

The Virtuality and Actuality of Dance Movements in José Gil's Considerations

Miloš Ševčík 

Department of Aesthetics, Faculty of Arts,
Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic.

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts,
University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, Czech Republic.

milos.sevcik@ff.cuni.cz; sevcik@kfi.zcu.cz

Received 17 February 2022; accepted 29 December 2022; published Online First 6 January 2023.

Abstract

The article deals with José Gil's considerations on the relationships between the virtuality and the actuality of the dancing body. At first, it analyses Gil's idea of projecting the current position of the dancing body into virtual images and explores Gil's notion of the multiplicity of virtuality. Further, it demonstrates how in the space of the body a consistent compound of movements is created at the level of the monstrous virtual body. Finally, the article emphasizes that, despite the connections between the actual position of the body and its virtual images, there is a fundamental distinction between the actuality and the virtuality of the dancing body. It shows that the idea of the distinction between the virtual and the actual reflects Gil's concept of virtual memory as a zone of accumulated possibilities of movement.

Keywords: José Gil; virtuality; actuality; dance; body

1. Introduction

Analyzing the relationships between the virtuality and the actuality of the dancing body is a frequent theme in the works of contemporary Portuguese philosopher José Gil. Gil's thematizing of the virtuality of the dancing body has undoubtedly been influenced by concepts formulated by other authors, such as Susanne Langer, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Henri Bergson. It

should be noted, however, that Gil examines the relationship between the virtuality and actuality of danced movements independently of the ideas of those who have influenced him. I believe that in Gil's writings we can discern the outline of a coherent conception of this issue. My starting point is Gil's idea about projecting the current position of the dancing body into virtual images. I will explore Gil's notion of the multiplicity of virtuality, especially as it relates to the actualization of the virtual image in the body of a dance partner. This multiplicity of actualized virtuality however also means a multiplicity of the dancing body's points of contemplation. Following Gil's observations, I will examine how such contemplation is not only of a visual nature but also of a kinetic, tactile, and auditory nature. I will also explore Gil's conceptualization of how the space of the body is created through dance movements, describing the features of the dancing body and focusing on the formation of the spatial and temporal relationships within this space. I will also demonstrate how in the space of the body a consistent compound of movements is created at the level of the monstrous virtual body. I conclude by emphasizing that, despite the connections between the actual position of the body and its virtual images in which this body is projected, there is a fundamental distinction between the actuality and the virtuality of the dancing body. I will show that the idea of the distinction between the virtual and the actual reflects Gil's concept of virtual memory as a zone of accumulated possibilities of movement. According to Gil, the dancer, following a specific notion of dance movements, may in some cases expose this zone. Most importantly, however, this zone allows the implementation of choreographic innovation.

I will emphasize that the concept of virtuality and actuality of the danced movements that Gil presents involves both the continuity between the virtual and the actual, and distance or rather the difference between them. I will point out that this continuity and difference allow us, on the one hand, to grasp the fluidity of transformation that connects the movements that have been, are and will be performed. On the other hand, as I will also show, the irreducible difference between the actual and the virtual and their close connection allows us to grasp the process of transformation of dance movements, both within a single performance and in terms of the innovations of choreographic practices. For this reason, my aim will be to point out that Gil's reflections on the relationship between virtuality and the actuality of dance movements can become a very useful tool for a comprehensive grasp of the nature of dance.

2. The Virtuality of the Dancing Body as Multiplicity

Gil examines the relationship between the virtual and the actual in dance movements in many places in his book *Total Movement: The Body and Dance (Movimento Total. O corpo e a Dança)*. He shows how in a dance performance

the actual movements of the dancer's body are accompanied by "virtual images" arranged into "maps" of movement that the dancer masters (Gil, 2001, p. 62). The dancer sees these projected virtual images as the opposite of what he or she has already achieved, that is, the actual image of his or her own body. The actual positions of the body evolve in these projected images. In contrast, the virtual image is not "built in itself," unlike visible gestures, which are "actualizations" of the virtual image (p. 62). Unlike the virtual image, the actual image of one's own body comes "from reality" (p. 62).

Thus, dance movements are marked with a certain ambiguity. On one hand, they "roll" the body to itself, that is, they guide it toward the actualization of maps of movement in realized gestures. On the other hand, from the achieved actualization emerges the projection of "multiple images" in which the actual position of the body evolves. Thus, there is a difference between virtual images and the actualization of these images in visible gestures; at the same time, however, there is also a connection between them. In this regard, Gil speaks about the existence of "complicity" and at the same time "distance" between the actual position of the body and virtual images (Gil, 2001, p. 62). This complicity connected with distance is essential for creating "consistent perspective at the interior of movement itself," which facilitates the "contemplation" of this movement (p. 63). Gil states that the projection, which emerges from the actual position of the body, creates virtual images in "points" outside "the body itself," from which the body "contemplates" itself as soon as it reaches these points (p. 62). The fact that these virtual images—as "doubles" of the dancing body—"guarantee a stable point of view" (p. 63) from which bodily movements are contemplated corresponds to the fact that the evolution of realized gestures into virtual images is observed from the point of view of a single body, even though the actual position of this body does not cease to transform, depending on the process of actualizing the projected virtual images. Although this contemplative point of view lying within the body is "wed" with the movement that is developed, at the same time, as a stable point of view, it necessarily detaches itself from this movement (p. 63). The dancing body—being intended for this constant observing and experiencing of itself—is therefore fundamentally "narcissist" (p. 61–62). Danced movements in which the transition from the actual to the virtual, and from the virtual to the actual, is realized draw the gaze of the dancing body.

It must, however, be noted that the virtuality with which the actuality of the dancing body is inevitably linked is not only visual, although its visual aspect cannot be ignored. The virtual plane is not only that which we see, but also that which we experience through the entire body (Gil, 2001, p. 62). The virtual body, in being actualized, is also—and primarily—corporeally sensed and touched, or even heard (p. 62). The virtual map of movements that the dancer actualizes can not only be seen; it can also be experienced. This means it is inscribed in the transformations of kinesthetic tension and in the sequence of

touches that occur (p. 60). Narcissism, therefore, does not just concern seeing, as the dancing body is bound up with the narcissism of touching, kinesthesia, and hearing. And because the actual dancing body multiplies in virtuality, because the actual positions of the body that make up dance movements are tied to “virtual” positions, the narcissism of the dancing body is focused on the multiplicity of experienced heterogeneous images—images of the seen, the heard, and the corporeally sensed—in this virtuality. Narcissism equates to “the general reflexivity of the body” (p. 62). In this reflexivity the contemplation of the dancer’s movement is sustained.

This “stable point of view” of contemplating the dancer’s movement may be occupied by the moving body of the dance partner. The virtual images of the body of one dancer are actualized in the body of the other dancer. In virtual images the dancer’s body evolves by itself into a multiplicity of “virtual doubles.” The virtuality of some of these doubles, however, is, when a second dancing body is involved, actualized in the position of the dance partner’s body: “The actual partner realizes the dancer’s virtual double” (Gil, 2001, p. 63). That the dance partner occupies this role is “quite natural” because the actual position of this partner and its evolution into virtuality enables one to contemplate one’s own actual position and its evolution: “the dancer sees himself or herself in the other” dancer, he or she “contemplates himself or herself” from the position of the other dancer (p. 63). This contemplation of the one dancer in the other however naturally means the doubling of the evolution of the actuality of the body’s position into virtuality. In other words, the fact that every dancing actual body gives birth to a multiplicity of virtual images leads to the doubling of this multiplicity when two partners dance together (p. 63).

This doubling or multiplying of virtuality in the relationships between the movements of dance partners, however, is decisively not the product of mimesis. Dance partners do not enter into a “mirroring mimetic relation” (Gil, 2001, p. 63). They “both enter into the same rhythm, while marking within it their own differences” (p. 63). Although the rhythm “surpasses” both partners, the rhythmic differences of the movement of one of them is “reflected” in the movement of the other, and vice versa. Thus is formed a “plane of movement,” which “stimulates” the dance partners’ movements (p. 63). The mutual actualization of virtual doubles in the relation between dance partners results in the projection of different and at the same time closely related multiplicities of these virtual doubles. Each of the dance partners attempts to accommodate the rhythmic differences of the other, to “become the rhythm” of the other (p. 63). For this reason, the constituting of a dance duo naturally leads to the formation of a group of dancers. The rhythmic differences in the movements of both dancers are surpassed in a projected series of virtual bodies in which “the entire process” of adapting to the other partner is developed (p. 64). This series of virtual bodies can be actualized by a group of dancers. In groups of dancers, however, the above-mentioned multiplicity of virtuality is not doubled, as it is when

there are two partners—it is multiplied. And if this multiplicity of virtuality is identical to the general reflexivity of the body, which maintains the stable point of view of the danced movement, that is, identical to the dancer's narcissism, such narcissism naturally evolves into the multiplication of contemplation in a group of dancers. In other words: "Narcissus is a crowd" (p. 64).

3. The Virtuality of Dance Movements as the Plane of Immanence, the Space of the Body, and a Compound

In his writings on the relationship between actuality and virtuality in dance movements Gil repeatedly refers to Susanne Langer's notion of the virtuality of a dancer's movement. Langer uses the term *virtuality*, or *virtual*, in connection with the dancer to differentiate what dance symbolizes and what is the vehicle of this symbolization.

In the study "The Dynamic Image: Some Philosophical Reflections on Dance," which Gil cites, Langer points out that dance is not a "symptom of the dancer's feeling" but an expression of the dancer's or choreographer's "knowledge" of feelings (Langer, 1957, p. 8). That which we see when we watch a dance performance is not physical, or actual reality, but virtual reality, an image in which the "forces" and "centers of power in their emanation" are manifested (p. 6). Langer emphasizes that the dynamic image is not actual reality. Actual reality, which is constituted by the moving physical body of the dancer, however, serves to "express" this dynamic image in which the "nature of human feeling" is depicted in the "tensions, balances, [and] rhythms" of this feeling (p. 8). In keeping with Langer's formulation, Gil states that the dancing body is not made of flesh and bones, that is, it is not a mechanical or physical body, but a "virtual" one (Gil, 2001, p. 27). A body of flesh and bones "actualizes the virtual." It refers to the virtual. This means that it "embodies and dematerializes" (p. 27) the virtual.

Gil, however, does not accept Langer's notion of the "dynamic image" as a depiction of the nature of human feeling and notes that the "virtual plane" is the "plane of immanence" (Gil, 2001, p. 51). Gil's subscribing to this notion, with which Deleuze and Guattari work in *A Thousand Plateaus*, demonstrates that the plane on which virtual forces manifest is a plane of constant transformation, that is, a plane of "becoming" with no connections to clearly defined elements, stable elements, among which this occasion of transformation would play out. On the plane of immanence identities exist solely as a part of the transformation process itself. Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly relate this the process of becoming, with virtuality. The reality of continually evolving transition, that is, the reality of constantly advancing "variation," is the opposite of the actual determining of "constant" and thus graspable realities and the relations between them (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 85, 95–96, 99–100, 108).

I would like to emphasize that Gil's statements on the nature and meaning of dance movement rely in many respects on concepts formulated by Deleuze and Guattari. This connection, which Gil regularly admits, is particularly apparent when it comes to Gil's writings about "the space of the body." Gil emphasizes that the continuous evolution, the transformation of the narcissistic contemplation of the dancing body plays out in the "space of the body," which is like an "intimate" connection between the body and the space in which the body is virtually projected and actualized; the space of the body is both "internal" and "external" (Gil, 2001, p. 60), and as such creates "exterior-interior points of contemplation" (p. 62). Dance movements open the space of the body in which the actual and the virtual build upon each other to extend or expand the body into space. The space of the body is not a system of exactly defined places, that is, a system of places between which distances can be measured. Virtual movements extend actual movements to "infinity." The achievement of virtual movements is not connected with "any specific place" in an "objective space," whether it be the podium of a classic theater or any other space (p. 143).

The space of the body is an exceptionally "plastic matter" (Gil, 2001, p. 65). It consists of units of space-time created by dance movements, of "virtual vacuoles" (p. 65). Because the space of the body differs from objective, or material, space and measurable time, in the dancer's movement space and time are transformed. The dancer's movements form "micro-events" with various meanings, that is, with different affects, with different energy flows (p. 65–66). Such micro-events may be a turn of the head, or a lifting of the shoulders, that is, when thanks to such a movement the space of the body is transformed. Such micro-events allow the space of the body to "contract" or "expand," "extend" (p. 66). This contraction or extension occurs in a non-objective space, and thus it is not a measurable contraction or extension. Such contraction or expansion emerges, for example, out of the simplicity or dynamicity of movement, or, in contrast, from the "detailed articulation" of movement, from its "infinite slowness" (p. 66). Space-time's dimensions—for example, its width or narrowness—and textures—for example, its density or sparseness—transform into micro-events, that is, into different methods of topological "carving," into different "places" linked to each other in the actual body's evolution into virtuality through movement (p. 65). The space of the body may become "porous, sponge-like, smooth, or striated" (p. 69). Thus, we cannot speak about a "fixed or autonomous" space of the body (p. 66). The characteristics of this space, in its dimensions and textures, depend fully upon the speed of the dancer's movements. The differing intensity of the energy of this opening creates mutually different and always singular spatiotemporal units of this space (p. 66).

Gil's thoughts on the differences in the dynamics of forming the space of the body through dance movement, that is, on the creation of different virtual vacuoles, are elaborations on the difference between "pulsed" and "nonpulsed" time, that is, the difference between "Chronos" and "Aeon" as presented in the

work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 262–263). The time of Aeon, unlike the measurable, emerges from the difference in the slowness and speeds of movements, and thus is not an objectively describable or quantifiable variable. Dance movements that expand the body into space serve as the vehicle not only of the unquantifiable temporality that is Aeon but also of a highly plastic, variable spatiality. In their remarks on the differences between “smooth” space and “striated” space, Deleuze and Guattari speak about such plastic space, that is, a spatiality that is not objective and measurable. Smooth space is “directional,” whereas striated space is “metric” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 479). Smooth space contains “events, affects, intensities, and forces”; striated space contains measurable “formed and perceived things” and their features (p. 479). Clearly, the space of the body—in which the dancing body merges with space; in which, thanks to this merging, temporal and spatial relations are formed and transformed; in which different but at the same time connected micro-events of spatiotemporal units, or virtual vacuoles, are created—possesses the features of smooth space.

The term *compound* proves to be highly important in Gil’s description of the space of the body (Gil, 2001, p. 70).¹ Here Gil certainly adopts the notion of a work of art as a “compound of sensations” that Deleuze and Guattari explore in their book *What Is Philosophy?* An artwork is always a “compound of percepts and affects,” “a being of sensations” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 164). This assemblage of different types of sensations—percepts and affects—corresponds with the complexity of the compound that the dancing body forms. All dance gestures are a “compound of the body” (Gil, 2001, p. 71), a compound of the positions of its arms, legs, torso, and head. At the same time, however, the dance gesture articulates the relations between the actual position of the body and its projected virtual positions. In this “danced gesticulation” a compound of the actual body with “actualized virtual bodies,” or “compounds of compounds,” is formed (p. 71). This compound of compounds emerges as a compound of actual and virtual movements of the legs, head, and torso. This “totality” of the body as a compound of compounds, through whose transformation the body expands into space and takes on its qualities and texture, is the “plane of immanence” (p. 70).

Deleuze and Guattari note that the plane of immanence is the plane of transition between heterogenous elements. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they demonstrate that on the plane of immanence territory is connected with movements of deterritorialization because only deterritorialization guarantees the consistency of a territory. Movements of deterritorialization hold together heterogenous elements of territory as heterogenous; this means that they bind them together as different. Heterogenous qualities are consolidated by the effects of

¹ Máira Santos (2018, p. 177) notes that Gil’s ideas about the compound of dance movements is inspired by the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari.

the vectors of deterritorialization: despite their mutual differences these qualities “correspond” with each other, for example, the color of sound or the color of movement. These qualities are synthetized (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 330–331). This synthetization of heterogenous elements, however, is enabled by their mutual separation, that is, by the “intervals and intercalations” between them (p. 330). Or the other way around: the consolidation of heterogenous elements captures the traversing vectors of deterritorialization. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that this directing of territory toward deterritorialization is a part of a territory’s consistency (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 324–325). The vectors of deterritorialization join together the individual signs of a territory, which are qualities of various types, such as “colors, sounds, and postures” (p. 323). The consistency of the individual signs of a territory finds the totality of necessary conditions only on the plane of deterritorialization, that is, on a plane on which “all the disparate and heterogeneous elements are convoked” (p. 327).

Thus, it is no coincidence that Gil characterizes the “affective investment” of the body in the space of the body as an investment in “territory” (Gil, 2001, p. 58). Clearly building upon Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the heterogeneity of territory, Gil notes that the forming of compounds of dancing bodies equates to the creation of “heterogenous material,” or the finding of new connections between heterogeneous materials. To assemble means to connect, to enable “contact” or symbiosis, through which “energy” passes (p. 70). Gil notes that heterogeneous organic movements are the material of the compound of the dancing body. All such assemblages of movements seem to correspond with a different organic body, that is, a different virtual organic body. Actual movement thus “extends” into virtuality in this multiplicity of organic bodies. The result of this multiplicity of virtual organic bodies is the “impossible body,” a body that is not real and empirical but “monstrous” and “virtual” (p. 44). The consistency of the dancer’s heterogenous movements is a given only in this virtuality of the monstrous body, it is not attainable in a particular organic body, but in their impossible combination of diverse organic bodies. “The coherence of the coexistence of the heterogenous” is guaranteed by “the virtual unity of movement” or “the unity of virtual movement” (p. 44). To the basis of Gil’s ideas about narcissism, in which the stable point of view from which the dancer contemplates his or her own body is maintained, we can add that the virtual unity of the danced movement incorporates not only visual images but also tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory ones. This understanding of the heterogeneity of danced movements, too, in a certain way corresponds with Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas about consolidating the heterogenous signs of a territory.

I add that although in Gil’s concept the unity of the dancer’s movements is “composed of virtual movement,” the coherence of the compound of a dance performance does not exclusively lie in bodily movements. In a dance performance “virtual unity” applies also to the movement of objects, feelings, or ideas

(Gil, 2001, p. 45). This unity even surpasses the heterogeneity of the elements of a dance performance and leads toward establishing the coherence of elements that are used in different arts. Virtual unity is valid on the plane of “sounds, colors, and gestures,” that is, on the plane of immanence, on which dance, music, literature, and painting are connected (p. 46).

4. The interconnection and distinction between actuality and virtuality

In his work on the space of the body, Gil generally states that the actual body evolves into the virtual body, which is prepared to actualize itself and to enable the actualization of its gestures (Gil, 2001, p. 58). If we attempt to summarize Gil's ideas about the nature of the dancer's movements discussed above, we can say that the actual position of the body evolves toward virtual positions into which it projects itself. The dancer's movements therefore mean the surpassing of this actual position toward the virtuality of the dancer's movement. At the same time, however, virtual positions are actualized. This means that they are realized in actual positions. A link between actual movements and virtual movements exists. There is “a doubling of the body toward itself (from the actual toward the virtual and from the virtual toward the actual)” (p. 45–46). Therefore, exchange is constantly taking place between the actuality and the virtuality of the dancing body. This actuality manifests as inseparable from this virtuality. And if we understand the dancer's movements as the unceasing evolution of actuality into virtuality, the fluidly changing actuality of the dancing body seems hard to distinguish from the virtuality of this position's transformations.

This notion that actuality and virtuality are difficult to distinguish from each other or even inseparable shares much in common with Deleuze's ideas on the connection between the actual and the virtual presented in *Dialogues*. Deleuze notes that philosophy always deals with multiplicity and that multiplicity always contains actual and virtual elements. No object can be called “purely actual,” as “every actual is surrounded by a cloud of virtual images” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, p. 148). An actual element emits, and then absorbs, virtual elements that “vary in kind” and “in their degree of proximity” (p. 148). Every actual is surrounded by circuits of virtuality that “perpetually renew themselves.” These circuits emit virtuality and “surround” and “react upon” the actual (p. 148). Virtual images are not inextricable from an actual object, just as an actual object is not inseparable from these images. Circuits of the virtual form the “the total impetus of the object”; they are “layers” of the object in which the object becomes virtual (p. 149). The images and the object are therefore virtual; they create a plane of immanence “upon which the dissolution of the actual object occurs” (p. 149). At the same time Deleuze notes that the virtual draws closer to the actual in such a way that the two become “less and less distinct” because between them there is a “circuit” of perpetually mutual “exchange”

(p. 150). The actual object, therefore, in the end becomes “indistinguishable” from the virtual image (p. 151). Here Deleuze refers to Bergson’s work on the virtuality of memories, when he states that an “actual perception has its own memory as a sort of immediate, consecutive or even simultaneous double” (p. 150).

I would like to point out that Deleuze’s use of motifs contained in Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* also leads Deleuze to emphasize the distinction between the actual and the virtual. Deleuze was heavily influenced by Bergson’s understanding of the “radical difference” between “pure memory,” that is, virtuality stored in the memory, and the “actuality” of present things, which this memory may become (Bergson, 1911, p. 179), when he states that actualization belongs to the virtual. The culmination or product of actualization, however, is actual in the sense of the object (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, p. 149–150). Deleuze specifically elaborates Bergson’s concept of the difference between “true memory,” which stores the virtuality of memories, and “quasi-instantaneous memory,” which is a “set of mechanisms” that affect the actual, or present, situation (Bergson, 1911, p. 196–197), where he notes that the difference between an actual object and a virtual image “corresponds to the most fundamental split in time” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, p. 151). This split corresponds to how in the “passage” of time “two great jets” are distinguished: on one hand the passage of time lies in “the passing of the present” and on the other hand in the “preservation of the past” (p. 151). The passing present is that which defines the actual. It is bound up with the “ephemerality” of the virtual because the virtual is a period of time that is “smaller” than “the smallest period” of imaginable continuous time (p. 151). This smaller-than-the-smallest period of time moves the present into the past (p. 151). At the same time, however, within the virtual is everything that has been preserved, that is, all of the past (p. 151). The smallest period of time is therefore also the “longest time, longer than the longest unit of continuous time imaginable” (p. 151). In this past “virtuals communicate directly,” unseparated by the actuals (p. 151). Despite the apparent continuity of Deleuze’s conception of the relation between the actual and the virtual with Bergson’s considerations, Bergson’s conception seems more radical in its distinction between the virtual and the actual than Deleuze and Guattari’s. This is because Bergson understands virtuality as possibility and actuality as realization, whereas Deleuze and Guattari combine the actual and the virtual in the process of becoming.

I would like to point out that like in the work of Deleuze we also find in Gil’s writings a reflection of this ambiguity in the relations between the actual and the virtual. Bergson’s understanding of the distinction between the actual and the virtual, or rather of the principal difference between them, is transmitted not only in Deleuze’s general considerations but also in Gil’s understanding of

the dancer's movement.² I have already pointed out Gil's idea of the necessary distance between the actual and virtual position of the dancing body. From Gil's point of view, however, this distance reflects the fundamental difference between the actual and the virtual. Despite the clear connection and the constant exchange between the actual and the virtual of the dancer's movement the principal difference between the actuality of the dancer's body and the virtuality of the body's movement becomes clear. If we understand the actuality of the dancer's body as that which has already been achieved or actualized, then the dancer's movements must contain the above-mentioned doubling of the body even in the sense that there is a certain difference between the actual and the virtual because the virtual body, unlike the actual body, is elusively variable and inexhaustibly mobile. I am convinced that when Gil examines the relationship between heterogenous organic movements and the monstrous impossible body he is referring to this mobility and variability of the virtual body. Only this elusive and inexhaustibly mobile virtual body ensures the constant transformation and innovation of the real body. This is because this monstrous mobile body, the virtual body, is understood by Gil as a huge reservoir of possibilities for the actualization of movements.

5. Virtuality as a "Zone"

Many of Gil's ideas point to the difference between the virtuality and the actuality of the dancer's movement. Paraphrasing dancer and choreographer Steve Paxton, Gil notes that in common movement there are "holes" or "intervals" that are not accessible to "full consciousness" (Gil, 2001, p. 140). Within our conscious intentions behind performed movements there is an "unconscious content" (p. 140). Gil explores what we can find in these moments where consciousness "is lacking" (p. 140). They are movements that are so fast that they evade the consciousness, that they are not "engraved into our intention" (p. 140). These movements, which "in their extreme rapidity evade the consciousness," are "virtual" (p. 141). The dancer may focus on and emphasize the existence of these intervals or holes in movement. The dancer's movements, for example, those emerging from Paxton's choreography, highlight the existence of these "unthinkably" fast movements, especially in the improvisations of two dancing bodies confronting each other. Gil, however, points out that these holes or intervals in "intentional" movement can be filled. The unconscious content can be made conscious. We can arrive at "what happens in between" disjointed moments of complete consciousness (p. 140). The dancer arrives at how to fill these blank intervals when he or she is "fully conscious" of the continuity of dance movements, when in his or her consciousness "the map of movements is

² Maria Ferraz (2011, p. 682) has noted the connection between Gil's work on dance movement and Bergson's notions of virtuality and actuality.

unfurled” (p. 140). In this situation, dance movements “do not remain unconscious in a hole in the consciousness.” They are incorporated into the “overall feeling of movement” (p. 140–141). Thus, through actualization, virtual dance movements “become conscious” (p. 141). It is, however, out of the question that all virtual movements transform into actual ones (p. 141). The vast domain of virtual movements is inexhaustible. Gil’s ideas about the dancer’s movements, however, lead not only to the discovery that the virtual is actualized in the dancer’s movements but also to highlighting that the dancer’s movements suggest the potential of actualizing the vast domain of the virtual.

For example, while writing about Yvonne Rainer’s choreography, Gil refers to this expanse of the virtual as a *zone*: “the virtual is a *zone* as a space of always possible actualization of movement” (Gil, 2001, p. 203). This zone is a prerequisite for the potential of the dancer’s movements. It opens up “an infinite number of possible bodily movements and combinations thereof” (p. 167). The abating of movements, their “vanishing,” in some of Rainer’s choreography, however, is not a “plain and simple vanishing” (p. 203). It does not mean “annihilation,” “a fall into nothingness” (p. 203). This vanishing “*progresses towards something*” (p. 203). This “something,” the virtual, “surrounds” the actual in its emergence; it is like time that “is always here,” “always invisible and available,” when a “new form” emerges (p. 203). For the same reason, Rainer rejects the repetition of movements in her choreography. Repetition emphasizes the “objective” nature of movement. Rainer, however, wants to show what the repetition and objective capturing of movements is based on. That actual movements are not repeated allows the emergence of the “virtual (transcendental) time of repetition,” that is, time that is “enabled” through the repetition of movements (p. 204). The virtual time into which “disappearing movements enter” (p. 203) is the “frame/reservoir of ever-possible actualizations” (p. 204). Thanks to this abatement of movements and their non-repetition, the zone in which movements gain the ability to “become objectified” and become visible may “paradoxically” become “quasi-visible” (p. 204). Paradoxically, in this choreography “the virtual [is] actualized as the virtual” (p. 178). The zone that makes Rainer’s choreography quasi-visible is “non-presence,” which lies on the boundary between “presence” and “absence” (p. 204). The fact that vanishing movements “suggest” not “that which is here” but “ever-possible actualization” (p. 204) hints at the inexhaustibility of the virtuality of movements. Using a different approach, he also examines virtuality in the choreography of Pina Bausch. Bausch lets the “movement of virtual bodies” evolve in the words and improvised movements of the dancers (p. 221). Here, a “splitting of the subject” occurs, the proliferation of virtual subjects that differ from each other (p. 221). Dancers’ actual vocal and movement improvisations are connected with virtual words and gestures, and thus with “a multiplicity of virtual bodies” to which these words and gestures belong (p. 221). This choreography then seems to be an actualization of virtual multiplicity, as if Bausch “pursued the actualization” of this virtuality (p. 221).

Therefore, in such ideas virtuality takes on the shape of that which is always accessible as well as that which allows actuality to become real. This potential is not present as the actual, but at the same time it is not non-present like nothingness. Gil's statements regularly confirm this understanding of virtuality as possibilities and of actuality as the realization of this virtuality. I have already mentioned that Gil understands the virtual image of the body as the opposite of the real image of the body. But it can also be said that "the actual partner realizes the double of the dancer" (Gil, 2001, p. 63). This understanding of virtuality as the possibility of actualization shows that Gil has gone beyond the notion of virtuality developed by Deleuze and Guattari. In contrast to Gil's views on virtuality as distinct from reality, which I have already briefly mentioned, Deleuze and Guattari do not understand virtuality as the opposite of reality. The virtual is real without being actual (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 95, 99–100). I believe that Gil's statements about the virtual as a zone or reservoir of possibilities of actuality resemble more closely the thrust of Bergson's ideas about the relationship of virtual memory to actual bodily perception. In *Matter and Memory* Bergson considers "virtual images" and "virtual acts" to be images and acts that evolve toward "true movements" (Bergson, 1911, p. 168). These virtual images serve as mediators between "virtual objects," which are deposited in pure memory, and the "real objects" that we perceive (p. 167). Gil's idea that the relationship between actual dance movements and the zone of virtuality is similar to Bergson's conceptual relationship between real, that is, perceived objects, and pure memory. The connection between Gil's ideas and Bergson's theory of the virtual is explicitly confirmed: the vanishing of danced movements in Rainer's choreography "transforms actual movements into virtual memory (Bergson)" (Gil, 2001, p. 203).

6. The Virtuality of Dance Movement as a Source of Innovation

Gil, however, deals with the "virtuality" of the dancer's movements when he writes about the evolution of dance, specifically about the transformations it underwent in the twentieth century. Here the virtuality takes on the actual's "value of negation," if we understand the actual as a system of the "classic" dance idiom (Gil, 2001, p. 45). Classic dance movements, in their persistence, approach having the status of achieved or realized actual movements, and as "templates" of movements are not by their nature far off from movements of the holistic organic body (p. 34–35). The monstrous virtual body, or zone, negates the organic body with which classical ballet choreography works (p. 45). This negation, however, at the same time allows new actualities of danced movement to emerge; it is the "source of a new type of actual movement and a new choreographic language" (p. 45). The virtuality of movement in Gil's thought becomes a source of purification to which the dancer or choreographer can turn to when they seek to move away from the fixed steps involved in

danced movements. Thanks to the virtuality of the monstrous body, a new manner of actualizing danced movements can emerge.

In connection with this conception of virtuality, Gil speaks about the emptying or abstracting of movements. The virtuality of movements is the result of abstraction, of stripping away all representation—the representation of feelings, objects, stories, and the body itself as a holistic organic whole. From this virtuality stem modern and postmodern understandings of dance movements, such as that of Merce Cunningham. This virtuality retreats beyond the idea of the actualized body. It is something; it is “neither represented nor representable” because it lies in the “blind zone” where movements interweave (Gil, 2001, p. 54). Modern and postmodern choreography therefore turn to this blind zone of interweaving because this zone is that which “stirs” movements (p. 42). It is a “transcendental space” or “a condition of the potential of the danced movement itself” (p. 167). This transcendental space opens up “an infinite scale” of bodily movements and combinations thereof (p. 167). Thus, in this zone “multiple heterogeneous spaces virtually coexist” from which the dancer or choreographer can draw in an attempt to create a new manner of dance movement. A precondition for such restoration is the revelation of the “infinity of virtual bodies,” which “inhabit” the body (p. 167). The dancer’s or choreographer’s actualization of this infiniteness of virtual bodies “establishes” an always specific “space of the body” (p. 167). Establishing the space of the body requires that the dancer’s body always contain another virtual body or other virtual bodies (p. 152). In the dancing body performing actual movements there is a “crowd of virtual dancers” (Gil, 2001, p. 152). This crowd of dancers in the dancing body corresponds with the monstrous body, the virtual body. The body performing dance movements does not cease to draw from this virtuality. It does not cease to actualize this monstrosity.

It is, however, unquestionable that the monstrosity of the virtual body is used in different ways in different choreographies. Even though choreography always refers to this monstrous virtuality and even though the actualization of movements in choreography always makes this monstrous virtuality quasi-visible, choreography refers to it only from the perspective of chosen actual movements. Only from this perspective is the virtuality of the monstrous body made quasi-perceptible. Here too there is a connection to Bergson’s ideas. In *Matter and Memory* Bergson remarks that actualized virtuality is like “a condensing cloud” (Bergson, 1911, p. 171). Virtuality itself is “independent” of the actual (p. 170). However, it “manifests itself” only in the “coloured and living image,” that is, in the actual image that “reveals” it (p. 170). I believe that danced movements make such a manifestation or revelation of the virtuality of the monstrous body in actual movements of the dancing body, which constantly projects its virtual images. The novelty of dance movements involved in certain choreography stems from the specific way in which the virtual monstrous body is actualized. This novelty is based on the rejection of established methods of actualization,

that is, on the rejection of a system of accepted, even canonized movements, and lies in the creation of a new method of actualizing the virtuality of the monstrous body.

7. Conclusion

Gil's notion of the relationship between the actual and the virtual in dance movements is, despite its multiple layers, internally coherent. The evolution of the actual image of the dancing body into virtual images is facilitated through the existence of the invisible domain of the virtual interweaving of images. Virtual images into which the actual positions of the body evolve are always in a certain way the manifestation of this invisible domain and represent a certain perspective from which it is viewed. And because these virtual images correspond with the actual position of the body with which they are connected, the perspective from which the virtual domain of interweaving movements is viewed is determined by the actual, or real, movements of the body. Virtuality itself, as a domain of interweaving, or a cloud of movements, differs from the actual and is even separate from it because the only connection between it and the actual are virtual images projected in the actual position of the body. Gil's conception of the "zone" of the virtual conceives of this difference between the virtual and the actual, which we must assume in the very evolution of the danced movement, as fundamental. Despite the inspiration from Langer and the use of several concepts formulated by Deleuze and Guattari, Gil's understanding of the relationship between the actual and the virtual is clearly Bergsonian. Even though the space of the body, which emerges as the actual position of the body evolving into virtual images, can be described using terms such as *striated space*, *deterritorialization*, or *heterogeneity*, its evolving is based on the zone of the virtual. The actual positions of the dancing body, that is, of the body projecting virtual images of itself, are based on the transcendental multiplicity of the body's potential, on an infinite number of interweaving movements stored in the continuous virtuality of memory. This virtual memory, as a huge reservoir of possibilities for actualization, also allows for innovations in the conception of dance movements, in choreography, and in the ways in which compositions are created, as well as compositions of compositions of real and virtual movements. I believe that especially from this perspective, Gil's reflections contribute to an understanding of the nature of dance movement, showing it as both continuous and transformative, or rather transformative in its continuity. This continuous transformation concerns both individual dance performances and the innovative development of choreographic practices.

References

- Bergson, H. (1911). *Matter and memory*. New York: MacMillan,
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1994). *What Is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. & Parnet, C. (2007). *Dialogues II*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ferraz, M. C. F. (2011). Graça, corpo e consciência. *Revista FAMECOS: mídia, cultura e tecnologia*, 18(3), 674–684. <https://doi.org/10.15448/1980-3729.2011.3.10376>
- Gil, J. (2001). *Movimento Total – O Corpo e a Dança*. Lisboa: Relógio d'Água.
- Langer, S. (1957). *Problems of Art*. New York: Charles Scribner's Son.
- Santos, M. S. C. (2018). Instant Composition: Choreographic Training of the Dance Artist and his Corporeality. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença/Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies*, 8(1), 167–193. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2237-266063624>

Miloš Ševčík received his Ph.D. in aesthetic at Charles University, Prague, in 2003. In 2021, he achieved habilitation in philosophy at University of Ostrava. In his research, he deals mainly with the aesthetics of the 20th and 21st centuries, focusing on issues of the temporality of the aesthetic experience, rhythm, and virtuality. His professional interests also include the theory of comicality. He authored or co-authored seven monographs, including *Process and Aesthetics. An Outline of Whiteheadian Aesthetics and Beyond* (Prague: Karolinum, 2021) and *Louis Cazamian's Theory of Humour* (Prague: Karolinum, 2021).