point of view.
4. Among the large group of "linguistically alert anthropologists" who are especially concerned with the dance and movement studies, I would want to mention Kaeppler (1978), Schieffelin (1976), Ardener (1980), Crick (1976), Birdwhistell (1970) and Hall (1966).
5. For "semasiologists", see JASHM (1981).
6. For linguists, see Frishberg (1982), Stokes (1980), and Pike (1960). These are by no means complete lists. The above names are drawn from personal friends and acquaintances.
7. It should be emphasised here that when Sheets-Johnstone speaks of 'the dance' in an article entitled 'Thinking in Movement' in JAAC, Summer, 1981, she is not talking about the same kind of thing that social anthropologists refer to when we use the phrase. We simply mean 'the world's dances' in sum, as it were. I am unclear as to exactly what it is that Sheets means, because it would appear that she tries to press a rather confused claim about some supposed, mysterious 'private knowledge', conferred in some way by the experience of moving. See Best (1980) for further discussion.
8. There is a handbook-cum-manual in preparation at this writing that consists of the efforts of a distinguished notator, Ray Cook, myself and a graduate student semasiologist, Dixie Durr. The work is in three sections: Part One consists of a thorough analysis and application of the criteria for a written notation system as set out in Goodman (1969), Part Two consists of anthropological applications of the writing; and Part Three is a Beginners course in Labanotation for Non-Dancers, by Ray Cook.
9. This has long been a preoccupation of philosophers. Those who have specifically dealt with movement in some sense are Langer (1942), Hampshire (1959), Winch (1958), Wittgenstein (1970 and 1953), Sheets (1966) and Best (1974 and 1978). There are probably others, but these have the major influence on my own writing.

10. See Best (1978) for a particularly lucid discussion of the differences between what he calls 'lingcom' and 'percom'.
11. See Barthes (1967) for a discussion of the privileged position of spoken language.
12. See Crick (1976) for a thorough discussion in an anthropological context.
13. There are many forms of dancing throughout the world that are roughly equivalent to what in our culture we call 'social' or 'ballroom' dancing. These have countless times been explained in terms of the function of 'mate-hunting'. Fair enough. But semasiologists would want to point out that there are many forms of spoken languages that are also used for the purposes of 'mate-hunting'. In either case, the notion of 'mate-hunting' is merely a minor and specific use of the medium of movement -- or the medium of spoken sound, as the case may be. No one, of course, would attempt to characterise the whole of, say, the English language in terms of its minor and specific usages for 'mate-hunting', yet over and over again, we encounter examples of body languages (including whole idioms of dancing) characterised in terms of minor and specific usages of the medium of movement.
14. Goodman (1969) makes a point of this in his section on 'the dance' but then comments: "All in all, Labanotation passes the theoretical tests very well -- about as well as does ordinary musical notation, and perhaps as well as is compatible with practicality" (1969:217), and we feel that, if anything, he understates the case. Part of the problem exists within the notation and dance world itself; for example, Turnbaugh (1969:98-106) who was commissioned to undertake a survey, through prescribed questionnaires, that were divided into three parts: "one for choreographers to assess the needs, experience and wishes of the artist; one for company administrators, to examine pertinent financial and organizational aspects; one for teachers and schools, principally universities with an established dance curriculum, to investigate academic and instructional implications and possibilities". This report is regrettably deficient in its latter aim, although there is some historical justification for the deficiency. In 1968-69, no major scholarly studies had been done on the merits or non-merits of movement notation systems, for a start (with the possible exception of Goodman's, and his work has yet to filter down to the level of most dance departments). All that aside, Turnbaugh's study was purely pragmatic and mainly reviewed the two systems from the standpoint of practical aids to production. No major theoretical issues were addressed, if indeed, they were even recognised.
15. There is only one other extant system that provides such a complete schema for recording movement: the Eshkol-Wachmann system, but it is not so well known or so widely used, and it does not provide the same detailed visual text as does Labanotation, hence is not so useful for the needs of semasiologists.
16. I am indebted to D.K. Dunn (Oxford, 1972) for this information in a personal communication.
17. With a script, one is in possession of 'the code', as it were, and can work with this 'minus the actors', as one can analyze a written spoken text 'minus the speakers'.

18. Dr. Varela raised an interesting and cogent point here, i.e. an over-reaction to positivism, reflected in the idea that 'explanation' of any kind somehow evaporates the 'poetry' in an activity such as the dance, bears the consequences of throwing the field of enquiry squarely into the lap of untutored 'common-sense', making out of dancers, in particular, simply practitioners and technicians. In turn, this becomes a justification for no conceptual progress in the field whatsoever.
19. It was E. B. Tylor (1881), for example, who pointed out the doubtful character of stories about tribes who supposedly could not make themselves understood in the dark, because, it was said, they could only communicate via gesture and movement and were therefore forced to silence at nightfall or in the absence of a light source. Tylor would have objected to Mary Kingsley's statements that the Bubi people, for instance, could not speak to one another at night unless they were near a fire. More recently, Ardener has remarked that "Tylor's interest in deaf and dumb and sign languages pre-figures some of the proposed semiology of Saussure, but he held firmly to an evolutionist view that early linguistic signs were 'motivated'..." (1971:lxix). For excellent discussions of Tylor and 19th Century evolutionist views in general, see Henson (1974) and Callan (1970).
20. A strikingly naive, but clear statement of this way of thinking is to be found in Lomax (1971). Although in some sense a pioneer in attempts to handle the complexities of movement data (in particular, dances), Lomax's Choreometrics is particularly deficient in terms of (i) exactly what the 'data' consists of, (ii) what 'units of movement' are and (iii) how all of this should be interpreted. See Williams (1974) for review.
21. Most writers on the subject of Labanotation (and nearly all contemporary teachers of it in the English-speaking world) at present confine their concerns to those of the dancer and choreographer. Whilst this is understandable and even laudable because it is to them that we owe the present existence of the system, we are attempting to supply a need for a different approach to movement writing that more adequately serves the purposes of non-dancers. We argue that the existence and rapid growth of Labanotation, plus its unique features as a script places the notion of the general literacy of movement in the foreground of our attention. It is impossible to enter into discussion of the grounds and consequences of this position in this paper, so I would refer the reader to Durr (1980) and Farnell and Durr (1981) for some notion of what we mean. For computer applications, see Sealey (1980).
22. Dr. Cantor has pointed out to me that whilst the surface manifestation seems now to be 'anti-intellectualism', the actual problem is somewhat deeper than that; he would want to say that the 'educational present' to which I refer is not so much 'anti-intellectualist' as it is an indicator of a retreat in certain quarters plus the development, through the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, of changes in the basic structures of American academic life. Between 1965 and 1975, what had been common structures were exacerbated by political struggles of left and right, and there was a reaction against politicization of the new left. This, and the appearance of an activist new left, rather than an intellectual new left is what is behind the rather depressing scenario we live in today.

23. The 'political radicalization' that I suggest would emphasize intellectual obligations in the form of an interest group composed of scholars from different Universities and from different schools within Universities who are (i) interested in the question of the authorship of knowledge within their particular disciplines and are (ii) not ambivalent about assigning the authorship of knowledge in an academic discipline to human beings.

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