

SONDRA FRALEIGH

State University of New York

Ethical world gaze

ABSTRACT

Earth spinning in space grounds our world-sense of belonging, as do our spinning dances. This article explores self-world-earth relationships, particularly how direction of attention (intentionality) becomes formative in dancing. More widely, it develops a philosophy of an ethical world gaze, promising to enliven the senses. Somewhere between untenable extremes of optimism and pessimism, actions born of joy and hope draw me towards this possibility. Earth, world and nature entwine in language and perception, but they also have divergent aspects to be theorized. These imprecise terms become increasingly more discrete in the course of this article, textured through perspectives of Buddhism, eco-phenomenology and butoh. Examinations of ethics in dance and attendant relationships of morality build from there. I explore all of this in four sections of this work: Stargazing, Faces of joy and evanescence, Texturing world and nature, and As the moth.

KEYWORDS

ethical
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matching
earth
intentionality
travel

When I was 5 years old, my father read a book to me about the travels of Marco Polo. What joy! I asked him to read it over and over again, and imagined myself a world traveller. Over the years, this has come true; I have travelled the world. Many places have taught me how to pay attention to the new, the novel, the historically grand or simply grounding. Navigating the unknown draws one's attention to small and overlooked details of place, tastes of food never imagined and faces never glanced. Chancing the unknown widens one's world gaze, and at best engenders empathy for those who are bereft and have little. This gaze is contemplative attunement that takes the form of wonder and care.

1. The term 'worlding' has a long history in phenomenology, and was used by Husserl early in the twentieth century. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty use it later in the same century. I use it first in 1987 in *Dance and the Lived Body* (p. 165), and again in 2004 in *Dancing Identity* (p. 133) to signify an expansive, moving use of language and world in dance scholarship. I continue to use it here and elsewhere through its origination in phenomenology. Heidegger's famous use of 'worlding' signifies a poetic and ever-expanding four-fold-gathering dance of earth and heaven, mortality and divinity (See Heidegger 1971: 163–86).

As an adult, I travelled in Polo's directions towards the Far East, curbing my illusions, but not completely. When I was five, I envisioned jade colours in the atmosphere of the East, with gold and emerald jewels lining the streets, but my stays in Japan nowadays are not so green. Automobiles whizz by as I wait for the bullet train and close my eyes to sense the luminous surroundings that I once imagined. Occasionally I reconnect to the mental travels of my childhood, admiring very real and gorgeous silk kimonos in the Tokyo shops or golden temples in Kyoto built eons ago. The world is still a wonder to me, and so I continue to travel and also to teach as part of this journey. More importantly, through travel I have learned to pay attention to the world that I experience, especially its thickening diversity of people and places. Cultivation of attention to the world outside has also helped me attend more closely at home, and as part of my spiritual path, travel has made me a better person.

Earth and world are quite different, but we often equate them, maybe because both are wide and ubiquitous. I live in Southwest Utah, where the natural surroundings of vast deserts, deep canyons and rivers hold us on earth. The earth is red here, a root-morphic burnt orange and swirling pink container. When I look out of my window at Pine Valley Mountain on the horizon, I absorb the autumn glories of birch trees cleaning the air. As a traveller, I experience cultural and social worlds of other people and the physical givens of earth as joyfully novel yet near, partly through circumstantial luck, but I have also been a good student. I like to study, to pay attention and to learn new things. I have never lost my taste for travel and philosophy, swimming in the ocean or music and dance. Philosophy keeps me asking questions and thinking beyond assumptions of the everyday. Music gives me rest and ecstasy.

And dance? Ahh, that one! Dance brings me closer to others and myself, where space encompasses time, moving with the worlding of the world¹ in spectrums of experience as earth becomes clay to play with. In matching earth and ocean as I dance with them, I sense their organic textures and how colours move within their histories. I have no guarantee that the earth senses me, but the minute I share its softness, I choose to believe that it does, especially at Mukuntuweap, known as Zion National Park to many.

At Mukuntuweap

I meet the horizon,
Dancing in the rivers and canyons
Below the towering cliffs
Of the Ancestral Puebloans.

I don't know if it's sound or silence
Singing to me here.
But I do know, even more,
How it holds me dear.

Dancing brings me joy and is an ethical practice in this respect. Conversely, when depression creeps in, I become a lump on the couch and have less desire to touch the world outside or make a positive difference. Then, I miss connections with others. Doing nothing is sometimes necessary, but turning inward is not always a good thing. Other people, plants and animals, and the otherness of the landscape keep us tuned to world and earth. More closely for me, the earthy call to otherness is intoned through vision, touch and embodied geology.

This article explores relationships of self, world and earth in dancing, particularly how direction of attention (intentionality) becomes formative. I like to encourage dance through *matching*, as here close to my home in Utah, I dance with others to match the red earth of the desert and swerve of canyons. Matching is an empathic sign of regard, a contemplative and selfless intention towards otherness. In looking towards and matching difference, I become inclusive and my world-sense expands. Matching is correlating, often with a meditative intent, letting the world be without trying to master it. I speak without embarrassment of an ethical world gaze, promising not to dull my feelings, nor be swayed by criticisms of sentimentality.

Somewhere between untenable extremes of optimism and pessimism, action born of joy and hope draws me towards this possibility. World includes earth and goes out beyond bounds, just as the earth that we walk on holds and cares for us. World and earth exceed the human, and yet they include us. We know them, and we belong to them when we feel we do. The earth spinning in space grounds our metaphysical world-sense of belonging. Gravity holds us on earth. Grace sustains us. If this sounds like too much to grasp at once and for real, dance brings this world-sense to us in embodied motion, with feet stamping and arms carving intervals of the heart. Earth, world and nature entwine in language and perception, but they also have divergent aspects to be theorized. Examinations of ethics in dance and attendant relationships of morality also build from there. I explore all of this in four sections of this article: Stargazing, Faces of joy and evanescence, Texturing world and nature and As the moth.

STARGAZING

As the branch of philosophy that studies experience, phenomenology teaches that consciousness and intentionality ensue from live state standpoints, and at the same time, create them. The experiential gaze of phenomenology relates to this creative, generative stance, but suspends the natural attitude (what is taken for granted). Originating in sense perception, the gaze interrogates attention itself. This attitude of gazing develops curiosity, not closure. Gazing in its very meaning moves psychologically towards immanence and self-reflection. Gazing is about seeing, and it is also about what seeing means and how it happens. How is attention directed; towards what; and to what end? Matters of attention are matters of consciousness, and they form the basis for standpoints and choices, ethical or otherwise.

In constitutive phenomenology through Edmund Husserl, the orientation of attention is known as *intentionality*: 'to perform attentively an act of seeing [...] to "live" in the seeing [...] to be directed with an active focus to what is objective, to be directed in a specifically *intentional way*' ([1912, 1952] 1989: 5, original emphasis). As the way we orient attention, intentionality has ethical implications. The intentionality of gazing implies an investigation of consciousness, sometimes motivating a deeper look at one's life and actions. In *What is Life*, scientists Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan say: 'Life is evolutionary exuberance; it is what happens when expanding populations of sensing, active, organisms knock up against each other and work things out. Life is animals at play' (1995: 170). Dancer Ashley Meeder develops a playful curiosity and gaze in Figures 1 and 2 below. See also my music videos of these events, *Land to Water Yoga in the Water* (Fraleigh 2016a) and *Levitation Water Dance* (Fraleigh 2016b).



Figure 1: Ashley Meeder. Gazing at a misty-red sea star on Holbox Island in Mexico. Photograph © Rames Xelhuantzi, 2016.



Figure 2: Ashley Meeder. Dancing to match beached driftwood on Holbox Island in Mexico. Photograph © Rames Xelhuantzi, 2016.

The gaze as an image and metaphor is not new. Stargazing draws up imagery in art, motivates astronomy and refers to daydreams and night watching. Existential phenomenologist Jean-Paul Sartre spoke at length of ‘the gaze of the other’, which was threatening to him (1956: 110). Conceptually, the gaze has also been popularized and critiqued as ‘the male gaze’ through the cinema studies of Laura Mulvey (1975). In terms of phenomenology and ethics – the gaze informs perception and understanding. When I gaze at something as a phenomenon (an appearance suspended in time and not laden with belief), I orient my sight and all of my senses towards it. Gazing can be mindful, evoking integrative qualities of meditation and relative to this, *chiasm*, a symbiotic term from Maurice Merleau-Ponty that indicates a crossing over and return; the seer is seen and the knower becomes known (1968: Chapter 4). Attitudes to the body condition such responsiveness. Preceding

Merleau-Ponty, Husserl also wrote of reciprocal interactions of body, psyche and the natural world, describing the body as 'a point of conversion' ([1912, 1952] 1989: 297–99). Husserl's ideas concerning the body as part of material nature are foundational in phenomenology: 'If we apprehend the body as a real thing, it is because we find it integrated into the causal nexus of material nature' ([1912, 1952] 1989: 167).

Jane Bennett in her political ecology, *Vibrant Matter*, puts the phenomenological issue of perception and consciousness as follows: 'I believe that encounters with lively matter can chasten my fantasies of human mastery, highlight the common materiality of all that is, expose a wider distribution of agency, and reshape the self and its interests' (2010: 122). Husserl's initiation of phenomenology set the stage for philosophies of ecology in explaining over several works that how we understand the world enters into our behaviour towards it. Later in this tradition, Merleau-Ponty created a phenomenology of the human as an inseparable part of the already expressive world ([1945] 1962: 3–5, 35, 53, 67–68). In our current century, the eco-phenomenology of performance artist David Abram extends these sources, recently in *Becoming Animal* (2010). Philosophers Edward Casey (2003) and John Llewelyn (2003) also develop rich ecological perspectives in phenomenology and critique views of humanity as above and in conquest of nature. Similarly, the eco-friendly Japanese philosophy of Yasuo Yuasa defines the human as an integral part of the ecosystem, 'for the human being is originally a being born out of nature' (1993: 188). Yuasa's philosophy, *The Body, Self-Cultivation & Ki-Energy* (1993), approaches mind and material not in terms of opposition but through their embodied oneness in being moved by *ki* (universal energy).

As we condition the world in our gaze towards it, we direct perception intentionally and are not passive recipients of material nature as other. This does not necessarily dissolve otherness or the magical difference that it can make. Science, ecology and phenomenology attest a physical, material world, which calls our attention to its evolutions when we are listening. Our gaze towards the stars textures them in constellations and spherical music, and the stars return the gaze. We love what we care for, and this affection crosses over our sensate experiences of the live world, returning to us. We can texture our consciousness with appreciation for the world that we share. Consciousness, in its somatic variety, explores this in many shades. Dancer Roman Morris provides an example, as he navigates an icy winter landscape in Zion, Utah, in this video performance link ('Weeping rock: Exploring grief and climate change', Morris 2016).

Where I stand now

On the red rough cliff of the deserted canyon,
I expect to consult the breeze
by telling it how much it reminds me
of cluttered paths in the muddle of my mind.

Then breathing quietly big,
the desert slips into me,
where I examine conscience and
release failings, not merely on orders.

It has just rained and the sun is out,
my feet miring gratefully

into the wet rust silt
and sandy squish.

What causes my shoulders to
hunch and dance in rhythms,
like repeat reversals
of oscillatory habitats?

Why, I ask, where I stand now
in my kitchen
with a lemon in my hand, do I inhale
ghosts with blank expressions?

Let me return to the soft stones with my name,
to sign it in mud, and with a flourish of toes.

Below, I turn towards soma in affective states that I also think of as *live states* of being. Live states are flesh and blood vitalities, moving as we move, feeling so much like dancing. As Buddhism holds, 'it is not correct to say that life is moving, but movement is life itself. Life and movement are not two different things' (Rahula 1974: 26). At the same time, movement is the very definition of ephemerality. 'Nothing lasts long enough to move', Tibetan Buddhist scholar Miranda Shaw said in 'Dancing on earth' (2016), a seminar that inspired the present journal. I can hardly wrap my mind around Shaw's statement, and yet, I want to. For now, I relate it to immeasurable present time and its resistance



Figure 3: Blue Muffins in Snow Canyon, dancing into the soft sandstone. Left to right: Sarah Gallo, Denise Purvis and Meghan Brunsvold. Photograph © Tom Gallo, 2015.

to being captured in the live states of which I speak. Live states are what? They are what, where we stand and how we are at any moment. *Intention* is part of this slippery animation, not separate from our dances and disappearances, but very much alive in present time – as past and future obscure while attention intensifies – leaping, swerving or settling.

When liveliness is imbued with dancing purposes, it is not lazy, nor is it selfish; it is present-centred and life-affirming. In being focused, such direction of attention has the potential to elicit moral attitudes and ethical actions, those we might value as good because they are uplifting and vitalizing, also recognizing cycles of life and death in nature.

At the top of my list of live states that animate ethical intent in dance, I nominate *joyfulness* and its intoxications, not those of drugs or drunkenness, but those that might easily appear in heartening movements, and at the other end of the energy spectrum, meditative states of *vastness*, tending towards *evanescence*.

In the following, I explore examples of my study of butoh through travels in Japan and several other countries. This is the form of dance arising from the ashes of Japan in the aftermath of the Second World War. In morphing the human into all that is not human, butoh is not naively joyful but passes deftly through many transformational states in its illogic and evaporations. I am drawn to the meditative, inclusive processes in butoh's now global spread, its healing embrace of performances in nature and its neutral, almost-Buddhist lack of expectations.

FACES OF JOY AND EVANESCENCE

The Chinese Book of Changes, The I Ching, anthropomorphizes affects of joyfulness in the image of *the smiling lake* and delineates qualities of true joy: 'True joy rests on firmness and strength within, manifesting itself outwardly as yielding and gentle' (*I Ching*, 1967: 224). In their workshops, my butoh mentors the Ohnos, Kazuo (father) and Yoshito (son), teach in their gentle ways that *dance should be intoxicating*. Well into old age, Kazuo cast spells in his dance. Intoxications of dance are related to what transpersonal psychologists Abraham Maslow (2014) and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2013) call, among other things, peak experiences, being in the groove, riding a wave and being in flow. The affective residuals of these states include spontaneity, unselfconsciousness in action, absorptive involvement and euphoria. 'Unmixed happiness' recognized in trance and very pure spiritual states of *dhyana* attained in meditation are described in Buddhism, which also speaks of pleasure free from sensations both pleasant and unpleasant (Rahula 1974: 18). All of these impermanent states are known at various times in contexts of dance. In technically challenging forms, they arrive through a mix of skill and abandon and intensify existentially through bravery. In contemplative forms, states of joy dive into the mix as possible movements bubble up in gentle bliss. In dancing, joy has many changing faces, and cannot be forced.

These thoughts continue my post-metaphysical research in a chapter of *Dancing Identity*, 'The morality of joy' (Fraleigh 2004: Chapter 9), but with an eye to the joy of connecting to world and earth through attentive performance, noting that performance is not simply a phenomenon of the stage. When I dance somatically in the careens of coral-coloured canyons or find footing with others in the fathomless spirituality of deserts and forests, I breathe in the oxygen that feeds my desires to be better, to be more awake and able

to embody worlds of difference beyond my immediate grasp, matching them empathically. I might even identify this as a call to earthly friendship with others near and far, and to an ethic of compassion and peace.

The laughter and joy that ensue from companionship when I dance with others in the environment are worth more to me than impressions of the stage. Most of the somatically oriented performances that I facilitate in nature are not for an audience. Even so, I love enlightening theatre. The self-forgiving joys that I speak of in attuning to nature through dance have much in common with concert dancing and being an audience for stage performances. Both bring us out of ourselves and into community. To do anything in concert is to do it together. I cannot count the performances that I have attended over 58 years of witnessing dance and theatre. Hundreds, no doubt. Theatre dances and earth dances both engage the mindfulness of a traveller, not simply a tourist, but one who is ready for surprise and the inevitable pain of unpredictable encounters. Tourists are insulated in air-conditioned rooms wherever they go. Travellers live with new environments and people, at least for a while, and often without expectations of familiar comforts. Environmental dances like staged performances are not comfortable; their vagaries can be terrifying, but they expand one's reverence for life. Most of all, stepping out into material nature widens attention towards world-spaciousness and livens time beyond time, living in every dance, rock and leaf. Still further, photography, film and video generate potentials for sharing dance experiences beyond immediate instances, as shown in Tom Gallo's photograph above (Figure 3).

Attentiveness manifests in various ways, and its generous forms are potentially powerful. Iris Murdoch writes about the moral virtue of paying attention unselfishly to something without expectation (1993). Similarly, Simone Weil's philosophy attends spiritually and socially to world suffering as a way of overcoming self-centredness (Springsted 1986). In advocating a morality of joy, I take another step in the same direction as Murdoch and Weil. But joy, simply as an emotion, might not be moral at all, or evoke ethical actions. Joy is an embodied somatic state that might in any next moment break towards gloom or suffering. Buddhism speaks to such psychological shifting. It delineates a particular kind of suffering that appears in unrequited desire, the dissatisfaction of not being or having enough, evoking endless desires for more. The Buddha is described as 'ever smiling', happy, serene, contented and compassionate (Rahula 1974: 26–27). Buddhism recognizes suffering, while it does not dwell on it.

Impermanence and evanescence are keys to Buddhist thought, just as these often appear in the morphic intentionality of *butoh*. Somatic states are always passing, and passing through us. What happens when we multiply selfless attentive states and these settle into individual habitus? Might we cultivate the joy of having enough? In its wake, joy, however fleeting, promotes well-being, and in joyful states, people tend to treat others in light of the gladness that they feel. I cannot prove this, but I do observe it. When people dance expansively with others, and experience a joyful belonging to the world, they do not waste time on petty grievances. Dancing joyfully and reflectively develops human capacity for empathy and enduring curiosity.

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I facilitated a performance in Snow Canyon near where I live in Southwest Utah. To begin the performance, the four of us sat on the curving soft sandstone, as each of us took a turn focusing silently inward using psychologist



Figure 4: Sondra Fraleigh. Photograph © Tom Gallo, 2015.

Eugene Gendlin's guidelines for 'Focusing'. This is a transpersonal process with a witness where people take time to focus attention on an image that arises spontaneously for them when their eyes are closed. The image might be anything: perhaps a sound, a shape or visual image, a taste, a word or whole phrase. The point is that one gets to pay attention to something latent in consciousness, ready and waiting, and this can be anything or nothing at all. Focusing is a reflective experiment in attention, patience and sharing. Participants usually have something to say about what arises for them, as they recount this to a witness.

We four witnessed each other's images and words on this bright September morning in the canyon, and then danced our images to the group, noting that dance is not part of Gendlin's original plan. Each of us danced in solo while the others watched, and 'seeing' was acknowledged as part of 'being seen'. I remember the melting, arresting tones of each person's dance, the vast earth holding us and sounds of the morning breeze moving through us. Together, we shimmied through multimodal images, our bodies striking the canyon sandstone and bouncing back. Looking up, I understood how heaven drops through skin and stone without prejudice. My music video portrays parts of our imagistic dance (Fraleigh 2015b). Tom Gallo's photograph above shows my settling with earth and laughter at the finish (Figure 4).

TEXTURING WORLD AND NATURE

If joy comes through lively, liberated and concentrated actions, forbearance and patience often occasion thoughtful restraint. The magic trick of dance is in allowing things to change, as earth and nature are constantly changing, and not to get stuck looking back with regret or forward in expectation. In present-centred dance, I lose self-recriminations and have courage. Casting the world as *lover*, as Buddhist teacher Joanna Macy does (2007), emphasizes an interactive mode of attention and ecological relationship. The true lover is not self-centred, but is concerned with the welfare of others. Sitting or moving for a

while in a natural environment, by a stream, for instance, allows the mind to settle and stop 'hopping around'. One might then start afresh and without obsessive attachment to personal concerns. Worries can drift away, and attention can flow as part of the streaming world. Buddhism would carry attention towards suffering, but move at last towards compassion and joy.

In Buddhism compassion is a key principle, and it is also a practice of texturing the world through mindfulness, noticing suffering and joy without attaching to these in any permanent way – all this while acting to assist others. To this purpose, one cultivates the self through some tangible, artful means. Paying attention to ourselves with care and curiosity in dance processes means that we value our own life. Curiosity is about not knowing; it gives up the answers. When we are curious, we can become aware of ourselves almost as if we were another, thus becoming teachable. Curiosity is basic to happiness because it is a prompt to let go of self-judgement, to become present to others and the world in this moment. We can make peace with the past and take joy in the future in such vital moments of dancing.

My dance is like my body, a fleeting part of the material of the living world, a correlate of the world and all life.

When I dance, I value my part
in the evolving meaning of the life of this world
and of worlds that beckon.

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Moving attention towards the natural world helps to change the mind in its restless motions so that something larger than self-interest might arrive in consciousness. But some might say *there is no such thing as nature*, that nature is a learned, culturally constructed point of view. Indeed, Husserl notices that nature even in its objective appearances is constituted in consciousness. It is thinkable, he says, 'that there is no nature at all'. But he sees that such thinking also places consciousness outside of nature. In this attitude, 'consciousness is not positable as something of nature (as state of an animal); it is absolutely non-spatial' ([1912, 1952] 1989: 187). In the many ways Husserl gives text and language to nature and consciousness, he also textures lived space and time as active states of human consciousness relative to nature.

In *Material Feminisms*, Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman sidestep consciousness to put the problem in more mundane terms of language and outlook:

Whereas the epistemology of modernism is grounded in objective access to a real/natural world, postmodernists argue that the real/material is entirely constituted by language; what we call the real is a product of language and has its reality only in language. In their zeal to reject the modernist grounding in the material, postmodernists have turned to the discursive pole as the exclusive source of the constitution of nature, society, and reality. Far from deconstructing the dichotomies of language/reality or culture/nature, they have rejected one side and embraced the other.

(2008: 1–2)

I engage the insight of Alaimo and Hekman with a question about nature and our intentions towards the environment. As concerns performance and action,

do we act *on* environments or *in* environments? The first intention separates; the second makes humans an integral part of the environments that they inhabit. Do we conceive ourselves as actors on a passive slate of otherness, as artists who mould and shape the environment, or do we embrace environmental emergence and art as belonging to ecological unfolding? In the latter case, we culture (or evolve) art as part of nature and not as a superior comment or event. When we accustom to the subject-object direction of intention in creative processes, and to walling consciousness off from nature as other, making and doing become acting-on or above, rather than acting-with or acting-as. It matters that we dance our way into our human continuities with nature, that we care for material environments vastly wide and far, just as we care for our intimate human terrains.

In order to clarify further, let me define what I mean by *nature* and differentiate it somewhat from *world* through Husserl. We mean many things when we invoke 'world' as a term. Husserl expanded 'world' in his term 'lifeworld', generating several meanings: the environing world (nature), the world of human production and tradition (culture), the world established relationally through social structures and interactions (community and society) and worldly knowledge obtained through carefully coded objectivity and observation (science). He produced a rich variety of topics concerning the world of practical life, ecology, culture and history ([1932] 1995: xiv, 181–92). It is significant that his broad lifeworld concept sees lived continuities across difference and delineation. Ethically, he describes lifeworld inclusively as a world of 'we', one that grasps human continuities with other life, understanding that all life comes from an *environing core*. Husserl's ontology does not separate human subjectivity from nature, but speaks to nature's influence. Nature changes in the grasp of human subjectivity, but still has unity 'as core in its own ontological form' (Husserl [1932] 1995, 189). Nature is materially real in phenomenology, and as lived and known, nature is also complex.

Husserl elaborated lifeworld concepts over the course of two early books and throughout his philosophy ([1900] 1970, [1912, 1952] 1989: 383–90, [1932] 1995: 164–65). In his 1936 publication, *Crisis*, two years before his death, he continued to evolve lifeworld meanings (Husserl [1936] 1970). He managed to combine the physical word, 'life', with the more amorphous expression, 'world'. These are both widely interpreted terms that take on meanings through use. Husserl textured them by delineating and combining them. How could the world be alive unless it included natural processes of growth and decay, for instance? And how could life mean more than the ability to move and reproduce? Life and world commonly refer us beyond such simple boundaries. World as lived invokes multitudes of decisions and choices. World as Earth is where we walk and dance, and it is also a distant marbled globe photographed from space. Lifeworld is the aliveness of the world in its many dimensions: material, physical, social, psychological, anthropological, imagistic and more. All the ways we can study life and world are implicated, including the illusive world of spiritual life. Husserl viewed human subjectivity as having the capacity to experience time beyond objective boundaries ([1912, 1952] 1989: 187–88). This would be one of the ways in which phenomenology explains spirituality. Husserl's early study of varied subjective and intersubjective experiences is key to lived distinctions between the spiritual and the psychological ([1912, 1952] 1989: 412–13).

In expansive concepts of lifeworld, phenomenology generates an ontology of nature grounded in living, moving, environments. It is significant for eco-phenomenology that Husserl kept returning to what he originally identified as 'the environing world'. This would be what we commonly call nature, recognized variously in its temporal glacial sluggishness, vital materiality and terrifying physical forces. Nature is not an abstraction in phenomenology, but it can be represented in abstract terms. Like dance, nature is a word and phenomenon of mind and matter; it lives materially in the real time and embodied space of which human consciousness is a part.

AS THE MOTH

We began by extolling travel, dancing in coral canyons close to home and gazing at a true-red starfish. Like this star, my body of dance correlates with objective, affective boundaries, expressive bodies of ice and sand, plants and animals with which it coexists, with bee pollen, fuzzy moths and massive grizzly bears. This field of coexistents is not flat on the page, but rather its differentiations are diverse and invite exploration as their vitalities thicken multidimensional timespace bodies in dance, hopefully not in ways that privilege one form or type. In this field, everything is alive with value to share, including the brightness of sky-blue rocks and the journey from water that spawns all life on earth. This liveliness is what sustains the embodied life of dancing. Like water, dance is flow and sharing in the live present. Lifeworld, the vital field of life out of which dance finds its embodied ways, is what the word 'nature' signals most closely.

Correlations with nature (and with culture) arise in sensate life, and can be oriented in many ways. They might occasion as forethought for dancer action, but their broader appearance is through attunement of attention and intentionality. Direction of intention is part of the act of dancing, even as we might speak of intention in terms of lack and missed opportunity. Here we speak of intentionality as a phenomenon that is part of purpose, attention and care. Phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur says of this: 'It is one thing to indicate an action in a project, another thing to act bodily *in conformity with the project* [...] This relation can be instantaneous, that is, the project and its execution can be simultaneous' ([1966] 2007: 38, original emphasis).

Intentionality, interactivity and affectivity are perennial subjects of both phenomenology and dance. The intentional actions of dance create meaning and can renew bodily responsiveness, assisting participants both on and offstage to realize potential and surpass perceptual habits. The progenitors of phenomenology did not write about dance, even though movement, ecology, body and world were important to them, especially in contexts of choice, individual freedom and social responsibility. I write in the belief that inquiry in dance can expand phenomenologies of the body. The current work of neuro-phenomenology through Francisco Varela (1996), vital materialism through Jane Bennett (2010) and somatic perspectives of dance assist ontologies that explain freedom and responsiveness as founded in bodily lived affectivity.

An ethic of care assists the attentive work and play of dancing, and comes to life in various ways. Here we speak of it in attunements of 'dancing on (with/as) earth'. This ethic expands humanity towards other actants (including fuzzy moths, to which I will return), thus expanding the bodily lived foundation of choice and agency. These foundations are based first in somatic sensibilities and understood as meaningful in experience; by extension, we encounter these in social and political life in the freedoms that we proclaim and

scrutinize. In recognizing our tenuous relationships with nature, we grasp how corporate interests and big money in politics pose a threat to the environment and to democracy, as Sheldon Whitehouse outlines in *Capture* (2017).

Consciousness is consciousness of something in Husserlian phenomenology. When we perform an act of expression, or understand an act of expression, it means something to us; we have a consciousness of its sense. Intentionality as orientation communicates meaning through the 'aboutness' of the action or what it is about. Dance processes are sometimes about the dancing itself, but they can also point beyond the dance, signalling out into a broader world. Possible meanings that humans share in dance are many, and they are constructed through sense and interpretation. Meaning-making in dance is a hermeneutic process in live terms, even as technology allows us to access life and dance at an objective remove, as I document in this article through music/dance videos and photographs.

As a dancer, I understand that *dances move in meanings*. If I pay attention carefully, I can discern meaning in movement: in sense, expression and significance. We have said that dance, like consciousness, is oriented through intention, and that what makes an act intentional is its relationship with something. We embody otherness in the way we relate to others and in the 'how' of our doings (call this the intentional quality of actions). These become intensified in matters of performance: in presentation, relationship, transaction and reciprocity. Dancing with others can generate experiences of meaning and sharing. *Dance intensifies perceptual attention* in 'the flowing live present', Husserl's phrase concerning the constitutive function of lived time ([1932] 1995: xiv).

Consciousness is more than being awake. It is being aware of others, self-aware and aware of being embedded in contexts of world and earth. Self is a dynamic unfolding process. Similarly, world and earth continually unfold in consciousness, creatively and imagistically. Images are surely constructed in thoughts and ideas, perceived in colours and sounds, visualizations, rhythmic movement, formal and expressive movement, tastes, smells and narratives. Embodied images are affectively felt and cognitively processed in dance. Tactile-kinesthetic perceptions are among the most potent somatic images that propel dancer creativity. These might be active as sense impressions, or result in cognitive *feelings of knowing* with distinct patterns and attunements that can be described and shared. Dance is a means of identifying with the feelings and thoughts of others and objective otherness, a way towards sharing sense and understanding through imaginative movement.

Art is one of the primary centres of *axiology*, value theory in philosophy and the collective term for ethics and aesthetics. I know this sounds a bit arcane, but it helps locate how values develop through human understanding and affectivity, manifesting in culture and politics in all the ways we can turn the word 'value' towards experience. In dance we find *the good* in experience, intrinsically valued when it becomes meaningful to us aesthetically (affectively) and ethically valued when we find that it moves us towards principled actions, as we understand these. Ethical and aesthetic values are not guaranteed; they are lived in what is fair, what feels and seems right, what is felt and reasoned to be the loving act, what is inclusive and caring. In classical philosophy, the good and the beautiful are entwined. Beauty also has a long history in aesthetic theory, increasing its variable characteristics from formal to expressively reactive, as I have written before (Fraleigh 1999b). Today aesthetic values continue to emerge in curiosity, creative ferment and revolutions. At best, they will lead in the direction of ethical action.



Figure 5: Kimerer LaMothe's charcoal drawing of a white-lined sphinx moth of Colorado and Utah, also called 'hummingbird'. Photograph © Kimerer LaMothe, 2017.

Here at the finish, we lean towards aesthetics and morphology of moths. In ancient Greek philosophy, *Physis* (to puff or to blow) relates to *Physis* (the Goddess of Nature), the creative principle of nature through gestation, hatching and growing, and thus, of change. Creative principles are an ongoing morphic process of the becoming-otherwise of things in motion as they enter into congruent and sometimes strange conjunctions with one another. Morphic becoming hums within the dance of nature, the dance that we already do in cycles of the spinning world. Binaries disappear in the performative phenomenology of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1986, 1987), which draws from Nietzschean poetic philosophy and from Sartre's phenomenology and contemporary writers in science and literature. Their project calls upon several tasks stretching received concepts of subject and object, matter and mind, human and animal, organic and inorganic, also using performative devices such as 'Plane of Consistency' (PoC). If our being is an open project and not determined as Sartre taught in *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre 1956), we can move past binaries, morph and change, and no form is ultimate. It is not too late to re-envision our relationship with nature, to understand and experience our human continuity (or PoC) with all life. We are not other than nature, even if we are also culturally embedded and to some extent shaped through cultural influences. Both nature and culture sediment in human life and are woven into the nervous systems of human responsiveness.

Performativity in the arts can dissipate dual difference, admitting individuation while attending to consistencies, encouraging affective openness

to the material and spiritual metamorphosis of all life. I have been attracted to Japanese butoh and its global manifestations for this very reason. Butoh morphs from one state to another, not denying associations with natural, cultivated and wild environments. Nothing in nature rests untouched by time, and this includes humans. In dancing and teaching dance, I adopt aspects of butoh that pay attention to humans in relation to other phenomena. There is somewhere a plane of consistency (PoC) where all life connects, and we can find this in dancing. As Ohno Kazuo-sensei said in our butoh workshops: 'The entire universe imprints on the moth's wing' (Fraleigh 1999a: 164–65). His workshop words state the continuity between human and other beings and allow us to look into the forgotten corners of our lives, including pain and disease. Butoh does not leave suffering behind. 'Do not push away the messiness of life', Ohno teaches. His workshop urgings also promote a Zen ethos, attending to and caring for all life. Speaking of the moth-like universe, Ohno speaks of gestation in utero to motivate dancers in his improvisatory dance classes: 'the mother makes a soup of the universe to feed to her baby, a soup of the moth's wing' (Fraleigh 1999a).

Like Ohno's dance, ours can turn ecological imagery into ethical world actions. His dances inspired others such as Takenouchi Atsushi and this author to dance for peace and in endangered environments. Among the arts, dance brings unmixed happiness and joy to ethics and attentive world gazes.

The ethical task at hand is to become open to the gifts of nature through the life around and within us, and to flow with it in dancing without prejudice or exploitation – like the nocturnal moth, flying and resting through the night. Usually considered clothes-devouring pests, moths are part of a ubiquitous world-wide species considered to be at least 190 million years old, and there are elegant and useful moths: the spinning Chinese oak silk moth, the Japanese silk moth and the Assam silk moth, reserved for the exclusive use of royal families in Assam for 600 years. Rivalling any beauty, the marbled emperor moth is found in Kenya and Tanzania, and the wings of the white-lined sphinx moth of Colorado and Utah are laced with bright pink and deep velvet brown. The 'sphinx' is also called 'hummingbird' because of its extraordinary beauty and size.

While I was writing this article, a sphinx moth entered my house through the back door and rested in the windowsill long enough for my husband and me to admire it. At first, we thought it was a hummingbird. As a team, we eventually coaxed it to safety. Kimerer LaMothe, our editor (although probably not named for this moth), has considerable talent for life drawings. I asked her to draw a sphinx moth to illuminate this essay and she joyfully agreed. Dear readers, I hope you appreciate this special moth and Kimerer's drawing as much as I do (Figure 5).

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Sondra Fraleigh is Professor Emerita of Dance at the State University of New York (SUNY Brockport), a Fulbright Scholar and award-winning author of nine books, *Back to the Dance Itself: Phenomenologies of the Body in Performance* (in press); *Moving Consciously: Somatic Transformations through Dance, Yoga, and Touch* (2015); *BUTOH: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy* (2010); *Dancing Identity: Metaphysics in Motion* (2004); *Dancing into Darkness: Butoh, Zen, and Japan* (1999); *Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of Inquiry* (1998); and *Dance and the Lived Body* (1987). She published a book on the founders of Japanese butoh, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo* (2006) and in 2008, *Land to Water Yoga* on somatic yoga and infant movement development. She has also contributed numerous book chapters. Fraleigh was chair of the Department of Dance at SUNY Brockport for nine years, later head of graduate dance studies and also selected by SUNY as a university-wide Faculty Exchange Scholar. Her choreography has been performed internationally. A teaching fellow at Ochanomizu University in Tokyo and the University of Baroda in India, Fraleigh is also the founding director of Eastwest Somatics Institute for the study of dance, yoga and movement.

Contact: Eastwest Somatics Institute, 250 N. Redcliffs Dr., Suite 48 #184, Saint George, Utah 84790, USA.

E-mail: sondrafraleigh@me.com

Web address: www.eastwestsomatics.com

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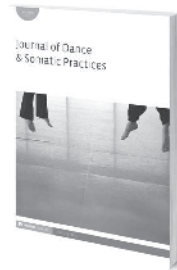
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Principal Editor

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s.whatley@coventry.ac.uk

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