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# Feeling feelings, the work of Russell Dumas through Whitehead's *Process and Reality*

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*Thus a simple physical feeling is one feeling which feels another feeling. But the feeling felt has a subject diverse from the subject of the feeling which feels it.*

Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p.362

## Prolegomena

The thing about dancing is that all there is is the dancing. There are myriad terms which circle the activity, ways in, through language, that aim to capture what happens. But the capturing itself has its own style, its own technologies of thought, its own manner of moving, along with the dance. So each duet between philosophy and dance differs. And while each duet is a field of enabling moments – possible ways of engaging dance – these engagements between philosophy and dance are also staged. In the enterprise of language, we are shaped by the particular conceptual field. Dance appears through these concepts. The concepts dance the dance, animating it conceptually. That animation may seem to 'fit the facts' but it is also generative.

Meantime, the dancing continues, unperturbed. Looking for improvement I ask questions: a 'physical question' I say. Then I realize all of my questions are in a sense physical, whether they are played out here on the page, articulated as conceptual problems in the studio or directed to the minutiae of activities inherent in a so-called move. This is an endless process. I am still working out what that process is.

I had somewhat of an epiphany the other day. Something appeared in the feeling of dancing some choreographic material that was hitherto lacking. It had been suggested to me that I needed to 'author' my dancing, that what I was doing was just performing my failure to dance the material. It certainly felt like that; an emotionally wrought, inner emptiness populated by doomed, episodic attempts to get this bit right, that bit right. By a series of happenstance, something emerged inside my dancing body. I was not authoring anything. But deep inside, there was a thickness of feeling which I felt. It permeated my torso. If I pushed out of the ground from a bend/plié, I could feel that deep inside get pushed from the ground. A series of playful, thick-from-the-inside activities ensued. Moments before, I had desperately claimed that I really *was* 'looking for the feeling'. "Listen to yourself", Russell said, "You're 'looking' for the feeling". "OK, (I was reading Whitehead), I'm feeling for the feeling." Then it came.  
*What happened?*

## Next

According to Alfred North Whitehead, the world is the kind of place where new things happen. Newness comes from oldness, then sinks back into the landscape of the old. [1] New things generate newer things, thereby becoming old. There is a kind of rhythm to this perpetual oscillation between emergent newness and ongoing establishment. The rhythmic shift between old and new is not merely the relentless pursuit of the new. The process of becoming past also enters that which becomes, connecting with the process of becoming itself. In that sense, a certain reverence is maintained for the old. It partners the agency of the new via that which is called the creative advance.

Whitehead writes of a swinging motion, whereby the emergence of newness moves between two poles, which I have dubbed the old and the new, and repeats itself "to the crack of doom in the creative advance from creature to creature" (Whitehead, 1960: 347). It's not that the new is all there is. The 'creative advance' takes something of the old with it. There is a moment of repetition in which aspects of the old are taken into the new. [2] The old sets up the conditions for the emergence of the new. It flows into the new, enabling, facilitating the generation of newness.

Feelings are the conduit for this flow, for the link between the old and the new. Whitehead writes of feelings as vectors, for they are directional towards the new. [3] They also enter the new, forming its subjective nucleus. He writes:

A feeling is the appropriation of some elements in the universe to be components in the real internal constitution of its subject. The elements are

the initial data; they are what the feeling feels. But they are felt under an abstraction. The process of the feeling involves negative prehensions which effect elimination. Thus the initial data are felt under a 'perspective' which is the objective datum of the feeling (Whitehead, 1960: 353).

You could say that *prior* to my feeling that inside thickness in my dancing, the dancing involved a set of 'eliminations', what Whitehead would call negative prehensions. A negative prehension is a sort of refusal to incorporate a feature of the world with which one is related. [4] It's a potential feeling that's part of the "process of the feeling" (Whitehead, 1960: 353). Before I found that inside thickness, my dancing was not taking up a series of potential feelings that circled a series of relations between, say, the floor and my body. In finding that thickness, however, these potential feelings came to be felt (they became positively prehended). Not by 'me' so much as in the dancing itself (through the activity of the dancing rather than 'my' agency. [5] In that shift, from not-feeling my inside torso to feeling it, something new came to be. [6]

I like the way Whitehead's account combines the old with the new, through feeling. As I marveled this thick feeling-from-the-inside in my dancing, I also wondered how come. How come I can feel this now? What has happened to enable this feeling which, in a sense, feels like it was always around? This was not a feeling I was 'making' happen. Something was letting it occur, something I couldn't quite grasp but could nevertheless feel. Feelings, for Whitehead, effect a passage from something there to a kind of here (Whitehead, 1960: 133). The here-ness of feeling within an activity such as dancing occurs in virtue of "the real internal constitution of its subject" (1960: 133): "The term 'subject' has been retained because in this sense it is familiar in philosophy. But it is misleading" (Whitehead, 1960: 339).

Whitehead's *Process and Reality* posits events or occasions as the most basic entities in the world. Entities are emergent, dynamic processes. Reality emerges through these processes, in fits and starts, via what's called 'drops of experience', recalling the Jamesian notion that perception "grows literally by buds or drops" (Whitehead, 1960: 105). What's distinctive about this account is that processes become the drops. Being emerges from becoming which in turn emerges from being. The 'ing'-ness of process retains a dynamic character which comes to fruition at the formation of the 'drop', via what Whitehead calls satisfaction. Although processes happen altogether (they cannot be timed and therefore broken down into temporal components), they can be philosophically analyzed into their constituent aspects.

Subjectivity falls into this camp. Subjectivity is the interior perspective of an emergent process. It may be simple or complex. Subjectivity doesn't endure. [7] It is completed with the completion of the process, with its satisfaction. There is no subject who 'has' drops of experience. The formation of the drop constitutes the subjective point of view, its 'bite' of the real. Subjectivity is intrinsically related to feeling. It is created through the passage of feelings in the process of feeling. [8] The subject is produced by the activity and agency of feeling — via the feeling's 'appropriation' of elements in the universe — along with the feeling's reaching out towards newness. Since feelings are vectorial, rather than there being a subject (pre-given) which 'has' feelings, the feelings themselves (thought singly or together) constitute the subjectivity of the process, its 'real internal constitution'.

The vectorial movement of feelings effects a shift, towards the constitution of the new. The element of the old in the constitution of the new subject is that which is felt, that which feels its way into a new subjectivity. It is that 'little piece of the real' which is appropriated and taken into the future by the movement of feeling in 'the process of the feeling.' According to Whitehead, even the simplest of physical feelings involves a relation between what I'm calling the old and the new (Whitehead, 1960: 361). In the process of becoming according to which a new entity arises, a feeling in one entity (the soon-to-be old one) extends into an emerging new one. Donald Sherburne writes that the new entity 'reaches out' to include aspects of the old entity in itself (Sherburne, 1966: 10). This is the 'appropriation' of which Whitehead writes. In appropriating 'elements of the universe', the old feeling is now selected by a new subjectivity. In Sherburne's terms, the passage of feeling "bears the A-ness of A into B" (1966: 10). This selection process represents the *way* in which the old features in the new. It's not that all aspects of the old entity are merely repeated, some may be (via feeling) while some may not be (they are eliminated via negative prehension).

Whitehead describes this process as one of objectification, as a form of realization through actualization. Feelings are the agents of that process. They are the mobile agents of the active relationship between what could be taken up and what eventuates. The field of possibility nestles disjunctively amongst the world of 'the many'. Feelings take up what is there, transporting aspects of there-ness, or what will become the past into a new future (the creative advance), into here-ness. The property/function of here-ness Whitehead calls subjectivity. It is the interiority of the immediate instance (or series of such instances), the occasion as 'subjected'. Subjectivity is the interiority of the process considered *as* process. The process also moves beyond interiority into actuality, leaving its mark on the objective realm. The account of the 'simple physical feeling' has all the necessary ingredients to illustrate this process which could be described as a fold. The

folding occurs via a feeling's journey, which transforms the 'initial data' of the given to the 'objective datum' of the past. In the process, the feeling thereby becomes the subjectivity of a new occasion in the process of its becoming. The folding of a new subjectivity is also an unfolding of past subjectivities into 'objective immortality'. Thus the pleating and unfolding motion continues in 'rhythmic' fashion.

Whitehead writes of a certain kind of repetition in the carriage of the old into the new, whereby the old becomes objectified relative to a new subjectivity of process. Something prior was utilized by my dancing so as to create something new; the feeling of (a new) feeling, which constituted a new manner of dancing. The objectified old functions in a causal manner to produce the new which is a mode of reenactment of what is now an old feeling. But, and this must be said all at once, old feelings are felt under an abstraction, via subjectivity's perspective, via its *selection* of the old. Reenactment is never *mere* reenactment. [9] Certain old feelings (in my example of not-feeling) caused a new feeling (that thickness of feeling). So, in a sense, the components were there — it was always open to me to feel that inner thickness. These 'elements of the universe' were available. But I didn't avail myself of them until the feelings moved from one state (initial datum/data) to another (objective datum/data). This passage is (or, by now, was) active. It represents the agency inherent in the shift from my not feeling my torso to feeling it. If there was a sense of emergent authorship in my dancing, it is due to that agency, otherwise called 'appropriation'.

### **Looking back, looking forward**

The attempt to explain the momentary shift in my dancing from desperate instrumentality to sensed activity involved the passage and transformation of feelings. In the process, feelings come together and become other than what they were. While the turning point remains somewhat mysterious to me, its constituent moments are explicable. The sought after authorship *of* my dancing turned out to be a new mode of agency *in* my dancing. This agency is not without a subject but connotes a complex formation of enduring subjectivity (superjectivity). It is a form of agency to be found in the dancing, which was where we were looking for it. Whitehead's work is more than a backwards glance at reality, however. It also proposes to specify the production of futurity, the repetition of difference inherent in Friedrich Nietzsche's eternal return. [10] Posed against the rigidity of determinism, the notion of the creative advance posits its conceptual field so as to tread lightly on the future. How to marry the objective immortality of the past, its crystalline definiteness, with the nebulous character of the future? This is nowhere more important than in the work of

Russell Dumas, where the physical enunciation of his choreography makes a feature of this problematic.

### **There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip**

While dancing relentlessly pursues the creation of novelty, via the forward thrust of actualization, the process of emergent newness is a complex play between the gravitational pull of givenness (the conditioning aspect of objectivity) and the lure towards new feeling. If that lure is not completely unfettered, it is nevertheless alive with potential indetermination. The play between the two is how I like to think of dance. By analyzing the 'phases of concrecence' through the formation of subjectivity, into the 'objective immortality' of a fresh past, Whitehead attempts to account for the debt actualization owes the past as it participates in the creation of novelty. There are a number of terms whose complex articulation suggests the concrete sense in which the past both grounds and enables the future. [11] But perhaps we might pay homage to the Humean lineage in Whitehead's work, and work through a few physical vignettes as we turn to the conceptual. [12]

*(i) eliminating ballet – why this and not that*

It is not really possible to dance every kind of dance. Ananya Chatterjea writes:

My many years of working with the materiality of dancing bodies, as dancer, choreographer, and dance teacher, and in a different way as audience member, has made me deeply appreciative of dancing's irreducible plurality in meaning-making, coinciding with its insistence on incredible specificity. [13]

The incredible specificity of dance can be framed in terms of elimination and integration – the sum of Whitehead's categoreal obligations numbers one to three. The categoreal obligations are a series of propositions which embody Whitehead's philosophy of process. They are general expressions which, together, specify his account of process, prehension, actual entities and feeling. They are similar to mathematical or logical axioms in their attempt to define their subject. Donald Sherburne writes that "it has been suggested that they are similar to Kant's categories, except that they operate throughout the world instead of merely in the experience of conscious persons. They are conditions of all possible actual worlds, rather than merely conditions of all possible experience." (Sherburne, 1966: 41-42).

Whitehead's notion of the categoreal obligations as applied to conformal feelings sheds light on an important element of Dumas' work and on the specificity of dancing more generally. The categoreal obligations ensure that the actual world of a given entity is consistent, that subjective unity is achieved, objective identity preserved and objective diversity allowed for (Whitehead, 1960: 39). Incompatible qualities cannot inhere in the one danced movement. Thus the feelings that come together work positively, to offer a unity of felt qualities but also negatively, to exclude that which cannot be incorporated within the one process. While there are many possible timbres of bodily feeling, the composite actuality of dancing will only select those timbres which are "harmoniously compatible" and capable of enjoying "mutual sensitivity" (1960: 362, 338). [14] This pertains to what can be felt according to a particular style and manner of dancing and what cannot.

Dumas' work is predicated upon what he would call 'felt sensations' in the body. Dumas appeals to the dancer's lived engagement with sensations in part because his choreography, whilst particular, does not, cannot, necessitate one manner of execution. Unlike the reification inherent in ballet's fixed lexicon of movement, the (post)modern character of Dumas' work requires the choreographic formulation of movement material out of malleable vocabularies of movement. This is not improvisation as it is commonly understood but requires of the dancer an in-the-moment series of improvisatory adjustments in the process of the material's execution. Dumas' often speaks of Roland Barthes' account of a daily walk through the park. Though the path stays the same, each day the walk differs. Taking into account the circularity of movement (that a 3-dimensional body moves through the path) the very simplest dance between the foot and the floor can engage a myriad of vicissitudes. The difference from ballet lies in the fact that Dumas' work does not consist of pre-given, recognizable movements. While the ballet dancer must also dance in the moment, she/he need not identify a field of possibility in relation to the choreographic imperative. The ballet dancer's task is repetition of the lexicon according to new choreographic assemblages and the vicissitudes of the moment. Dumas' dancer must learn to repeat new movements via the assistance of feeling in the service of repetition.

Hence, Dumas' emphasis upon felt sensation. Dumas urges his dancers to 'chart sensations' in their bodies (feel the feelings) in the context of dancing. Since the choreographic material does not depend upon given vocabularies of movement, the dancer must navigate the reenactment of feelings, including their novel, hopefully proximate, deviations. How else to do so but through felt sensation? This work is not derived from an external look, though it has a look. It is not a series of postures, positions or end-points, but a challenging series of choreographic demands/actions. The sensory challenge for the dancer is to be

sufficiently sensitive (manifest a 'mutual sensitivity') so as to recognize the field of reenactment in/on the field. This is where elimination comes in.

In a Whiteheadian sense, 'felt sensation' is inconsistent with too much tension in the body. Too much muscularity (tension in the legs, rigidity in the spine or muscular holding patterns in the body) stands in the way of a body feeling the dance of gravity. In short, muscularity operates at the expense of felt sensation in movement. Although Dumas addresses the dancer's sense of feeling, it could be said that the incompatibility pertains to the field of relational feelings – of feelings feeling other feelings – and that tense muscles 'interfere' with nuanced sensations at the level of the feelings themselves. The dancer enters the mix at a latter stage, as a secondary formation or superject predicated upon the play of process. The 'constructive rest position' involves lying down flat on the back with bent legs, and allowing the muscles to soften, without needing to use the muscles that typically hold the body erect. In constructive rest, it becomes possible to allow the muscles to soften, to feel the play of gravity through the legs, often with the help of imagery (as a 'lure for feeling'). After a while, it can become possible to feel the sensations associated with the relations between gravity and the limbs, including for example the feel of fall of the femur bone into the hip socket. The femur can be felt to 'fall' into the hip socket because the legs are bent and the weight of the legs falls down towards the hip socket. Even so, it takes a tie around the knees to encourage the legs to let go of their usual muscular holding *and* the imaginative lure of imagery such as; "imagine a clothes hanger holding up the knees, and the legs hang down either side of the hanger like a pair of slacks". The aim of this vignette is to depict the process by which muscularity gives way to felt sensation.

The three categorial obligations account for the selection process at work in dancing: between the muscularity inherent in say classical ballet and the palette of felt sensation requisite for the execution of Dumas' choreographic material. Dumas speaks of 'a body available to movement' versus a body trained in classical techniques. A 'body available to movement' is a body that can adapt to new physical requirements of emergent movement vocabularies quite apart from the way in which a classical dancer has to adapt in the moment to perform familiar moves assembled from the fixed lexicon of ballet. Dumas' work also capitalizes on the intense mobility of a body which is not stabilized via held muscularity, calling for what he calls the 'management of instability'. Management is the job of the dancer – not control, rather riding the wave of movement. Given that Dumas' work also aims to aesthetically evoke the ease associated with walking (the ease of the everyday), felt sensation and skill is pretty much all that the dancer has to call upon. A body available to movement aims to feel the sensations implicit in movement. In Whitehead's parlance,



muscularity is also felt. A muscular manner of moving has its own world of muscular feelings but these latter feelings *mask* the felt sensations that arise in relation to subtle shifts in the body (a focused feeling of feeling). Ballet's muscularity and Dumas' felt sensation are inconsistent; ultimately, they cannot enjoy mutual sensitivity. Whitehead writes: "what an actual entity has avoided as a datum for feeling may yet be an important part of its equipment" (Whitehead, 1960: 346).

Avoidance is the flip side of incorporation. What the 3 categoreal obligations imply is an understanding of the concrete texture and particularity of dancing, its specificity, but also the sense in which one manner of dancing eliminates others. Elimination is an active and important element in the process of dancing. Actualization of some qualities precludes the incorporation of others. And yet, those eliminated potential feelings have a certain neighborly relation to that which is actualized in the dancing. The continuation of muscular holding patterns is all that stands in the way of the myriad felt sensations of gravity. Habit, tendency and disposition may create a certain propensity for elimination. The sensations of gravity are filtered through the 'mediation' of intervening processes. But they *are* nevertheless potentially felt. What it takes to convert these potentials to actuality is the work of making a body 'available' in Dumas' terms. It's the task of converting one world to another. [15]

The other side of elimination and incompatibility is integration, the implicit integration according to which the feelings in movement come together. The 'purpose' (function) of elimination is not simply to eliminate, to narrow down the world of A, it is that which makes the world of A, *a* world. Whitehead writes of integration, of those aspects of objectivity which come together within the one process to create a "something", a "this" which "cannot be in the same sense the status of that" (Whitehead, 1960: 348). This is the concrete specificity of dancing seen from the perspective of the dancing itself, Chatterjea's 'incredible specificity':

Thus the process of integration, which lies at the very heart of the concrete is the urge imposed on the concrete unity of that universe by the 3 categories of subjective unity, of objective identity and of objective diversity (Whitehead, 1960: 346).

(ii) *attenuating the potential*

A feeling bears on itself the scars of its birth: it recollects as a subjective emotion its struggle for existence; it retains the impress of what might have

been, but is not...The actual cannot be reduced to mere matter of fact in divorce from the potential (Whitehead, 1960: 346).

Whitehead uses the notion of attenuation as an alternative to (subjective) intensification. There is a sense in which attenuation, as the *delay* of selection, achieves an intensification all of its own. This mode of intensification concerns a set of relations between potentiality and actuality which arise in a movement's concrete "history of production" (Whitehead, 1960: 13). By potentiality, I mean a sphere of complex eternal objects as they relate to the emerging physicality of movement. The delay of selection (decision) could also be seen as the play of satisfaction, as a play *with* (unrealized) satisfaction. [16] The pirouette in ballet has what is called a preparation. While the preparation will differ each time it's enacted, it will be 'read' as the precursor to a pirouette. Its recognizable character (it is a set move in itself) suggests a certain inevitability with respect to that which follows. Virtuosity in ballet is expressed in the dancer's 'mastery' of these actions. From her smile, to the muscular assertion of recognizable poses (visually coded), the ballet dancers' skill evokes a sense of control. This is assisted by the stability of a centred torso (shoulders over hips, spine erect) whose predetermined order facilitates the legibility of the limbs as they achieve spectacular heights.

Dumas explicitly rejects the notion of control in his work, preferring to speak of the dancer's management of instability. He intensifies that instability by keeping to a narrow base (legs under hip sockets) rather than the soldier's wide stance with feet firmly planted on the ground. Allied to the elimination of muscular holding patterns and the increase of felt sensation, this body is alive to the micro movements that emerge and cluster around a choreographic moment. The instability which is intensified – both at the level of feeling and in the choreographic 'tasks' – calls for some management. The dancer's virtuosity, in Dumas' work, consists of the execution of movement, walking the path, in such a way as to deal with an increased amplitude of movement possibilities inherent at each and every moment, with the sort of ease suggested by walking. A movement well done will be one whose complex challenges will be met in such a way that the observer feels the familiar timbre of those sensory pleasures which attend a stroll in the park. The point of such ease is to make identification between dancer and observer possible through a common habitus of everyday movement. Virtuosity in this setting is the achievement of complexity in relation to a physical palette of easeful movement. This notion of virtuosity is not aimed to inspire admiration from afar. It can be contrasted with a relation of alienation, in which the observer feels a movement is something they could not do and consequently admires the difference. Huge leg extensions, for example, or circus feats, provoke admiration from afar. They may inspire trepidation and

excitement in relation to and on behalf of the performer but they do not suggest a virtual feeling of reenactment drawn from a common cultural field of everyday movement. This is not the pedestrian movement associated with postmodern dance as such but a shared physical palette of the ease with which it is associated. The virtuosic aspect arises because that feeling of ease has been pressed into the service of complexity via the exercise of consummate skill. Dumas will often say that an incredibly complex move, when pulled off well, will look like nothing much.

The management of instability is not simply the breadth of possibility facilitated by letting go of muscularity and keeping to a narrow base. It also calls for a certain kind of attenuation which ballet by and large foregoes. [17] Erin Manning has spoken of something similar in the execution of tango, a form which she also predicates upon the ease of walking, and according to which the zone between the looming step and its satisfaction is kept alive. [18] There is a concrete skill at work in the evocation of a potential field surrounding the ultimate inevitability of the step. This field must be invoked through the articulation of concrete possibility. Can Whitehead's work assist in accounting for this important texture?

Whitehead writes of the formal aspect of an actual entity's belonging to its process of concrescence (coming together), and not its satisfaction (Whitehead, 1960: 131). The perpetual relation-difference between concrescence and satisfaction can be put in terms of becoming and perishing. [19] In this aspect of dancing, we are dealing with a number of factors. First, the decision. Subjective decisions dissolve indeterminacy (1960: 354). Through actualization, the decision selects from a potential field – a field which may, nevertheless, be said to exist only in its relation *to* the decision once articulated. Whitehead writes of actuality as a form of decision made "amid potentiality" (1960: 68). If eternal objects (universals, concepts, qualities) are a form of pure potentiality, their particular modes of ingression (instantiation) enable a concrete link between potentiality and actuality. Whitehead writes of ingression:

The definite ingression into a particular actual entity is not to be conceived as the sheer evocation of that eternal object from 'not-being' to 'being'; it is the evocation of determination out of indetermination. Potentiality becomes reality; and yet retains its message of alternatives which the actual entity has avoided (Whitehead, 1960: 226).

The dancer's skill lies in the articulation of this message. Inasmuch as the ingression of eternal objects enacts the thoughts allied to physical feelings, the thinking implicit in sensory activity, the attenuation of dancing's potential for

actualization is a matter for thought, thought in the body. This is not pure potential, rather, decision amid potentiality, a negotiation between “the inevitable ordering of things conceptually realized in the nature of God” (Whitehead, 1960: 373) and the self-causality of each drop of experience:

Each temporal entity derives from God its basic conceptual aim, relative to its actual world, yet with indeterminations awaiting its own decisions (Whitehead, 1960: 343).

Thus the initial stage of the aim is rooted in the nature of God, and its completion depends on the self-causation of the subject-superject (373).

Whitehead writes of the primordial nature of God:

He is the unconditioned actuality of conceptual feeling at the base of things; so that, by reason of this primordial actuality, there is an order in the relevance of eternal objects to the process of creation (Whitehead, 1960: 522).

He is the actual entity in virtue of which the *entire* multiplicity of eternal objects obtains its graded relevance to each stage of concrescence (248).

Without God, there would be no “relevant novelty” (Whitehead, 1960: 248). God functions so as to transform the “entire multiplicity of eternal objects” (1960: 248). Through “this primordial valuation of pure potentials, each eternal object has a definite, effective relevance to each concrescent process” (1960: 64).

Without:

...such orderings, there would be a complete disjunction of eternal objects unrealized in the temporal world. Novelty would be meaningless and inconceivable (Whitehead, 1960: 64).

Although the ordering is divine, it is also a matter of fact. It is the matter of facts. [20]

Whitehead distinguishes between the relevance of eternal objects to the concrescent phases of a particular occasion, and the additional ground of relevance for:

...select eternal objects *by reason of their ingression* into derivate actual entities belonging to the actual world of the concrescent occasion in question. But whether or no this be the case, there is always the direct

relevance derived from God. Thus possibility which transcends realized temporal matter of fact has a real relevance to the creative advance (Whitehead, 1960: 46; my emphasis).

Whitehead writes of effective relevance, as that which can only belong to actual occasions. There seem to be two strands of the sort of relevance which conditions potentiality. One derives from the God who conditions actuality through ordering eternal objects. This God transforms eternal objects from a disjunctive series of predicates (the universal set of all possible concepts) to a sphere of possibility which is linked to the real world. Careful not to preempt reality, God nevertheless orders “the relevance of eternal objects to the process of creation” (Whitehead, 1960: 522). This is a sort of potential of potential. First order potential comes from God, then a second order arises according to conceptual ingression within the actual occasion. While both are real, the latter has effective relevance.

If there is a kind of two-fold order which conditions that which is relevant, then the job of the dancer is to work backwards, to play with those conditions as they become effectively relevant, to evoke conditions, then make decisions with respect to those conditions. Dumas’ manner of teaching choreography illustrates the point. Eschewing the notion of ‘a solution’, Dumas will, over time, explore a range of possible physical approaches towards a particular choreographic activity. These consist of exclusive possibilities (alternatives). The challenge is to evoke these disjunctive-yet-relevant conditions as a field of potentiality in the midst of making physical decisions, that is, in the midst of dancing. The field of potentiality, its relevance, must be associated with the movement in the concrete instance (actual occasion) as a matter of felt (or feel-able) proximity, through what might be called the trace. Sometimes we will break with a particular line of working and insert something else, a series of activities which exemplifies a particular aspect of the activity. Then we go back to the original activity. Something of that physically, temporally proximate activity ‘ghosts’ what follows. This is an example of a trace. Traces need not be temporally immediate. It is possible, though not necessarily easy, to evoke the trace of former movement decisions, in the process of actualization.

There is a choreographic strategy which hails from the work of Twyla Tharp, called ‘the Zs’. A movement phrase is broken up into durational segments and each segment is given a letter in alphabetical order: A, B, C and so on. An adjacent phase of the phrase is also broken up into As, Bs and so on. Finally, all the As are reassembled as a movement phrase consisting of the order of As, the Bs are reassembled as the order of Bs and so on. The A’s are then sutured onto the B’s which are stitched onto the C’s. An implication of this intensive process of

disjunction and conjunction is that movement is uncoupled from its original (and naturalized) context, and reinserted into a new setting. The subsequent order of the work creates movement *almost* totally unlike its original character. But, and here a kind of divine order and relevance prevails, the aura of the originary context ought be kept alive. From a dancer's point of view, Sally Gardner has suggested that something of the prior context needs to be retained as the field of potentiality wherein decisions are made. [21] Otherwise, the new assemblage becomes reduced to a new movement norm (an inevitability with only one solution) and it loses that richness of transplanted indeterminacy. It is all too easy for the dancer to 'normalize' movement (make its inevitability a familiar expectation, an element of movement-superjectivity) and to thereby close off its wealth of potential. Keeping potentiality alive through a disjunctive multiplicity of traces is a matter of thinking in movement. It may be governed by God, but its execution is very much up to the actual occasion. Strategies such as Tharp's Zs and Dumas' 'jump cuts' ask dancers to work with two related fields – the conditioning implicit in the notion of relevant, proximate order, and the 'autonomous mastery' of decision making – the *causa sui* of the creative advance.

If dance is a series of creative advances, it is also in these examples a question of sustaining the conditioning potential within which decisions are made. What I call working backwards is the task of learning about that which conditions in the context of dancing. While all there is is the dancing, the dancing is more than all there is. It's also what might have been and what might be. What's given might not have been given but also, what's not given might have been given (Whitehead, 1960: 70). This blurring of boundary in the context of the boundary, is a question of attenuation aimed towards intensification, not the intensification of addition (adversion) nor that of contrast (aversion) but the intensification of the experience of potentiality in those droplets of experience we call dancing. [22]

## **conclusion**

Although subjectivity extends into the past via completion (and superjectivity), there is something incredibly dynamic about the flowering that occurs in the growing complexity of concrescence. Whitehead's analysis of process – its intricate constitution according to an indivisible temporality – somehow manages the instability of reality in its process of becoming, alongside an empirical fealty to the stubborn historicity of fact. Subjectivity encapsulates the agency of the process, its will to power, not forever, but for a while. Whitehead depicts God, both as keeper of the conceptual order and as the conduit of relevance and proximity. It behoves the vicissitudes of the occasion to concretize these matters in the realm of sensation. We are returned to a Humean allegiance

to the primacy of the senses. Whitehead's rendition of Hume's insight opens the way for the creative complexity of thought allied with sensation. This is the world of elimination, integration, decision, givenness and potential, of actualization in the midst of indetermination, of the flow of feelings in the feeling of feeling. We walk the path on a daily basis but thankfully each day is different. The relation between the path and its walking, between the foot and the floor, is where it all happens.

### *Acknowledgement*

I would like to thank Stamatia Portanova and Erin Manning for their generous and incisive comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to dedicate this paper to Russell Dumas.

### *Weblink*

The following weblink is included because it offers a sense of feelings feeling other feelings, virtually, across bodies, time and space, related through the editorial process but also through something else, through a sense of feeling that extends beyond one movement activity and into the next:

<http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=3erazaZDvBM>

### **Details and acknowledgements: Dance Path (2005) video: 7:28**

Performed by Hellen Sky, Greg Dyson, Lou Duckett, Philipa Rothfield, Shaun McLeod, Kim Vincs, Yumi Umiumare, Sally Smith, Luke Hockley, Helen Herbertson, Ros Warby, David Corbet, Anne O'Keeffe, Elizabeth Keen, Tony Yap, Christos Linou, Viona Lowenthal, Rochelle Carmichael, Angie Potsch, Nicky Marr, Nick Papas, David Wells.

Camera & edit: Dianne Reid

Additional Camera: Peta O'Doherty & Rowena Di Stefano

Music: Rae Howell (Sunwrae)

Artistic Director: Dianne Reid

Assistant Director: Emma Porteus

Producer: Dancehouse

*A video collage of the living history of Dancehouse, centre for independent contemporary arts in Melbourne, Australia. Twenty-two independent dance artists danced their recollections of working in the Dancehouse studios...reflecting on their performances, their practice, their collaborations.  
Screenings: Channel 31, Melbourne, Australia (2007)*

### *Notes*

[1] Whitehead writes of the many coming together, conjoining in the production of newness, in the creation of the novel entity, and of the sense in which the novel entity then becomes one of the many, the new many, as it were — "The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction. The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the 'many' which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive 'many' which it leaves" (Whitehead, 1960: 32).

[2] “A simple physical feeling enjoys a characteristic which has been variously described as ‘re-enaction,’ ‘reproduction,’ and ‘conformation.’ This characteristic can be more accurately explained in terms of the eternal objects involved. There are eternal objects determinant of the objective datum which is the ‘cause,’ and eternal objects determinant of the definiteness of the subjective form belonging to the ‘effect.’ When there is re-enaction there is one eternal object with two-way functioning, namely, as partial determinant of the objective datum, and as partial determinant of the subjective form” (Whitehead, 1960: 364). Conformal feelings more generally exhibit this character of re-enactment.

[3] “In the phraseology of mathematical physics a feeling has a vector character” (Whitehead, 1960: 353-354). “...remember that in physics ‘vector’ means definite transmission from elsewhere” (177). In physics, vectors allow quantity to be qualified through the notion of direction. For example, the motion of a car has a speed but it also travels in a direction. These combine to create velocity. Velocity is represented in physics via vector relations. Feelings are directional towards the new as they come from the old: “The feelings are inseparable from the end at which they aim; and this end is the feeler. The feelings aim at the feeler, as their final cause” (339). “Feelings are ‘vectors’; for they feel what is *there* and transform it into what is *here*” (133).

[4] Although ‘one’ sounds like me, for Whitehead, one could be a singular entity or a single fact of togetherness, a nexus.

[5] My lived sense of it was that something new was happening in my dancing *and* I could feel it. The feeling I felt seemed a secondary experience — consequent upon the corporeal activity. The distinction between the activity of the dancing as the source of the emergent feelings and *my* agency as the source moves this account out of the zone of embodied agency into one which attributes agency to the process itself, to the process of the *dancing* as the source and site of emergent feeling. It’s not that I cannot thereby access these feelings. It is rather that the process itself creates something which I am, as a consequence, able to feel. Similarly, the process of elimination is also a feature of the process itself (the dancing), rather than a subjective act carried out by me. It’s not that I don’t do it (produce the eliminations), it is rather that the eliminated feelings (negative prehensions) don’t do me. (Thanks to Erin Manning for this latter form of words).

[6] “A feeling can be genetically described in terms of its process of origination, with its negative prehensions whereby its many initial data become its complex objective datum” (Whitehead, 1960: 354).



[7] What lasts is the enduring pole of the subjective process, the superject. As far as emergent reality is concerned, it makes sense to speak of the subject-superject but a pure focus on emergence lends itself to talk of the subject as such.

[8] "It is better to say that the feelings *aim at* their subject, than to say that they *are aimed at* their subject. For the latter mode of expression removes the subject from the scope of the feeling and assigns it to an external agency" (Whitehead, 1960: 339).

[9] This is expressed in "*The Category of Objective Identity* - There can be no duplication of any element in the objective datum of the 'satisfaction' of an actual entity, so far as concerns the function of that element in the 'satisfaction' " (Whitehead, 1960: 39).

[10] Gilles Deleuze writes: "According to Nietzsche the eternal return is in no sense a thought of the identical but rather a thought of synthesis, a thought of the absolutely different which calls for a new principle outside science. The principle is that of the reproduction of diversity as such, of the repetition of difference..." (Deleuze, 1983: 46).

[11] These include notions such as relevance, decision, proximity, givenness-potential, God's experience/prehensions, propositions, concrescence-transmutation, rhythm.

[12] David Hume writes: "That all our simple ideas in their first appearance, are derived from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent... An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain, of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea" (Hume, 1974: 13-17). See also Whitehead (1960: 379).

[13] "On the Value of Mistranslations, Contaminations and Veerings Away, The Category of Contemporary Choreography in Asian Dance", p.1.

[14] Whitehead illustrates the three categories in terms of a concrescence of feeling which is jointly mediated by several actual entities which are the source of feelings in the one actual entity (Whitehead, 1960: 345). See also Elizabeth Kraus (1979: 106).

[15] This is the subject of both Alexander and Feldenkrais techniques.

[16] Unrealized in the sense of incomplete: “An actual entity is a process in the course of which many operations with incomplete subjective unity terminate in a completed unity of operation, termed the ‘satisfaction’” (Whitehead, 1960: 335). Also, “The satisfaction is merely the culmination marking the evaporation of all indetermination...” (Whitehead, 1960: 323).

[17] This isn't simply because of the preparations linked to pirouettes, tours à la seconde, tours en attitude, tours en l'air, pas ballonné and the like (see Lincoln Kirstein, Muriel Stuart and Carlus Dyer, 1977). It also follows the fact of ballet's fixed lexicon. Of course, timing can be and is attenuated, and all dancers deal with the vicissitudes of the moment, but the codification of ballet has been finessed over centuries. It is assisted by visual forms of representation that govern the look of movement, as well as a series of fixed directions which undergird the dancer's sense of orientation. See Gabrielle Brandstetter (2005: 67-79). The fact that the legibility of ballet came to be oriented to the front (according to the proscenium arch of the Paris Opera house and its subsequent avatars) cuts back on Dumas' notion of the circularity of movement. See Marvin Carlson (1989). Theatres 'in the round', such as the Balinese ceremonial courtyard or family compound, cannot avail themselves of the unilateral location of the observer-artist implied by perspectival forms of drawing.

[18] *Dancing the Virtual* (dir. Erin Manning and Brian Massumi), Sense Lab, Concordia University, La Société des Arts Technologiques, Montreal, May 2006.

[19] “In the organic philosophy an actual entity has ‘perished’ when it is complete. The pragmatic use of the actual entity, constituting its static life, lies in the future. The creature perishes *and* is immortal... This conception of an actual entity in the fluent world is little more than an expansion of a sentence in the *Timaeus*: ‘But that which is conceived by opinion with the help of sensation and without reason, is always in the process of becoming and perishing and never really is’ ” (Whitehead, 1960: 126).

[20] “This divine ordering is itself matter of fact, thereby conditioning creativity” (Whitehead, 1960: 46).

[21] Gardner danced with Douglas Dunn in New York, and later joined Danceworks (dir. Nanette Hassall). She has also worked with Dumas and has performed with Dance Exchange. She is also co-editor (with Elizabeth Dempster) of the journal *Writings on Dance*.

[22] Perhaps it's an intensification of the disjunction of potential, the adversions and aversions facilitated by the concrescent process, what might be called "dancing the virtual", cf *Dancing the Virtual*.

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