Core Aspects of Dance: Aristotle on Posture

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Introduction

This article is part of a larger project in which I suggest a historically informed philosophy of dance, called "figuration," consisting of new interpretations of canonical philosophers. Figuration consists of two major parts, comprising (a) four basic concepts, or "moves"—namely, "posture," "gesture," "grace," and "resilience"—and (b) seven types, or "families" of dance—namely, "concert," "folk," "societal," "agonistic," "animal," "astronomical," and "discursive." This article is devoted to the first of these four moves, as illustrated by both its importance for Aristotle and also its applicability to these seven families of dance. One goal of figuration as a whole, and the central goal of this excerpt from that larger project, is to model and justify a dancing aesthetic education pursuant to psychological and political flourishing.

More specifically, figuration argues that a maximally virtuous and flourishing community must facilitate dance, which requires dance education (both in practice and appreciation). Figuration also argues, drawing on Plato's *Laws*, that dance (along with poetry and music) is the foundation of civic education in the best communities.[1] Finally, figuration draws on Friedrich Schiller's *Aesthetic Education of Man* in the constructing of its third move, grace.[2] As for the present article, posture's contribution to aesthetic education lies in the nature of the concept itself, which I define as "poetically creative, politically situated, dynamic imitation of stasis."[3] Though I will focus here primarily on "dynamic imitation of stasis," I will first summarize the entire definition.

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Positure is an archaic spelling of *posture*, valuable in this context for making visible the etymological connections that link posture to posing to *poiesis* to positing to poetry. Posture is a central focus of many conceptions of dance, including that of Plato in *The Laws*, where it justifies dance's role as the foundation of civic education. Posing is the activity of which any given posture constitutes an interruption or end result, and it is often used as the smallest meaningful unit of a dance. Posing is also a fair translation of one of the uses of *poiesis* in ancient Greek, including Aristotle's word *poiein*, for what one of his predecessor philosophers, such as Thales, posits as the ultimate substrate of reality. (In Thales's case, this would be the *stoicheon* or "element" of water). Finally, and most famously, *poiesis* is also the word Plato uses in *The Republic* to discuss poetry as its most paradigmatic case. Thus, one can reverse engineer, so to speak, the posing of dance from the positing of poetry as *poiesis*.

On this basis, to return to the aesthetic educational implications of the present article, posture contributes one each of figuration's four psychological and four political prerequisites for ideal flourishing (that is, the minimum conditions under which it seems probable that an individual or a community could fully support dance).[4] Psychologically, posture suggests that individuals perpetually move and change and, thus, posture requires a psychological preparedness for change and capacity to adapt flexibly. Politically, posture suggests that stability is a function of tolerating perpetual and shifting tensions, thus requiring societal tolerance at the fundamental level of human embodiment.

As for the structure of the present article, I will begin with *poiesis* as positing in Aristotle's explicitly biological texts, including *On Generation and Corruption*, the *Physics*, and *On the Soul*. Here, I will show how the fluid simultaneity of the two major etymological aspects of posture (namely, posing and positing) suggests a similarly fluid connection between dance and poetry, which, in turn, justifies the use of poetry to approach dance discursively. More specifically, I will explore how *poiesis* functions—in *On Generation and Corruption*, the *Physics*, and *On the Soul*—primarily in the following ways: (1) as "making" or "postulating," particularly in terms of what a theorist posits as the fundamental layer of reality; (2) as "activity," particularly in relation to how the basic material elements of reality act on each other, as well as the soul understood as the activating verb to the body's noun; and (3) as an aesthetic test of philosophical fitness via the poetic aspects of language. The question will then arise as to whether these different aspects of the word *poiesis* constitute functionally independent concepts or whether there is a way to understand them as aspects of a unified conception, in which case *poiesis* as activity in these three texts could also be thought of as a kind of poetry—as the dance of Aristotle's materialist philosophy, a dynamic aesthetic basis for education.

I. Posture in Aristotelian Scholarship

Before turning directly to these texts of Aristotle, I will first consider the relationship of the ancient Greek word *poiesis* to the concepts of *poetry*, *making in general,* and *activity*. For the relationship between *poiesis* and *making*, I turn first to Plato's *Symposium* 205C, in which Diotima addresses the young Socrates:

> You know that "making" has a wide range; for, you see, every kind of making is responsible for anything whatever that is on the way from what is not to what is. . . . [Y]ou know that not all craftsmen are called makers but have other names; and one part is separated off from all of making—that which is concerned with music and meters—and is addressed by the name of the whole. For this alone is called poetry [making]; and those who have this part of making are poets [makers].[5]

The two most important points in this passage for my purposes are as follows: for Plato, (1) *poiesis* or making is a kind of creation, from nonbeing to being, "on the way from what is not to what is"; and (2) poetry is in some sense the paradigmatic case of making, which is evidenced by the fact that poetry and its practitioners hold the name of making and makers in general, respectively.[6]

Aristotle was no doubt familiar with, and likely even influenced by, Plato's linkage of poetry and making, but does this linkage survive in any significant way in Aristotle's own thinking? The most popular answer to that question, supported by superficial and cursory readings of Aristotle, would probably be a negative one. Stanley Rosen is probably representative of this most popular view in making the following claim:

> In Plato, the whole (*to holon*) is exhibited within the dialogues by myth, and more comprehensively by the dramatic form of the dialogues themselves. Aristotle advocates the replacement of myth by *logos* and he gives up the dialogue form for what may most simply be called monologue.[7]

This rejection of myth and the rejection of the dialogue form (in at least Aristotle's surviving texts) would seem to suggest that poetry, with its connections to myth and to literary genres such as the dialogue, is also rejected. But whether this simple rejection of *mythos* actually occurs is an issue to which I will return below.

Aristotle scholar and translator Joe Sachs states clearly that "Aristotle is not a poet" but, nevertheless, also claims that some of "Aristotle's phrases" "do something that is exactly analogous to the poet's word-play," albeit "directed only at the intellect and the understanding."[8] Though Sachs admits poetic wordplay into Aristotle's oeuvre, one wonders whether Sachs's restriction of that wordplay to intellectual applications alone is not too narrow. Is it not the case, for example, that Aristotle's frequent uses of

humor and irony constitute nonintellectual means of persuasion, not bound exclusively with the "intellect and understanding"?

One might wonder at this point why I am not focusing instead on what are probably Aristotle's two most direct texts on language—the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. One reason is the relative narrowness of their subject matters. The *Poetics* seems primarily concerned with what would now be called dramatic poetry (as opposed to epic and lyric poetry), and even more specifically with the subgenre of dramatic poetry that is tragedy; and the *Rhetoric*, similarly, seems primarily concerned with persuasion in verbal discourse. A second reason that I am not focusing on the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* is I am not primarily concerned with Aristotle's direct inquiry into poetry but in the implicit and performative roles of *poiesis* in his biologically oriented texts and what those roles reveal about his connection to poetry. That being said, I will now briefly consider two interpretive insights from the secondary literature on the *Poetics* that seem relevant to my present concerns.

First, Robert Yanal insists that "Aristotle takes pains" in the *Poetics* "to disabuse his readers of the view that *poiesis* must be in a poetic rhythm or meter."[9] Furthermore, "[W]hen Aristotle cites some examples of *poiesis* he includes certain sorts of texts which are clearly *not* covered by the English term 'poetry.'"[10] Not only does the term *poetry* seem too narrow to grasp what Aristotle is talking about, but there does not seem to be a word for Aristotle that does the job perfectly. Yanal quotes Aristotle as follows: "Now the art which imitates by means of words only, whether prose or verse, whether in one meter or a mixture of meters, this art is without a name to this day (1447b14–20)."[11]

Yanal then goes one step further to claim that "Aristotle's attempts to pry *poiesis* loose from its connotations of rhythm and meter are intended to pry it loose from its connotations of beautiful writing or style as well." Yanal, therefore, suggests the phrase "'literary artwork' as the nearest and best English equivalent of *poiesis*."[12] While I do not wish to follow Yanal's translation, it is helpful to remember that a simple equation of *poiesis* and poetry for Aristotle is unwarranted and potentially misleading.

Second, J. M. Armstrong is interested in what makes poetry, as compared with history, more "philosophical" for Aristotle in the *Poetics*. Aristotle claims that the historian writes of actual events, while the poet *also* writes of possible events, and that the historian writes of particulars, while the poet writes of universals.[13] Armstrong then argues, convincingly, that the universals with which the poet works are "are types of events or, more specifically, types of actions, and that [the] particulars are event- or action-tokens."[14] This view is put forward against the majority of interpreters, such as Bywater, Gudeman, Janko, Halliwell, Woodruff, and Butcher, who tend to understand the poet's universals as generic truths about humanity.[15] Armstrong labels the two dominant versions of the mainstream view as "The

Individuals and Their Properties View (ITP)" and the "Thematic View," which consider universals to be properties of individuals or abiding themes such as "death is nothing to a philosopher," respectively.[16] Armstrong, by contrast, considers universals as types of events.

More specifically for Armstrong, this type of event or action that constitutes the poetic universal is "a plot as it exists before the poet adds the characters' names and the details of the episodes."[17] The point of this analysis for my investigation is that Aristotle thinks of the poetic in relation to actions or processes in general, as opposed to what, in conventional usage, is the more specific action or process called "making." Making, in turn, is a subcategory of activity that emphasizes the duality of the maker and that which is made, artisan and art object. I will argue shortly that, in addition to linking poetry to making, as does Plato, Aristotle also broadens the range of making into activity in general, thus identifying poetry with activity in general as well. And since, on a materialist reading of Aristotle, all activity is that of bodies, *poiesis* becomes for him ultimately a kind of dance.

At this point, it is vitally important to note that I am not speaking of *energeia* here when I speak of activity. Instead, I am either speaking of the word/concept of *activity* in English, or of an entirely different Greek word, *poiesis*, which is also commonly translated from Greek into English as "activity." In other words, the English word/concept *activity* includes, in the minds of respected translators, both *poiesis* and *energeia*. Thus, I maintain that *poiesis* for Aristotle is, above all and per se, activity, whereas it is only derivatively the species of activity called making, with an emphasis on the subspecies of making that is (words-on-a-page) poetry. But this, nevertheless, means that poetry, via *poiesis*, is indirectly linked to activity and thereby to the kind of activity known as dance.

II. Posture in *On Generation and Corruption*

I will now begin the analyses of *poiesis* in Aristotle's biological texts with the two most frequent uses of the word (and its conjugations) in *On Generation and Corruption*, which appear in the contexts of discussing (a) Aristotle's predecessors' postulations of "first principles" and (b) those things that "act and are acted upon" in the interrelations of the elements. Both of these uses occur most frequently in Book I, with which I will be concerned exclusively.

An early example of the former case occurs early, in I. 2, at 315b7, when Aristotle addresses Democritus and Leucippus's treatment of "unqualified coming-to-be and passing-away": "Democritus, however, and Leucippus postulate [*poiesantes*] the 'figures' and make 'alteration' and coming-to-be result from these, attributing coming-to-be and passing-away to their dissociation and association, and 'alteration' to their arrangement and position."[18] In other words, *poiesis* is here understood as a kind of making of principles

or sources, a postulating of origins. Democritus and Leucippus "make" the "figures" [*schemata*] into the source of alteration and coming-to-be.

Further, this making can most profitably be conceptualized as a kind of creation, similar to that in which a novelist "makes" the butler the murderer of a crime novel. That this creative, poetic type of making is closer to what Aristotle is describing here (as opposed to something like "the discovery of pre-existing order") can be inferred from the fact that *poiesis* is used in various places in the text to refer to the efforts of several other philosophers whose views are radically incommensurable with that of Democritus and Leucippus. For example, in I. 8, around 326b22, Aristotle writes, against the views of an unnamed group of thinkers, that it is "superfluous" and "ridiculous to postulate [*poiein*] pores at all."[19]

This use of *poiesis* in Aristotle is not limited, however, to the views of Aristotle's predecessors. In I. 5, around 320b13, Aristotle writes, "It is better to suppose [*poiein*] that matter in anything is inseparable, being the same and numerically one, though not one by definition."[20] Here he is using a form of *poiesis* to refer to his own theoretical commitment, albeit in a rather tentative manner.

The other most frequent use of *poiesis* in *On Generation and Corruption* is as "action," "agent," "activity," and so forth, and this use appears first in the section "On Coming-to-Be" at I. 6, around 322b10. It originates in connection with a discussion of matter and the "so-called 'elements,'" in an effort to "first deal with matters about which people at present speak only vaguely." According to Aristotle, for generation (that is, coming-to-be) to be constituted by some arrangement of primary elements, there must be a system of "association" and "dissociation" of the elements by which everything else more complex is formed, which, in turn, necessitates some form of "action" [*poiein*] and "passion" [*paschein*]. Further, the kind of change labeled "alteration" is also not possible "without an 'agent' [*poiuntes*] and a 'patient' [*paschontos*]."[21] The simple observation I wish to make here is that *poiesis*, at least according to the translators and editors of the Loeb Classical Library, can be legitimately translated by "action" or perhaps "activity," presumably because, as noted above, *activity* (in contemporary English usage) is a kind of genus of which *making* is a species.

In investigating acting and being acted upon, Aristotle makes three important moves. First, he analyzes the phenomenon of contact and concludes that it is possible for an agent [*poiuntes*] to cause movement or touch something without being contacted or touched by that something (that is, the patient). Aristotle illustrates this point at I.6, 323a35, with the following example: "[W]e say sometimes that a man who grieves us 'touches' us, though we ourselves do not 'touch' him."[22] I will return below to this issue of agents that cause motion without touching their patients.

Second, Aristotle argues at I.7, 324a9 that "contraries" (such as hot and cold, wet and dry) alone constitute agents and patients, and "it is entirely

these processes which constitute passing-away and coming-to-be."[23] He goes on to claim, at I.7, 324a10–15, that "in general, that [which] is active [*to poietikon*] assimilates that which is passive to itself; for the agent [*to poioun*] and patient are contrary to one another, and coming-to-be is a process, so that the patient must change into the agent [*to poioun*], since only thus will coming-to-be be a process into the contrary."[24]

Third, and finally, at I.7, 324a31, Aristotle considers how there are two ways to speak of something being an agent. In the first, the agent is the matter or substratum; in the second, the agent is the purposive agent—"for we speak of the doctor, and also of wine, as healing."[25] These can also be thought of as the first (the purposive) and the last (the efficient) agents. In this regard, note the following passage from I.7, 324a35–b4:

> [I]n action, there is nothing to prevent the first agent being unaffected, but the last agent is itself also affected . . . (for example, the art of the physician which, while it causes health, is not itself acted upon by that which is being healed), but food, while it acts, is itself all somehow acted upon, for, while it acts, it is at the same time being heated or cooled or affected in some other way. Now the art of the physician is, as it were, an original source, while the food is, as it were, the final mover and in contact with that which is moved.[26]

Note that, according to Aristotle, the kind of agent that matches up with the art of the physician, what Aristotle also calls, at I.7, 325b16, "the end in view," "is not 'active' (hence health is not active, except metaphorically)."[27] Given the possible connection that I wish to draw out between *poiesis*'s two senses of activity and poetry, it is interesting that the sole "active[ness]" attributed to health, which is itself a kind of *poiesis* [action] is a "metaphorical" [and therefore poetically oriented] kind of activity [*poiesis*]. In other words, the agency of the first agent or "original source" (perhaps presource?) is a poetic one—thus, "activity" and "poetry" interweave in the word *poiesis* with regard to the first or purposive mover in an instance of acting.

To summarize these insights from *On Generation and Corruption* using slightly different rhetoric, the elements or contraries are the building blocks of reality, and *poiesis*, insofar as it is the acting of one element or contrary on another, is the basic actuality or being-engaged-staying-itself of those building blocks. And since, for Aristotle, the actual is always privileged over the potential, *poiesis* as activity constitutes the various agencies from which the world as we experience it results.

III. Posture in the *Physics*

I will now consider the *Physics*, which contains, in addition to both these uses of *poiesis* from *On Generation and Corruption*, a hint of a *poiesis*-poetry connection vis-à-vis the idea that "speaking beautifully" is a sort of ultimate aesthetic test of philosophical fitness. Regarding this additional sense

of *poiesis* in the *Physics*—as the poetic justification of philosophical fitness—I turn to IV: 4. Here, at 211a7, in the middle of discussing his difficult conception of "place," Aristotle makes the following remarks:

> And it is necessary to attempt the investigation in such a way as to make what it is be delivered up, both so that the impasses be resolved and so that the things that seem to belong to place will belong to it, and further so that the cause of the headache and the impasses about place be made clear. Thus each thing would be brought to light in the most beautiful way.[28]

What I wish to emphasize first about this passage is that the beauty of the way things are "brought to light" seems intimately connected to the truth of a philosophical investigation for Aristotle. At the very least, the truth-of-the-activity of the investigation is bound up with this beautiful mode of disclosing.

The objectives that Aristotle states for an investigation are (1) "to deliver up" what the phenomenon is, (2) resolve the impasses about the phenomenon, and (3) reveal the cause of the difficulties and impasses in thinking through the phenomenon. If these three conditions are met, the beautiful disclosure will have been accomplished. One could imagine other ways of stumbling haphazardly upon the answer or solution to a philosophical problem, but these would not constitute a thorough or excellent process of discovery because they would not be done beautifully. In this way, an aesthetic criterion—the beauty of the mode of disclosure—becomes for Aristotle a test of the satisfactory carrying out of a philosophical investigation. "Does this process show itself beautifully?" the investigator should ask her/himself. If the answer is negative, then the investigation has not been carried out properly.

To relate this analysis back to the use of *poiesis* as "poetry," I observe that, since this disclosure occurs in language, in *logos*, the aestheticizing of this disclosure implies a literary/poetic aspect. In the same way that speaking of the aesthetic in relation to oil suggests the art of painting and speaking of the aesthetic in relation to blueprints suggests the art of architecture, speaking of the aesthetic in relation to language per se suggests the poetic. Therefore, it is not merely a generally aesthetic test of adequacy that Aristotle is proposing but a more specifically poetic test. In other words, for Aristotle, *poiesis* as poetry, as the poetic, serves as a sort of aesthetic ver-dict (truth-speech) with regard to the fitness of a philosophical investigation.

IV. Posture in *On the Soul*

I now turn, finally, to two significant uses of *poiesis* and its variants in *On the Soul* beyond the two uses (as presource for philosophy and aesthetic test of fitness) it shares with *On Generation and Corruption* and the *Physics*. These

new uses are the soul's relationship to the body (which is to be the activity [*poiesis*] of the body) and that which distinguishes the active or agent intellect [*nous poetikos*] from other forms/aspects of intellection.

First, Aristotle suggests an even more interesting connection between the soul and *poiesis* in his second, and most thorough, definition of the soul in II.1, around 412b: "the soul is a being-at-work-staying-itself [*entelechia*] of the first kind of a natural body having life as a potency."[29] This definition is especially interesting for the present investigation because "being-at-work-staying-itself" for Aristotle, like motion, is pre-eminently process and activity—and thereby linked to *poiesis* as activity (as analyzed above regarding *On Generation and Corruption*).

The reader may be tempted to object here that Sachs's controversial translation of *entelechia*, inspired by Heidegger, as "being-at-work-staying-itself," is hopelessly problematic. In particular, it might be objected that "work" connotes an activity directed toward an end-product, as opposed to Aristotle's sense of *energeia* as an activity that is an end in itself. While this seems a fair and appropriate criticism, it is worth noting that Sachs's stated primary purpose in thus translating *entelechia* is to allow Aristotle's text to present itself to a contemporary lay reader unvarnished by interpretation-saturated jargon. Additionally, Sachs is attempting to recapture the dynamic quality of Aristotle's concept, which the Latinate "activity" lacks in English. To meet this criticism while nevertheless pursuing Sachs's worthy objectives, I would suggest a third possible translation of *entelechia*, "being-engaged-staying-itself," and a corresponding translation of energeia as "being-engaged." In this way, the product-oriented connotation of work is avoided but so is the reified jargon, while the hyphenated dynamism is preserved. As to the helpfulness of this strategy, the reader may judge for him/herself.

Aristotle's emphasis on *energeia* as activity is probably the reason that this definition is often paraphrased into English as "the soul is the activity of the body."[30] The body has the potency to be alive, which its soul makes possible or activates. One might say that the soul is the poetry [*poiesis*] of the body. Or to use an old phrase with a new twist, the soul can be thought of as "poetry in motion," which is, of course, a paradigmatic description, in contemporary Western culture, of dance. Put differently, *poiesis*, elsewhere linked to making and positing and poetry, when considered as the specific activity of the (for example) human body—becomes dance.

In the second new use of *poiesis* in *On the Soul*, a variation of *poiesis*, *poetikos*, is the adjective that distinguishes the active from the passive intellect, which Aristotle famously and controversially treats in Book III, Chapter 5. He introduces the former intellect as one example of a "causal and productive thing by which all [things] are formed" and which is "intellect" by virtue of "forming all things, in the way an active condition [*hexis*] such as light does, for in a certain way light too makes the colors that are in potency be

at work as colors."[31] So the poetic intellect [*nous poetikos*], as I will translate it somewhat loosely here, forms in a very particular way all things, and this way is something like the way that light causes appropriately pigmented images to be actively colorful (which means, perhaps, to be experienced as colors by an observing organism). In other words, the poetic intellect makes potentially known things actually/actively known. Aristotle goes on to claim that this poetic intellect is "separate, as well as by being without attributes and unmixed, since it is by its thinghood a being-at-work" (or "being-engaged" or "activity").[32]

Synthesizing these etymological analyses of posture in Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption*, *Physics*, and *On the Soul* yields the second phase of the amplified conception of posture for the "figuration" philosophy of dance—*posture is a dynamic imitation of stasis*. This formulation becomes clearer when one thinks of the way that Aristotle uses *poiesis* to denote the first principles of various philosophies and the underlying activity that manifests itself as the soul and even the world. Any claims of ultimate stasis or immobile foundation are therefore regarded, throughout that larger project, as an opportunity to seek the dynamism underlying the apparent stability and foundation. Having concluded the etymological analyses of posture, I will now turn to conceptual analyses of posture, through a brief look at Aristotle's *Categories*.

V. Posture in the *Categories*

The upshot of my analysis of the *Categories* will be that, since posture is one of the ten fundamental kinds of being and posture is also fundamental to dance in virtually all discourses and theories of dance, it is thus a central activity for reality.

"Posture" is a common translation of the category *keisthai* (rendered as "being-in-a-position" in the Ackrill translation). It is famously, along with "state" [*echein*], absent from several discussions of the so-called categories and has been argued to apply only to animals (and especially humans) and therefore to suggest that the human being is the subject Aristotle has in mind throughout the text.[33] The examples Aristotle gives of *keisthai* are "is lying" and "is sitting," but, as Ackrill points out in his notes to the text, the verb itself is used much more generally, so it is unclear exactly what extension Aristotle intended.[34]

"Posture' appears again under the heading of another category, namely, "relative," which includes all things that "are called just what they are, *of* or *than* something else—or in some other way *in relation* to something else."[35] Ackrill points out in his notes that Aristotle uses no substantive (such as "relation" in English) but always a prepositional phrase to indicate relativity. Posture is always the posture of something, the position of some body

or other. There is no such thing as absolute posture, or posture in itself, for Aristotle.

Aristotle also notes "in passing" that, although "lying and standing and sitting are really specific positions, position itself is a relative. To lie and to stand and to sit, these are not themselves really positions; their names are, however, derived from the attitudes just now referred to."[36] What Aristotle seems to mean is that, although there are different ways to be posed or to position oneself, these ways are not things or substances. They are not being-this-or-that, or the possession of thing-being, but are instead particular ways of being-related. The point here is that there is no bedrock of substance or foundation represented by infinitives such as "to lie" or, as Ackrill renders it, "to-be-lying."[37] To think otherwise is to be fooled by language, by a common way of speaking.

VI. Posture in Aristotle as Dynamic Imitation of Stasis

Synthesizing the conceptual analyses of Aristotle's *Categories* with my foregoing etymological analyses of Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption*, *Physics*, and *On the Soul*, I propose that the move called posture can be understood, in part, as a dynamic imitation of stasis. To rehearse the insights elaborated above, posture is a dynamic imitation of stasis because both philosophical accounts of the world and also the world itself are constant activities that only appear to be a static collection of stable things or objects.

To connect figuration to other theoretical discourses on dance, the move of posture is, first, closely related to Rudolf Laban movement analysis's concept of "weight," which involves the muscular tension of the body. According to *Laban for Actors and Dancers*, a concise introduction to Laban's work written by his student Jean Newlove, our "ability to stand upright depends on the tension between the upward force of our bodies and the downward pull of gravity."[38] Thus, even standing upright, which appears completely still and inactive, is the result of a constant striving of opposing forces. Newlove observes that this position, as with posture as basis of figuration, "clears the mind and body for action."[39]

The move of posture is also closely related to Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's concept of "tensional" movement quality. Although Johnstone elaborates less on the "tensional" quality than any of the three other movement qualities in her philosophy of dance, this effacement is at the heart of the concept. "For example," Johnstone writes, "the linear quality of any movement," by which she means the way that abstract visual lines are created by the dancer's body, "does not exist apart from the tension required to project the line."[40] Though one could measure quantitatively this "amount of effort exerted by the body through muscular contraction," Johnstone insists that "it is only as quality that tension can function in dance."[41] Put differently,

the effort must be phenomenologically available to the dance viewer; the positing and posturing must be seen as such, as "the manifest dynamic of the projection itself."[42]

Finally, the move of posture is closely related to Suzanne Langer's concept of that which animates the dancers as "dance-beings." Langer claims that dance's domain is virtual gestures expressive of virtual powers. "The spontaneously gestic character of dance motions is illusory," she explains, "and the vital force they express is illusory; the 'powers' (i.e., centers of vital force) in dance are created beings—created by the semblance gesture."[43] Put differently, dancers imaginatively imitate expressive movement, which creates the illusion that there are forces or beings, as it were, behind the dancers moving them like puppets. These forces are not a stable foundation for the dance but rather the product of concrete, imaginative, mindful bodies.

To contemplate these insights from Laban, Sheets-Johnstone, and Langer in a way consonant with my own theory of figuration, the move called "gesture" constitutes the "what" dimension, the dynamic starting place from which phenomena begin their journeys. Figuration thus finds, in the concept of posture, its foundation. The critical dimension of this aspect of figuration for philosophy is its claim that anything taken to be completely static and secure is, in fact, a dynamic process that merely gives the appearance of immobility.

VII. Posture as Dynamic Imitation of Stasis in Dance's Seven Families

How does this critical function of gesture play out in actual analyses of the seven members of the seven families of dance mentioned at the beginning of the article? To answer that question, I begin the analysis of each dance with the conventional or commonsensical usage of the move, then consider the two adjectival aspects and the one substantive core of the amplified philosophical construct. In consideration of posture as a whole, the commonsense meaning is posture or position, the first amplified aspect is poetic creativity, the second amplified aspect is political situatedness, and the substantial core is the dynamic imitation of stasis.

For ballet, my example throughout the larger project of what I have termed "concert dance," the commonsensical account of posture leads to the obvious role of posture and position in ballet, which is the formalized "syntax" of possible ballet poses and positions. Most people are familiar with the starting point of ballet, the first five positions, which refer (in part) to the proper placement of the feet on the floor. Posture finds dynamic imitation of stasis of ballet in the years of grueling training, the extreme brevity of a professional ballet dancer's career, and the extreme muscular efforts required for any given performance of ballet, with its images of perfect and

elegant creatures in perfect and elegant poses. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of concert dance in general, according to figuration theory, *the posture of concert dance consists in representational/mimetic/expressive performances, which grow out of a tradition of patriarchal voyeurism and which mask years of grueling training and physical suffering through immediate virtuosity*.

For clogging, my example throughout the project for what I have termed "folk dance," its commonsensical posture or position is a rigid upper body with arms folded behind the back, legs always lifted high with bended knees, and constant effervescent smiles. Posture finds dynamic imitation of stasis in clogging in the apparently infinite energy and carefree attitude of the dancers despite the exhausting and complex nature of the dance. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of folk dance in general, according to figuration theory, *the posture of folk dance consists in performances at the border between music and dance, which grow out of traditions of politically/economically/racially/ethnically disempowered communities and which mask exhaustion through overflowing energy*.

For salsa, my example throughout the project for what I have termed "societal dance," its commonsensical posture or position is an apparently simultaneously rigid and comfortable "dance frame" created by the bodies of two partners that are, nevertheless, relaxed enough to allow for the extensive sinuous hip movements that accompany the basic steps of the dance. Posture finds dynamic imitation of stasis in salsa in the fact that the apparently spontaneous improvisation of moves on the dance floor, often between strangers who have never danced with each other before, is the result of many hours of practice to learn common moves and train the body to guide and/or be guided by unfamiliar physical cues or "leads." To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of societal dance in general, according to figuration theory, *the posture of societal dance consists in performances of controlled social tensions, which grow out of the fusion of various cultures and subcultures and which mask extensive training through spontaneous improvisation*.

For Tae Kwon Do (as taught today to children in the United States), my example throughout the project for what I have termed "agonistic dance," its commonsensical posture or position is a constant tensed readiness to perform any of the various attacks and blocks of this martial art form. Posture finds dynamic imitation of stasis in Tae Kwon Do in the fact that what comes to appear as an elaborate and elegant testament to stamina and self-control is only made possible by techniques extracted from life-and-death one-on-one combat. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of agonistic dance in general, according to figuration theory, *the posture of agonistic dance consists in performances of violent aggression, which grow out of deceptive encounters between cultures and which mask the fight for individual survival through socially-beneficial personal discipline*.

For the pollen dance of the honey bee, my example throughout the project for what I have termed "animal dance," its commonsensical posture or position is one worker bee hovering in midair, surrounded by a group of other bees awaiting her performance in order to locate nectar (with the unintended consequence of accumulating and redistributing pollen, thus giving the dance its name). Positure finds dynamic imitation of stasis in the pollen dance in the fact that what has traditionally been interpreted as a hard-wired instinct of the worker bee to "automatically know" how to make honey is actually the result of an elaborate performance and interpretation without which the nectar needed to make the honey would never be found in the first place. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of animal dance in general, according to figuration theory, *the positure of animal dance consists in (especially spatially) minimal performances with (especially spatially) maximal results, which grow out of a necessarily social setting and which mask species' intellectual adaption through what has historically appeared to humans as instincts*.

For "falling stars" or "shooting stars," my example throughout the project for what I have termed "astronomical dance," its commonsensical posture or position is actually nothing at the moment of the falling but is retroactively inferred to have been a position as one of the visible stars, perceived as pinpricks of light in the night sky. Positure finds dynamic imitation of stasis in "falling stars" in the fact that, only because humans cannot see the constant flight of the meteoroid before it is transformed by the earth's gravity into a flaming meteorite, a brief fall from the heavens appears to have occurred. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of astronomical dance in general, according to figuration theory, *the positure of astronomical dance consists in performances of mistaken identities, which grow out of a politically-facilitated awareness and which mask human ignorance through visual spectacle*.

And, finally, for Neruda's poetry, my example throughout the project for what I have termed "discursive dance," its commonsensical posture or position is the words on the page and the sounds heard by the listener's ear. Positure finds dynamic imitation of stasis in Neruda's poetry in the fact that, through revolutionary personal experiences, the words came to be frozen in just the way that they now lie on the lifeless page. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of discursive dance in general, according to figuration theory, *the positure of discursive dance consists in performances of language as a nontransparent entity, which grow out of subversive political movements and which mask transcendent experiences in drab black-and-white pages.*

VIII. Conclusion

To recap the foregoing analyses, I began by considering the precedents for my focus on *poiesis* in Aristotle scholarship. Then I turned to the functions

of *poiesis*-as-posture in Aristotle's texts. First, in *On Generation and Corruption*, posture appears as that which Aristotle "posits" as the foundation of reality and of the elements qua acting and acted upon. Second, in the *Physics*, posture is intimated in Aristotle's use of poetically aesthetically pleasing speech as a marker of truth. Third, *On the Soul* deploys posture as the soul's relationship to the body (that is, posing it) and as the formative activity of the poetic intellect [*nous poetikos*]. And finally, the *Categories* identifies posture as one of Aristotle's ten fundamental kinds of language or being. Combining these insights results in my conception of posture as a dynamic imitation of stasis, in that both philosophical accounts of the world and also the world itself are constant activities that only appear to be a static collection of stable things or objects. I then concluded by showing how posture functions in seven different types of dance, which illustrates our desperate need for adaptive flexibility and for a tolerance of evolving tensions, both of which are benefits of a societally promoted aesthetic education in dance.

Notes

1. Joshua M. Hall, "Posture in Plato's *Laws*: An Introduction to Figuration on Civic Education," *Journal of Social Science Education* 15, no. 4 (2016): 59–67.
2. Joshua M. Hall, "Core Aspects of Dance: Schiller and Dewey on Grace," *Dance Chronicle* 40, no. 1 (2017): 74–98.
3. Joshua M. Hall, "Dancing-with: A Theoretical Method for Poetic Social Justice," in *Philosophy and Dance*, ed. Rebecca Farinas, Craig Hanks, and Julie C. Van Camp (New York: Bloomsbury, forthcoming).
4. By "fully supporting dance," I mean not only the absence of obstacles to dance but also the presence of facilitators of every community member's ability to engage in dance practices of his or her choosing. One example of such an obstacle, and a common one in contemporary U.S. culture, is a parent's decision that his or her son should not be allowed to dance because dance is too effeminate and might incline him to homosexuality. Another example would be the recent decision of a principal in Mississippi to cancel a junior high prom (and thereby prevent the occurrence of dancing) because one of the school's students expressed the intention of bringing her lesbian partner to the dance.
5. Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 35–36.
6. Heninger also finds in Plato the origin of the equation of poet and maker, but his focus in on the Timaeus: "When Timaeus first mentions the creating deity in this cosmogony, he refers to him with two epithets: 'the poet and the father of this all.'" S. K. Heninger Jr., *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1974), 292.
7. Stanley Rosen, *The Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry: Studies in Ancient Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1988), viii.
8. Joe Sachs, "Introduction," in *Aristotle's "Physics": A Guided Study*, 4th ed., ed. Sachs, Masterworks of Discovery: Guided Studies of Great Texts in Science series, ed. Harvey M. Flaumenhaft (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 4.
9. Robert J. Yanal, "Aristotle's Definition of Poetry," *Nous* 16, no. 4 (1982): 500.
10. Yanal, "Aristotle's Definition of Poetry," 500.

11. Yanal, 500.
12. Yanal, 501.
13. John Armstrong, "Aristotle on the Philosophical Nature of Poetry," *The Classical Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1998): 447.
14. Armstrong, "Aristotle on the Philosophical Nature," 448.
15. See Ingram Bywater, *Aristotle and the Art of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), 189; Alfred Gudeman, *Aristoteles "Poetik"* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1934), 207; Janko's translation of the *Poetics* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 12, 92; Stephen Halliwell's translation, *The Poetics of Aristotle: Translation and Commentary*, new ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 41, 106; Paul Woodruff, "Aristotle on *Mimesis*," in *Essays on Aristotle's "Poetics,"* ed. Amélie Rorty (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 73–92; and Samuel H. Butcher's translation, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, 4th ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1951), 163, 194.
16. Armstrong, "Aristotle on the Philosophical Nature," 449–50.
17. Armstrong, 452.
18. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be and Passing-Away," *Aristotle III: The Loeb Classical Library 400*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 173.
19. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be," 249.
20. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be," 209.
21. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be," 221.
22. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be," 227.
23. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be," 231.
24. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be," 233.
25. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be," 233.
26. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be," 235.
27. Aristotle, "On Coming-to-Be," 235.
28. Aristotle, *Aristotle's "Physics": A Guided Study*, 100.
29. Aristotle, *On the Soul and on Memory and Recollection*, ed. and trans. Joe Sachs (Sante Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2001), 82.
30. This paraphrase was used, for example, by Dr. Christopher Long in his spring 2005 undergraduate course "Aristotle" at Penn State University.
31. Aristotle, *On the Soul and on Memory*, 142.
32. Aristotle, *On the Soul and on Memory*, 142.
33. Aristotle, *Categories. On Interpretation. Prior Analytics*, trans. Harold Cooke and Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 3–4.
34. Aristotle, *Categories. On Interpretation*, 19; Aristotle, *Aristotle's "Categories" and "De Interpretatione,"* ed. and trans. John Ackrill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 78.
35. Aristotle, *Aristotle's "Categories" and "De Interpretatione,"* 17.
36. Aristotle, *Categories. On Interpretation*, 49.
37. Aristotle, *Aristotle's "Categories" and "De Interpretatione,"* 18.
38. Jean Newlove, *Laban for All* (London: Routledge Press, 2003), 64.
39. Newlove, *Laban for All*, 64.
40. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Phenomenology of Dance* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015), 51.
41. Sheets-Johnstone, *The Phenomenology of Dance*, 51.
42. Sheets-Johnstone, 52.
43. Suzanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 175.