

Spiritual Dancing

by

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Editorial Note:

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[Foreword](#)

The author is a disciple of the late Sufi Inayat Khan, also known as Hazrat Inayat, who introduced Sufi Mysticism into America and Europe between 1911 and 1926. He returned to India, the land of his birth, in 1927, only to pass his last few remaining days there. Sufi Inayat Khan was renowned in the land of his birth as a great musician and was a scion of a long line of musicians several of whom were quite famous.

The disciple was requested to write commentaries upon his teacher's works, and has completed in manuscript those based upon *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. This book deals with Sufi Inayat Khan's views upon the various arts. The separate commentaries have been grouped around Art, Architecture, Music, Drama, and Poetry.

—Samuel L. Lewis

[Introduction](#)

The dance is the way of Life; the dance is the sway of Life. What Life gives may be expressed with body, heart and soul to the glory of God and the elevation of mankind, leading therein to ecstasy and self-realization. Verily, this is the sacred dance. Past the portals where Havelock¹ has glanced and recorded, where Isadora² has wrongly entered, where the mighty Jinn³ involved the psychic forces which he could not control, let us venture, pioneering as angels where fools may fear to tread.

When mankind, terrorized by conflict and faced with the ruin of his civilization, when the power of wealth has dominated justice and the concept of fiction-money leading to utter destruction; when the Holy Spirit, driven ever further away on its path of ascension has again reached zenith, to the undoing of so much near and dear to us—let us, in spite of what occurs before our eyes, invoke that same Divine Spirit through love and beauty, that we may restore order and balance to humanity.

When doctrines divide and isms turn man against man, without speech, without silence, let us demonstrate. Let these demonstrations manifest everywhere. Not what we think or say but what we do shall avail. May we therefore bear the torch of holiness and make of our bodies temples of sacred worship. Verily, man is the noblest work of God.

From the East and from the West we invoke thee, o man! The prophets of old spoke with fiery tongues. The flame is never quenched though eyes be turned aside. Now look with hearts and minds and eyes, on with the dance—the dance itself shall mount through the seraphic flames of Jacob's ladder, leading humanity through sacred initiations from the netherworld even unto Thy courts, O Jehovah! Seek and ye shall find, and in the hour ye think least the Son of man shall come and the Daughter of man be there.

¹ Havelock Ellis, author of *The Dance of Life*, etc.

² Isadora Duncan

³ Nijinsky

[Chapter 1](#)

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Phenomena for their own sake will not interest them. They will know as did the Rishis of old that within the heart, smaller than a barley-corn, or the grain within the barley-corn, is that which is even larger than the world.

After the lesson of relaxation comes the lesson of motion. "It was evening, it was morning, one day." So relax, move; relax, move. Without leaving the floor keep arms and legs dangling and listen to suitable music, maintaining the rhythm of movement according to the music. Impulse from the heart always. Then turn from side to side, from the left to the right, from the right to the left. Then turn the back away from the floor and get on hands and knees, in posture and crawling movements. These strengthen the muscles and coordinate the individual. By his own direct experience he can learn the wisdom of the body. He can recover the delightful traits of the baby without descending to infantile behaviorism, and his knowledge will be retained.

If we can believe the Bible, the human being is the offspring of "the sons of God" and "daughters of earth," meaning that the spirit came from heaven and the body from earth. The Hindus call these aspects of personality respectively **purusha** and **prakriti**. In many respects they resemble the **yang** and **yin** of the Chinese, of which more anon. As the body becomes pliable, elastic, tenuous, so the spirit enters into it. **Feeling and will enhance movement.** The individual is a unit within and without, the chorus becomes one within and without. The angelic being has no mental accumulations, but perhaps on the surface of his being thought appears as colors do on the outside of the soap bubble. The dancer will develop accordingly. When Isadora turned to the worldly philosophers and overlooked the prophets she missed the greatest of opportunities. Angels sing the praises of God. Man sits in judgment upon man, and often upon God, too.

The ancients had two fundamental principles which grow into the dance. The Hebraic term *chul* represented all ideas of loosening, extending, stretching, and vanity, as well as the flute, a dissolute dance, and an amusement. In a sense it corresponded to the Grecian *orge*. It contains the idea of the breaking down of self. Self can be lost in a grand movement of ecstasy, as well as in complete repose or meditation.

It was supposed that through reciting the praises of God, as do the angels, devotees would reach an ecstatic stage, where, for practical purposes, they would be as angels. They would rise above the earthly consciousness and experience joy direct. They always kept their heart-feeling, but it released them from the bondage of self. They rose like butterflies doffing the "Mask" of Yeats and ultimately attaining the soul-consciousness.

Much later there arose a school of Sufis known as Hululis who particularly emphasized the attainment of ecstasy. They deemed that through ecstasy one entered into the presence of God. The Zikr, musical repetition of most sacred phrases, has been used by many schools of Sufis to elevate the human soul, to unite it with the Divine Soul. The Hululis in a wild extreme manner, the Mevlevis in a more balanced fashion, have added a sacred dance to the Zikr. With them the highest dance and highest prayer coalesced. This was but a continuance of the ancient methods and ancient outlook.

The chag of the Hebrews was a holy feast which was often accompanied by a dance. In the sacrificial rituals of the Beni Israel and Aryavartins processionalists around the altars induced a state of holy joy. Devotees felt an inner urge which elevated their feelings and affected their bodies. Then they would leap and dance as did David before the ark of the Lord, and the mystics of Israel in later times.

Of old, too, did Hindus know of the dances of devas and apsaras, and of the requirements for those dances which supposedly endowed the performers with faculties from beyond this world. There were special disciplines—deep, austere practices known as **tapas**; and other skills to be developed. The consciousness had to be raised to that of deva or apsara to perform those movements. Today one can only look at sculptured murals and imitate the forms. This gives but the shadow of the dance. The vibratory activity which passes from soul to heart and from heart to mind and body must become man's possession before he can return to higher glory. It is not enough to be like the infant; that is the first step, the first of many steps. The dance of the soul precedes all, for it is the dance of life.

“Let your light shine,” said Jesus Christ. It is that light which reflects the inner personality, purifying man from dross and restoring him to his position as a “son of God.” The spiritual dance has no other purpose, no other aim than to elevate mankind beyond self-thought: to joy, to bliss, to realization, and to peace.

[Chapter 2](#)

Static Symmetry

The general laws of mechanics have been formulated by such great scientists as Newton and Avogadro, and modified by Einstein and Planck in accordance with the discoveries made in laboratory and field, and corrected or adjusted to current mathematical knowledge. There is often a more or less unconscious element in them, that the natural motion of a body is in a straight line, and that these bodies, if unaffected, will move with constant **uniform acceleration**. That is to say, the **increase in speed** will be definite for each unit of superimposed time. The law of circular movement differs in that a body fixed upon such a path will continue onward with **uniform velocity** in that path. So at first hand the behavior of linear and circular movement is not the same. They seem to follow different laws, whereas a mathematical analysis reveals they have merely adapted separate patterns.

There are two points here which a philosopher might note. One is, that while these laws of discoveries may be true, are they limited to an objective, physical world? May they not also apply to worlds unseen and undiscovered? Worlds unseen may be physical or not. Infra-red and ultra-violet rays employed in photographic processes, and the ultra-microscope have added much to human knowledge. We may ignore differences, arbitrary or not, between physical, mental and spiritual. We may hold that truth is universal, and that laws, discovered to operate in one realm, may apply

elsewhere also. It may even be that thought and love are refined activities, resembling in their own ways light and radiant energy.

The straight line was long upheld as the norm for activity and dynamic behavior. Ever since Euclid proclaimed the majesty of the straight line the world has been dominated by masculine thought, masculine activity, masculine education and masculine ideals—more or less unconsciously. Perhaps some master psychologist or some disciple of Spengler will find the same secret, underlying motive in the contemporary revolt against Euclidean conventions with the rise of feminism in politics and social affairs. The masculine tendency is toward the straight line and flat plane and man lives in a common sense world of three dimensions. But the feminine universe is composed of points and curves and madame's space is of four dimensions.

To understand the spiritual and psychological aspects of art and of life we must study each of these in their proper setting and free ourselves from their dominance. Only that is spiritual which synthesizes opposites, so it is said that God has no opposite.

China, ever old and ever young, has been the repository of wisdom and civilization. The Chinese would say that the universe and all that is therein is the result of, or the scene of, the interplay of two tremendous forces which they call **Yin** and **Yang**, the symbol of which is familiar to many who know not their meaning. Yin, it may be said, is the negative or feminine aspect of life; Yang, the positive or masculine aspect. Yin is responsive and Yang expressive, Yin is beautiful and Yang is powerful. Yang is light and Yin is dark, Yang is activity and Yin repose or respite; Yang is expansion and Yin contraction. Light, the phenomenon of cosmic vibration is Yang; sound, the phenomenon of material atoms is Yin. Yet to us there is no Yin completely devoid of Yang or Yang completely devoid of Yin except where destruction impends.

In other lands there have been parallel terms. Thus we read in the Bible of the pillars of the temple of Solomon, which the Free-Masons consider so important. One was called **Jachin**, almost identical with Yin, the other **Boas**, the cognate of Yang. The Sufis speak of **Jemal** and **Jelal**. Yin is very close to, without being identical with the Hindu **prakriti**. Yang has close correlations with the Hindu **purusha**.

In the mineral world Yang dominates in all crystalline formations, whether metallic, non-metallic, or compound. Yin, on the other hand, is in the natural glasses such as obsidian, which may be called the queen of the petrosphere. It is also in amorphous substances. This has led to one conception that Yang represents order and Yin disorder, that Yang dominates in the rational and Yin in the impulsive. But to overstress this point leads to masculinity instead of to balanced, that balance which is required more than anything else to reach perfection.

Again, we find that a crystal bowl has sharp edges, but a glass one is smooth and “soft.” The Chinese knew this and applied it in ceramics. Yin is in clay and Yang is in sand. From the former came porcelain, from the latter glass. Fire is of the nature of Yang and adds Yang to Yin. In the formation of artificial glass the fire is quickly quenched and thus Yang is withdrawn, so is replaced

by Yin. Thus here and there we find a dance even in the world of rocky substances.

Yin is in clay and Yang is in sand so these principles appear in the soil and in the vegetation which grows therefrom. Yin dominates in plants that grow in the water, for Yin and water are closely allied, whereas Yang manifests in serophytic societies, the dwellers of desert and tundra and dry plain whose thorns and thickets attest. Yang is in the tall trees, Yin in the tendrils. Yang increases with calcium absorption and heat and is noticeable in sugars and cellulose. Yin increases with sodium absorption and moisture and is also found in the starches. So it is throughout the universe—with beauty and pliability is Yin, with strength and determination is Yang.

Advancing to the animal world we find Yang in shell, scale, and bone as well as in cell wall; Yin is in muscle, tendon, flesh and cell interior. This is true also of the body of man. But man is more than animal, for he is a creative artist. In the dance especially he uses his body to express what he is or would be and depends neither upon brush nor paint nor tool. He uses what God has given him. He can reproduce all the themes and thoughts of the infrahuman universe. For embellishment he may add costume and scenery and he may rely upon music as his greatest aid and asset. But everywhere Yin and Yang will manifest in his efforts.

Static Symmetry (S.S.) corresponds to zero as a living number. Zero is a reality in statistics, graph representations and decimals. It appears as the pause or rest in music, which so often accentuates a movement. In the dance it is especially noticeable in what might be called vital or bionomic sculpture. Ancient friezes often depict an individual or an ensemble, and moderns rely upon them in their efforts to restore the forgotten methods. Through them the stone becomes flesh and Galatea reincarnates anew.

Static Symmetry also appears in flower arrangement, that marvelous living art. Not so long ago cut flowers were placed in vases or boxes or frames according to their size, color, variety and simple harmonies. The introduction of **ichibana**, the traditional Japanese system, has awakened something in the aesthetic spirit of man and has helped to revolutionize the decorative arts. Some Americans, notably Rudolph Schaeffer of San Francisco, have retained the spiritual philosophy of the identity of life in the artist and flower while offering us an Occidental rather than Oriental art. They consider it better adapted to our personalities and more practical when applied to the growth of our gardens, fields and forests.

Another phase of S.S. may be seen in animal training. Everyone who enjoys the circus or the vaudeville show has noticed how beasts are handled, both as individuals and in groups. When not performing they may still be performing. The ensemble institutes a background, each animal being carefully educated to do his part and each finding a place in a graceful or symmetric pattern both in doing his stunt or in waiting his turn. The background presents an excellent example of zero as a living number in art, repose as the basis of motion.

Statics is the science of bodies at rest. Even then they are usually subject to many stresses and pulls. Lifeless forms depend upon mechanical centers of gravity. But a throbbing, vibrating,

breathing growing body may not always have an exact fixed point as such. Scientists say this is true even of the atom. Growth includes height (the Yang or Jelal factor) and girth (the Yin or Jemal factor). The increment of growth may be negative as well as positive, particularly with regards to girth. ("Girls, watch your waist line!") Changes in weight, too, affect the center of gravity.

The heart as static center may best be studied when the body is at rest, supine on the floor. To understand this better let one take the position of the corpse and feel the heart-beat; do not try at first to take any special position. Then lie flat on the back stretching arms and feet to make the sign of the cross with the body. The "corpse" attests to involuntary, the cross to voluntary self-surrender, meaning: "I am naught." The breath supplies its own rhythm and the heart begins to dance. The devotee may repeat sacred words while in that position, the dancer may listen to soothing music. The heart will throb and the inner light be augmented. This is the **Alpha** and **Omega** of the spiritual dance, and to it one may always return.

After that one should try lying on the left and on the right sides as if in sleep, doing this preferably without music which might arouse discordant emotions and so distract one from the heart-concentration. After that, without turning attention from the heart one may rest upon the bosom. Then one may dream. The mind here begins to assert itself. The vital forces are alert and the animal consciousness is aroused; then one is awakening. Thus there is relaxation and also stimulation. This is important as the tired dancer, snatching a few moments, will obtain knowledge common even to the animals.

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard," said the wise Solomon. The ant has a well developed respiratory system which accounts alike for its prowess (indicative of Yang operating through the breath) and intelligence (Yin through the breath). But this creature is not so advanced in the scale of heart, and according to the metaphysical Hindu classification would be regarded as a **rakshasa** (or **raksha**). Its circulatory system is by contrast quite undeveloped. Animals of flesh and blood, which feed upon milk, are more evolved in this respect. The cud-chewing cow, the cat basking in the sunlight, the horse in the meadow, have a far higher heart-knowledge which they reveal in their repose.

God, the Creator of the heavens and earth and of all the lower kingdoms of nature, made man in His image. So we may find something of the mineral, of the plant and of the animal in man. It is possible to assume "plant positions" and "animal positions," and to increase thereby psychic power as well as animal and vital magnetism. The bird contributed something in the course of evolution, **vis.**, the ability to stand erect. It is this characteristic, absorbed by man, which has earned him the name of **anthropos**, the upright one. To stand correctly is part of the teaching of hygiene and choreography and it need not be repeated here. But to keep the center of movement and feeling in or near the heart is most important and shall be constantly reiterated.

The bird in relaxation and in sleep stands but is not ungraceful. Its head may be lowered or turned to either side while the eyes remain open or closed. There is a dance of the head known to the Muslims and further developed by the dervishes. It is helpful in memory training though untried in the West. Its healing value is also great, rendering unnecessary some of the most delicate cervical

adjustments. But man can learn more than this from the birds; he may rest like the swan or dove or eagle or robin or canary. He may observe them and concentrate upon them and portray them in the dance as well as in graphic or plastic art. Then he will be practicing static and dynamic eurhythmics which will awaken in his mind a power of inspiration of which he has seldom dreamed. For simple is the alphabet of Terpsichore.

The prayerful head is held erect in praise and lowered in humility. Moving the head up and down and from side to side benefits the eyesight and aids the mind and nerves. In Static Symmetry one studies each position separately and learns through intuition and practice. Head up, head down, head to the right, head to the left, relaxed position, then taut position—each is definitive, each has its own connotation.

Thus we may call the model a dancer who emphasizes Static Symmetry. She may be posing for the artist or employed as a mannequin. She can learn to hold each pose better because of her heart-concentration. She can relax with firmness, grace, power and beauty. Her profession may add to the building of her character.

In all standing positions Yang predominates, whereas in sitting and in posture, there is more Yin. Sitting throws the weight from the feet (which are associated with Yang) to the base of the spine. Most people find it more comfortable and can remain seated far longer than they can stand. This relaxation brings repose to body and mind.

Kneeling is more common where the chair is not yet a customary article of furniture. It brings one closer to earth and to nature and helps prevent loss of psychic energy. When the feet are not flat upon the floor or ground they are “bio-electrically” not grounded or insulated. The breath is the channel for the vital force which we attract from space and also expel into space. If we are insulated we preserve vitality and power. This adds to our health and wards off the perils of disease and age.

Hatha Yoga is a great science especially necessary in a country like India, where, because of climate and conditions, energetic athletic indulgence would be inadvisable. It includes innumerable breathing exercises and postures, many of which could be learned by Westerners to their advantage. While some of these postures or **asanas** might be quite difficult for bony people without conferring much benefit upon them, there are others which can be learned. Psychologists gain nothing by ignoring Yeats-Brown and his teachings while the masses can observe a Lou Nova. Who knows but that the latter in his own way might be adding to the wisdom of the world!

It has to be understood that there are Yang-bodies and Yin-bodies. Yang-bodies are bony and are of two types: those with long backbones and legs, and those with strong skull and cheek formations. Yin-bodies are also of two types: the ligamentous, and the vital or fleshy. The muscular type is balanced and stands midway between the others. Most asana postures are of the Yin type, and the people of India and the Malayan archipelago possess Yin bodies. But those of the Northeast of India, in whom the true Aryan blood predominates, are of the Yang type. They have

Yang bodies and they have been drawn to a Yang religion (Islam), the prayer movements of which are very beneficial for bony and mental people. So in India we find Yang people drawn toward a Yang religion and Yin people drawn to a Yin religion, each with its respective attendant art forms.

Let us take into consideration the differences in physical formations, without in any way advising against instruction in Hatha Yoga. Let us follow the suggestions offered in the previous and in this chapter. A number of stances or positions are now presented which will give a better idea of the importance of S.S., the knowledge of which can only come through direct personal experience.

Kneeling With Reclined Thighs,

Buttocks Above Back of Foot

This is the devotee's position. "To Him every head shall bow and knee shall bend." It signifies surrender of body and mind to God in humility. It is the essential posture of the Catholic Church, quite in harmony with the general teachings of Catholic Christianity.

Keeping the concentration upon the heart, the dancer performing it generates **spiritual power**. This is all important for the evolution of every soul. When the legs are crossed **psychic** power is derived from spiritual power. Most people, in ignorance, derive their psychic energy from other and less holy sources, and not knowing the laws thereof, either suffer therefore or cause others to lack.

Either of these positions is associated with "earth." Their practice enables one to perform movements with bent knees.

Sitting Posture, With One Leg Under Body,

Touching Opposite Buttocks, and the Other Leg in Front

This is derived from the "lotus asana" of the Yogis and is better fitted for Western people. There are naturally two such positions, but for meditation it is advisable to sit upon the right foot and keep the left leg in front. The hands should be in the lap, one inside the other or else clasped; or they can be placed upon the thighs. The purpose is to foster relaxation. Then from the heart the vital energy flows and becomes the source of **mental magnetism** and psychic power. Those flow through the whole personality bringing blessing and benefit. Thus one experiences the life eternal in the midst of manifestation.

Kneeling, Head Touching Ground or Floor,

Hands on Either Side Also Touching

This is the position of humility. It is also a fine blood-wash for the brain. The blood surges into the skull, cleansing and purifying brain and glands, especially when the heart-concentration is maintained. There is no chance for thought, so the mind rests. This is used in the Islamic prayers.

There are other positions which may be studied and which are needed as essentials of technique in various dances. But here we are considering only those which are basic so far as the dance contributes to the spiritual life and so far as the dancer may discover in her art what others may find in their church. Every breath involves an electrical current, the nature of which has been little studied even by bio-physicists. Professor and Madame Roerich and Madame Davida Neel report that the Tibetans have considerable knowledge on this subject.

Those interested in psychic research and metaphysics have already made investigations into the nature of the aura and of ectoplasm. The latter is presented upon the cinema as a reality and is ignored in the materialistically minded academies. This shutting off of investigation which might unloose prejudices is always harmful, and, alas, occurs even in democracies. Thus the body-temple remains as a mystery until man becomes more truthful unto himself.

Like any electrical instrument the body exudes energy around points. Finger tips and toes are areas of leakage, and the eye, sensitive to light, also reacts to bio-electrical phenomena. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Reichenbach, an Austrian investigator, conducted a series of laboratory experiments in this field only to be derided, persecuted and branded as a charlatan. But a new day is dawning, a new generation has arisen, and the works of Reichenbach, Richet and Lodge will not go forever unheeded. And who knows, what will Betty White be telling us next?

[Chapter 3](#)

Dynamic Symmetry

The term "Dynamic Symmetry" (D.S.) is not new. It is based upon mathematical curves found in nature. The study of it reveals definite laws of growth. It also manifests in sub-atomic movements, in molecular functions, in surface tension and in gaseous "behaviorism." A recognition of it may explain some of the phenomena of sugars and starches, of indeterminism in the physical world, the laws of valence, vibratory activity, and changes of state. D.S. might also explicate innumerable formations and growths in the vegetation world. It has already been applied to both art and science at Yale University and elsewhere.

But man is not from the earth alone, and more than material laws are needed to understand him and to help him on his devious ways. The soul, his vital essence, has come downward, so to speak, as if from some high heaven. So there is another and in a sense a reciprocally opposite way of looking at things than the common sense view. We might perceive as from our heart and love-nature first, then look through the mind, emotions and appetites in turn. All of these aspects of personality can better be appreciated in the light of D.S.

Intuition is a faculty of heart and comes into play through the heart which is its natural sphere. Moreover the logic—and such a word can be applied—connected with the deeper aspects of personality is extremely intricate. It is difficult to disprove that every aspect of man's nature and personality can be explained in terms of atomic and vibratory phenomena. Nor need we restrict these terms to what is sensible and manifest. In states of joy, ecstasy and love we may recognize other aspects of movement and of life, and come to the heart of Dynamic Symmetry. Telepathy and metapsychical phenomena also become clearer in the light of D.S. Besides, what we hold to be true today may not always be clearly expressed in the terms of yesteryear.

Every movement of the body includes pulsation, ebb and flow. Yet we stand on our own feet and hold our own positions. When something goes amiss, the internal organs suffer, there is disease, there is pain. If we examine closely we discover that infringement of rhythm is one of the basic causes of **wrongness**, and our lack of understanding of the whole operation of the rhythms of breath and blood may lie close to the root of our difficulties.

Rhythm is of utmost importance in our lives. It is born of the earth and brings us the strength and qualities of earth. It characterizes our respiratory and circulatory systems which respectively bring and hold vibrations and forces from the external world, perhaps from the internal world also. When there is a defect in rhythm, there is a lack of balance, and then, whatever movements we may indulge in, produce loss of psychic power. This is one of the reasons for the coming of debility, disease, danger and death. The so-called dances of Isadora Duncan, based upon other than heart-concentration, had no rhythmical foundation and so led to destruction. Her life was no different.

A similar analysis may be made of music. It is questionable whether music without rhythm is really music at all, though it be produced by musical instruments. Children playing with clay do not create works of art and a baby with a paint box and brushes is not necessarily a genius. True art touches every plane of nature and every phase of existence. Each art has its fundamentals, the omission of which is damaging, and all the arts may be bound together by a cosmic, holistic, or universal aesthetic.

Emphasis upon the after-beat has its own definite result, different from that of steps taken with the down-beat rhythm. It produces duality, division and opposition or contrast. The after-beat stress is downward and should be used only when one wishes to direct forces downward or to produce a momentary contrast. It may have an association with Yin and with "water," but "fire" turned downward brings the destructive lightning. The dancer will quickly perceive that her synchronization with rhythmic pulsations adds to her psychic power.

Movement throws the center of gravity in the direction to be taken so that it is no longer concentrated about a point. The tight-rope walker, skater, skier and gymnast are well aware of it. The dancer has a more intricate art and must control this gravitational line whether she be posing, performing adagio, or whirling. In order to maintain control, she should begin with her heart-concentration and let its influence permeate her every step. And if she can keep her breath under a steady rhythmical control she should soon master her art.

In order to exemplify these teachings we turn to the study of movements beginning with those taken upon the floor and enter the world of dynamism.

Backbone Supine and Taut

This position has already been suggested, first as that taken by an infant, and second as one of the fundamentals of Static Symmetry. When we turn to dynamism we may regard it as a movement with the value of “zero;” that is to say, one remains relaxed and listens to music. As one advances in meditation he can dispense with the quiet supine position. In the cultivation of dynamism music is an essential for it sets up the vibrational activity in all aspects of personality and helps to develop the finer side of man.

One may experiment with different pieces and notice their varying effects. Thus one may discover the part that music plays in the life of the “soul.” One will learn about changes in heart-beat and respiratory rhythms under the diverse influences of music.

These exercises may be done on the floor, on the ground or on top of the bed. If a radio is handy, they may even be performed in bed.

Backbone Fixed, Body in Motion

There are two types of this exercise. In the one a person lies like an infant, with arms and legs in action, but maintaining heart-concentration. This should be continued until the life-force is felt in the limbs and in the entire body. It is excellent for drawing vital currents from the earth. A variation is to keep the arms by the sides moving the legs bicycle fashion. This strengthens the legs and is fine for those who need exercise without reducing waist and bust.

The Crawl

In the crawl one is like an animal except that man usually goes on hands and knees and not strictly on all fours. But here again one must not neglect the heart-concentration and rhythm. In the mime and in dramatic dancing, it is true, one may forego a degree of rhythm for the sake of realism. But for spiritual development, whether we imitate children or animals, or move by instinct, rhythm is requisite.

Hands-and-feet crawling is so ungainly that it is usual for two to team up to represent horse, donkey, or elephant. Even though it be for humor the work is best done when such persons concentrate together. Harmony is an essential both of spirituality and of art.

Most movements begin from an upright standing position. Here we enter into a very complex field

in which all the principles traditional or determinate may be retained. By traditional are meant folk dances and those themes which have been preserved for many generations. By determinate is meant any art form which belongs to a school or group of teachers or even to a single teacher. There is no need to criticize any method. Dancers usually have little knowledge of physiology and less of mechanics, so it is well to understand some of the principles of each in order to add to grace and to minimize lassitude and fatigue.

Of course, properly speaking, D.S. applies to movements in which the whole body, carried by the feet, changes position in space. Usually this is to the accompaniment of music, and with a purpose or program in view. In ancient times the program was chiefly borrowed from Scriptures, sacred poetry, or folk lore, and traditional chants and verses were recited. Such was the original idea of choreography. Verses might even be sung or chanted with modulations, for poetry, music, and dancing were not separated. They were all aspects of one art.

During the dance the dynamic center of gravity may take a pivotal course, or trace a complex pattern, or no exact pattern at all. The body has four basic types of movement which may be classified according to the “elements” of the ancients which “elements” are still recognized in parts of the Orient. Each one of them has its peculiar purpose and characteristics. In “Nature’s Finer Forces,” the Hindu Rama Prasad has presented the science of these elements to the public. Whatever else may have been written about them, their nature will never be understood by those who do not cultivate a sympathetic point of view. It is useless for a scientific philosopher to demand or request sympathy and understanding for his views while denying validity to the outlook of others.

Along with “earth,” “water,” “fire,” and “air” there is a fifth, the “ether” or the **akasha** of the Hindus. The ether-akasha extends through space and is the source and final repository of the others. It is also the refining element and the one which represents stillness. Cultivation of it enables one to hold any position indefinitely. In Tibetan art one finds it in the supreme position, dominating the others.

Earth Position

There are several aspects of the earth position. Earth movements force the body to inhale more deeply and draw in air and vital life force. They strengthen the spine and circulatory system, but do not alter the condition of the blood. They may well be preceded by a concentration upon earth. The sustaining of this concentration is very helpful.

Kneeling. Kneeling is a common position for children and primitive people. It is required in many folk occupations, such as pounding grain or washing clothes in a stream. Here the feet are anchored while the hands, head and even the whole torso may move. Kneeling is therefore a part of some folk dances, while in others one moves from or toward it.

There are indeed two forms of kneeling which are similar anatomically. In the one kind, a person is

in prayer or devotion. So we find the kneeling position in many ritualistic prayers. It indicates reverence, humility, modesty and service. Its moral value is great. And the psychic and moral effects are not different because the spirit of devotion is absent. That is, to stay weak itself is ennobling, especially when regarded as part of a sacred duty. One may move the arms and torso in rhythm without leaving the floor. It is possible to exhibit grace and beauty in such movements.

Squatting on haunches. Though this may appear quite difficult to us, it is the natural relaxed position of many aborigines, e.g. the natives of many parts of Africa. It is not often employed as a basic position in the dance but is included in the wild movements of the Cossacks. Their very vital dances combine “fire” and “earth,” and they exhibit these qualities in their natures, especially in their daring.

Water Positions and Movements

It is to be noticed that the elements, other than earth, signify movements rather than poses or positions. A dancer cannot stay long in a fixed pose to illustrate fountain or waterfall or rain. Water has definite movements in nature and a very determinate effect upon the body. This effect is seen in the tendency to bow and bend, like the foliage of trees. And, as has been stated, water has a close affinity to Yin.

Yin is thus near kin to water, and Yang to fire. Yin and water dominate in the arms which hang naturally from either side. They tend to curvilinear movements. They promote grace, beauty, gentleness, loveliness and sympathy, as well as sadness, pity and affection. All of these emotions and feelings may be illustrated by the arms. A person with awkward arms is generally lacking in one or more of these qualities. It is possible to develop the character through an artistic correction which is nearly always taken with a better spirit than a personal correction or moral teaching.

Eurythmic concentrations on water are only proper by the seashore or on the bank of a stream or the edge of a lake or near a waterfall. Otherwise it is best to suppose that the kingdom of heaven is within man, and that it is possible to awaken in the heart all qualities, characteristics and properties which appear in the manifestation. Thus the dancer may develop her own water-spirit and become even as a nymph.

Water movements are characterized by gentle step, light feet and agility. The force of them is toward the left and downward. They go well with drapes, light clothing, sashes and streamers. The color green belongs to water, while yellow and black are associated with earth. White, too, harmonizes with the spirit of water.

Fire Positions and Movements

For the most part, fire is the reciprocal opposite of water. Its tendency is to raise the body and also to draw it toward the right. Its pull is somewhat stiffer than that of water, for it is connected with

Yang. Its movements develop courage, energy and force. They also warm the body quickly. Indeed there is a tradition in India that the musician or dancer who invoked fire and did not know how to control it might become a living torch.

Fire dances are illustrated in the war, sword, and weapon dances of many peoples. Participation in them seems to make the body insensitive to pain, to rouse the adrenal glands and to produce an antitoxin in the blood which heals wounds more quickly than otherwise. This was certainly true in the case of the Zulus who participated in the First World War. They seemed quite definitely to be able to withstand suffering and to recover much more quickly than their white brothers who did not dance.

It should be noted that fire has the distinctive rhythm of three; that is to say of three beats to the measure. Earth has four beats to the measure, while water and air are associated with curvilinear movements so their stresses are not so well illustrated by integers.

Air Positions and Movements

The air appears in all movements from side to side, even when the body lies upon the floor. Even in rolling from side to side or rolling down a hill, the air element expresses itself. Lack of control of it produces dizziness and vertigo. This is also true in the case of inebriates. The crossing of legs and arms, the swinging of limbs and torso, are associated with it. It denotes vitality, changefulness, a mental rather than a material outlook, wit, humor, spriteliness, nervousness and intoxication. Ordinarily it tends to draw one from repose and it aids in the increase of tempo. Probably all rapid dances, (e.g. Satarello and Flamenco) may be considered as air types.

The air element also consumes more psychic energy but at the same time aids in its restoration, especially as one is lifted from the ground. In the story of Antaeus, that giant grew stronger each time Hercules threw him on the earth, and became weaker when he was lifted into the air. With psychic energy it is the opposite, as it may increase when one is elevated. But it must be assimilated too, else one will follow the path of Nijinski. This great genius, or "jinn," was able to lift his body into the air and even to hold it in space. He had invoked psychic power and could use it against the material gravitational forces, but lacking breath control and ignorant of the connection between breath, body and mind, he became "mad."

The concentration and practice of the science of these elements is of tremendous value in the training of body, emotions and mind. When mysticism is taught as a science, as the Vedantists and Sufis would have it, the student learns to employ these elements as his servants, and thus he perfects his own nature and helps others. Sufi Inayat Khan has also elaborated on this point in his *The Mysticism of Sound*, Grace, beauty and art are truly ways toward the realization of God, and if they are felt rather than thought, their value is supreme. This knowledge brings us to the consideration of the metaphysical aspects of Spiritual dancing.

Chapter 4

The Metaphysics of the Dance

It has been stated that the dance is an art which reflects life itself, that the dance is life. We cannot limit it to man alone. There are movements in nature such as sub-atomic gyrations, Brownian movements of pollen, the wind among the trees and waves beating on the shore which our poets would call dances. Besides this, birds and beasts have their art forms. They are usually employed in courtship, which according to the evolution of the animal are dances and they reveal something of the nature of the performers.

We can recognize the dance as a physical movement or series of physical movements, in which the body is employed as an instrument, with or without the addition of tonal music, costumes, scenery and other accouterments. Yet physical movement alone is sterile and that which does not involve emotion may be excluded from art. The march may be called a dance; it is a rhythmical, physical movement of the body, usually to the accompaniment of music and having a distinct purpose. The march does not demand grace or beauty; in it Yang dominates over Yin. The goose-step is an extreme example.

The goose-step involves a maximum of Yang to practically the complete exclusion of Yin; metaphysically the goose-step and war are one. The goose-step is a war march, as much or more than the savage dance is a war dance. It makes use of force without stint or qualification. It involves destructive psychic as well as physical forces. To abolish war we must abolish war-like movements.

Indeed, all bodily movements involve psychic forces which, while operating on the physical plane are partly magnetic, partly mental. It may be said that they are mental in point of origin and biophysical or bio-electro-magnetic in operation. They move along the nervous network and form an aura around it. When the body moves this aura is extended in the direction of movement, always ahead of the physical center of gravity. Therefore it may be said that there is a physical center of gravity in or near the heart, and a psychic center of gravity determined dynamically by the direction of movement. The former is more or less static, the latter dynamic even in repose. For in repose the psychic field of force may be extended according to the condition of thought and the quality of breath. The understanding of this will help to explain several kinds of metapsychical phenomena, commonly ascribed to spirit communication, etc.

Use and misuse of psychic energy tend toward stimulation or fatigue. When stimulation is under control there is ease and joy. It is a part of life to increase that joy even to the degree of ecstasy. But before the nature of ecstasy can be understood, one must learn the relation of mind to body and of heart to both mind and body. Otherwise, there will be that debilitating false ecstasy which is nothing but psychic inebriation.

We shall have to assume here that movement on the after-beat, or contrary to rhythm, consumes

vital force. One can prove this for himself by dancing or tapping on or off beat. Movement with the beat brings us the energy of earth. How often has the tired salesgirl danced through a whole evening and become so stimulated that not only has her fatigue disappeared but her several partners have been worn out! Unconsciously she was deriving psychic power from the music, and also, perhaps, from her companions. By earth here we mean the ground, nature, prakriti, the universe of form and solidity.

When thought and movement are synchronized and united, a greater degree of psychic power is engendered, and the body becomes its vehicle. When body and mind work together, man is pointing in the direction of perfection. When they work contrariwise, man is on the path of imperfection or “sin.” This may not be ethical sin at all. Rather it is psychological and aesthetical sin. Many “good” people suffer because of their ignorance of psychic laws and their self-apology avails them naught.

As the earth provides rhythm, so the mind supplies melody. Melody is a result of mental concentration or of the state of mind. Thought, seeking a musical outlet, creates or supplies melody. Yes, the mystical “earth” also assists the rhythms and the “air” is the best channel for melody, for to sing we must breathe. Therefore heaven and earth unite to give us our music, melody as if from above, rhythm as if from below. However, mind must be regarded in its largest sense, for thought is too apt to become a weight, especially in art. (This point is elucidated in a companion work called *Spiritual Music*).

There are two aspects of the mind in dancing, one being the concentration on the melodic aspect of music, and the second being the thought of the role the melody is playing. Attainment comes through union or communion of mind and body. Well might the Western world benefit from this cornerstone of Buddhistic teaching; it can do so without loss of face or change of religion. When one sings and thinks of what he is singing, be it a single note, he can hold it much longer. Then he can put power and magnetism into it, convey his sentiments thereupon and not be so fatigued. So it is with dancing and all arts. When the artist thinks of what he is doing, and when he becomes what he is thinking about, he is progressing toward perfection.

The doctrine of the “Logos” appears at the opening of the Gospel of St. John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of man.” This illustrates the idea of thought-action union or thought-word-action union. “Logos” signifies word and thought and reason yet includes action, and is fundamentally a **spiritual** term for “the Word was God.” And this Logos is the veritable seat or seed of spiritual power in man from which the psychic energy arises.

Mary Wigman has established what may become an important school of the dance, if not of all life, by this thought-action movement. She has succeeded as a pioneer, adding an important metaphysical and psychological element to art. She has emphasized the “idea” in the dance, which must be regarded as the analogue of the Wagnerian **leitmotif**. Although not the originator of

the “idea” she has vitalized it socially and aesthetically and given new values to the dance thereby.

We may recall that in the propagandizing of religion, ceremony and dance have played a large part. While the Catholic forms of Christianity rely upon ritual, the Protestant sects have largely dispensed with it, though it may be said that congregational singing has taken its place with them. Ancient religions had their peculiar dances, the vanishing of which was followed by a tremendous revolution. Their nature needs a more thorough study. When the post-Renaissance classicism appeared, everything was “nice,” “gentle,” and “proper,” including the dances. This art was patronized by the socially elite and had no deep roots in humanity. The result was that later, contemporary with the French Revolution, romanticism sprang into being. However, neither classicism nor romanticism has provided us with a proper substitute for the ancient methods.

As Cyril Scott has written, romanticism has served to harmonize the arts. But it has been so personal, so often based upon individual revolts and objections to stilted or outmoded traditions, that it has not always vitalized culture sufficiently. True art needs deep roots and truly springs from an eternal fountain. Debussy, Scriabin and Scott himself have been contributing to a “New Romanticism” which would not be superficial, but honest, solid, and pure. They would recover the lost blessing of the Greeks and Egyptians without departing from the spirit of the age. Wigman, in a sense, has been pursuing a parallel source with respect to the dance.

But it may be objected, and rightly, that too much intellectualism, while avoiding sterility, does not offer complete scope for grace and beauty. In the dance, in particular, the meaning should not dominate over aesthetic feeling. Helmholtz was one of our greatest scientists. He delved far into the nature of sound and music, but failed to find the basis for aesthetics therefrom. But he found it in life, and the reason is simple: **one does not reach enjoyment through analysis.**

The emotions are involved in all the arts, but there is as yet an imperfect understanding of their origin and nature, still less of the methods by which they may be controlled. No doubt, emotions have their physical organs of concentration and expression. Pathologists have made many poignant observations in this regard. With the advance of endocrinology, man will learn more about the physical aspects of fear, pain, courage and other states. While psychology continues to substitute for a true God that unknown deity which is labeled “environment,” and to attribute to “environment” every sort of inexplicable, magical, supernatural and irrational quality and potentiality, man will be hampered in his quest for truth. It does not always occur to psychologists that they, and not the aesthetes they stigmatize, may be abnormal. We need more showings of “Private Worlds.” However, it may be that there are numerous norms, norms for differing types of individuals.

A study of early dances, especially through the performance thereof, will bring to us an understanding of methods by which fear and pain and other emotions may be augmented or diminished. The athlete, in the height of the contest, does not notice slight injuries; still less did the warrior under the excitement of battle. The example of the Zulu warrior should be kept in mind.

Where was the “environment” here?

According to the mystical tradition, each emotion is more or less associated with earth, water, fire, air, and their combinations, each with the others and with the “ether.” The bloodstream is involved in all emotional surges, and emotions are connected with what might be called the shadow-side or ego-aspect of heart. As psychic power is raised or lowered in the play and interplay between mind and body, so emotions ebb or flow between the life of the heart on one side, and mind and body on the other. Together, mind and body give rise to what Yeats in *The Vision* called “The Mask,” and which Sufis know as **nufs** or “false self.”

By “heart” we mean more than the physical organ, but that center of all higher feelings. In its development, three factors come to the fore:

- a. Aesthetics, or the appreciation of beauty;
- b. Love and Will, the aspects of power;
- c. Intuition, Insight, and Inspiration, which lead to direct realization, to balance and perfection, to the “Oversoul.”

When mind unites with body, psychic power is generated. When heart unites with body, there is increased impressionability and more emotional response, owing to receptivity and fineness.

When heart, mind, and body are in communion, then spiritual forces find a proper channel for manifestation. They come into play with doubtful results when “Mask” covers the heart. They add to holiness when the heart, like a great central sun, illuminates mind and body. There are three aspects of this.

The first aspect appears when the life-force is felt in the heart which becomes tender and sensitive and so influences the personality. This sensitivity turns into refinement, which is the source of grace, beauty, aestheticism and wisdom. This is true even of the expression of inner beauty through the body.

Prettiness is too often superficial, but there is a living beauty which can increase as one sojourns longer on earth, and is independent of our years. That is why aged men and women are often handsome, even though they may not have been comely during youth. For the kingdom of heaven is in the heart, and the treasures of the universe are there. “As a man thinketh **in his heart**, so is he.”

When the heart-life is developed it brings joy. When the love-will nature is enhanced it also leads to joy, and the union of these aspects produces joy. That is to say, when our sense of love and feeling of beauty commingle we experience joy. Tasting of this joy we love others more, we love life more, and our faculty of appreciation increases. This may be called “Spiritual Optimism.” This optimism

must not be confused with the egocentric that which refuses to look upon facts and which seeks some escape mechanism, some ethereal aeroplane, some method of self-hypnosis. In his day, A.E. (George Russell) was a true spiritual optimist, for he faced the world as he found it, lived in it, fought its evils, and worked for their remedies, and yet knew from personal acquaintanceship the joy emanating from the sun of love.

The intuitive faculty is developed through use, self-confidence and trust. All of us receive impressions which are surely not imaginations, for imagination leans upon the past whereas intuition and insight are linked with timelessness and eternity. Imagination is a mental faculty, more or less alert as the will-power is dormant (this is also true of the dream state). But intuition is quite independent of personal experience, though not so independent of will. Reliance upon it often strengthens the will and leads one toward the Universal Will, source of all power and wisdom.

Next we come to the consideration of the aspects of heart known as love and will. Love does not arise of itself; we have to love another. When there is self-centeredness, there is not love; for it, self-sacrifice is needed. The same faculty, when used to concentrate all efforts and motives, and to give a purpose to life and hold us to that purpose, is will-power.

Whatever aspect of heart we refer to, when heart dominates mind and body, it can become the channel for spiritual forces. To make this practical, one needs meditation and concentration.

Meditation is an art of controlling all movements of mind and body. When the body is rested and the mind stilled, the pathway is opened toward repose and peace. How often the body stands before us as a rebel, difficult to tame and control. And what is this mind but a veritable devil which forces us in directions we would not take, which brings us bitterness and tribulation! In meditation, one becomes again like a little child; one has no memory, no past, one is ever about to be born, one is ready.

Concentration is an art whereby all forces are centered upon the immediate duty. Yes, for it the mind is needed and there has to be control of body by mind. But what controls the mind? At this point, man's feelings come into action. The heart, like a central beacon, pours forth its rays upon the mind, illuminates it and directs the thoughts constructively. This is the basis of spirituality in dancing, in art, and in all of life. If our deeds were preceded by meditation (or prayer) and concentration, then every act would become spiritual; every recital, whatever the theme, school, technique or purport, would be as an offering before God.

The secret of concentration is this holding of thought by feeling. No, not just empty feeling, for that will lead nowhere. No, not strong thought for such thought can produce disharmony and fatigue. There is a Hindu tradition that Love was the parent of Thought. The mystics say that beyond the world of mind there is another sphere or plane, the heart-world. Heart, mind and body may occupy the same "space" or **akasha**, but each has its own arena, its type of vibrations, its qualities and attributes. The mind-world in a sense permeates and controls the physical plane, but that of heart also permeates and may control the mental sphere.

Strictly intellectual concentration is apt to become boring, tiring and inhibiting to the artist. When the consciousness is kept in the realm of thought, during the execution of any duty, there is separation of subject and object. Loss of freedom, spontaneity, and inspiration follows. The Hindus say: “**Tat Twam Asi**”—“Thou art that.” In other words, the subject and object (**thou** and **that**) are essentially one. Life calls to life. If they are separate in the beginning, their union through yoga and concentration makes for perfection.

This is one of the fundamentals of all spiritual art. It is founded upon philosophical monism and denies every type of dualism and separatism. In art and painting the inner personality absorbs the subject-matter until the creator feels it within. In music and poetry he finds that which flows from his depths to his outer being. In drama he loses his ego-self to become apparently what he was not; thus “being is becoming” as the ancient Greeks taught. The dancer combines all of these attitudes and forgets herself, what she is or was, how she thinks or feels personally, to fulfill an immediate duty. The more perfect this forgetfulness, the greater the possibilities for true success.

There are four aspects of personality which come into manifestation here, all of which are found in man: the animal, the human, the genius and the angel. Naturally, we are more interested in how they appear in the dance than in their full psychological or metaphysical value. That is to say, we are more interested in animal, human, genius and angelic dances than in personalities as such.

Animal dances are essentially connected with that aspect of personality wherein man continues the same kind of life as is found in the animal. That is to say, they deal with appetites and instincts and are largely concerned with sexual relationships. In them the psychic center of gravity is pulled downward to the pelvis as there is more movement in that region. There may be gestures forward and backward which involve Yang and are characteristic of the male. These will appear to be as if in a straight line or on a flat plane. There are others which go from side to side or approximate the rotation of the torso. They belong to Yin and express the female side of life. When movements are vertical, toward the zenith or nadir, vital-life-force is directly involved.

Animal dances are prevalent in burlesque shows and also in rites and performances which are concerned with the imitation of animals. We should not condemn them merely because we do not admire them. There are undeveloped people, there are children, there are those with distinct desires, there are others seeking diversion who will run to them, who will delight in them. No, they are not high either in the scale of art or in the scale of idealism, but man has to be awakened to higher ideals before he can find enjoyment in them.

Human dances are of three types: formal, folk and artistic, although those classes no doubt overlap. The first two are distinctly social and reflect the spirit of the age. Folk dances are traditional and may be founded upon tasks or themes drawn from nature. Artistic dances are of the classical and romantic schools. They have developed into the forms used on stage and screen.

Folk and ballroom dancing do not belong directly to the spiritual aspect of art, but they can hardly be omitted from the aesthetic side of life. True, crowded halls, especially where there is smoking

and drinking, do not appeal to refined tastes. What is needed is the introduction of suitable diversion to draw man to the heights rather than to condemn an institution which to our minds is unworthy. Perhaps the U.S.O. [United Service Organizations—Ed.] is making a beginning here.

Stage and screen dancing merge into a higher type, that of the genius. The genius is one who has the gift of spontaneity, who can create dances. He is the artist **par excellence** who can readily be recognized as painter, poet or dramatist. Psychologically, there are two types of genius, those having strong back-head development indicative of imagination and refinement, and those with strong fore-head development indicative of thought and penetration. No doubt it is not always possible to separate the types entirely. There are persons with characteristics of each, more with qualities of neither. According to Oriental teachings, the genius represents a grade of evolution beyond that of man and is known variously as **jinn**, **petri**, **peri**, **gandharva**, **apsara**, **arvakn**, etc.

The school of Eurhythmics offers an excellent example of an attempt to codify the genius and free him from narrow classicism. But it has gone to an extreme, establishing a sort of orthodoxy to end orthodoxies. Pupils have been encouraged to ignore the physical world and to escape from realism. When freedom is so overstressed, the very thought of it may enslave. It is one thing to try to dance like a gull or pelican by the seashore; it is quite another matter to put on a butterfly waltz there. It is excellent to depict the spirit of the waterfall when one is near one; it borders on nonsense to do this in the desert. Dancing may benefit from a visible subject-model even as painting does. But if man carries his moods with him and ignores environment altogether it is only another kind of egotism. There is no "Tat Twam Asi." However, it is not Eurhythmics which is to be condemned so much as the extreme misapplications of it.

Wigman offers more opportunities to the genius if she is not merely imitated or aped. The purpose of the dance should include the emancipation of the spirit. Too much following limits the scope for expression. Each of us has his own purpose and career, and the light of that purpose kindles our pathway. Concentration, feeling, poetry and music can furnish sufficient framework for pattern and theme, and it is not necessary to repeat steps with exactitude. The secret of Wigman is her inner attitude; if this is held, the form will take care of itself.

The angelic dance has its correlations in the movements of the infant, for the infant, as has been mentioned, retains angelic qualities. But there are also angelic people who may be called devas or deva-souls, who dance because their souls dance. There is a spontaneity in them. Often one sees it as springtime, after the storm, or on entering a beautiful place, a garden, or woodland glade. They will dance to the birds, the flowers, the stream, the wind. They always dance when in love. The mood seems to come and go without making a deep mark upon the memory because it is not intellectual. It is like a descent of the Holy Spirit and it may come unawares.

Angelic dances are magnetic and entrancing, but the angelic soul is not necessarily artistic nor is her physical charm paramount. Neither need we regard her dance as especially sacred. There may be joy and ebullience in it, though she may never give thought to them. She is a free soul who does not prate about freedom.

Everyone shows one or more of these four aspects: the animal, human, genius, and angel in his personality. Sometimes one, sometimes another seems to dominate behavior. Usually one aspect is so preponderant that we can say a person belongs to that type, to that grade of evolution. However, a skilled dancer learns to take on all roles, just as an actor does, and her divinity must manifest in all forms.

[Chapter 5](#)

Physical Aspects

By physical aspects of the dance we mean especially the part the body plays. It has been stated that the dance is one art in which man's body is the essential instrument. This very fact makes it potentially the most sacred of arts, one in which the temple of God is directly used, to verify the teaching: "In thy flesh thou shalt see God." And one will discover, too, that the dance leads to the highest spiritual states, and through it the Kingdom of Heaven may manifest on earth, so to speak.

The physical center of gravity can be found by dropping a vertical line from the crown of the head and crossing it with a horizontal plane so placed that half of the weight would be above, half below that plane. This point would be the static center. Its exact position would depend upon osseous and muscular structure, height and girth. This point would be a center of balance, more significant in gymnastics and tumbling than in the dance, yet not to be ignored. If one relied upon it and it alone, the body would become a sort of corpse-machine rather than a vital instrument.

As the body moves, it is well to know the line of direction of change—in other words, what may be regarded as the **dynamic** center of gravity. Here the momentum rather than the mass of the body is significant. That is to say, the mass and the direction it takes. This involves **psychic** as well as physical forces. Physical force is connected with the calories of heat generated and with the associative functions. The psychic force is in the direction of that gravitation line, but the force itself emanates from fingers, toes, chin, ears and eyes, and, when there is speech, through the tongue.

It has been stated that the frontal line or plane, the direction in which one walks, is connected with the Yang aspect of life, which helps to develop strength. In this sense every march and even a rhythmic walk may be regarded as a dance-form, Yang type. Lateral movements and gyrations of the torso involve Yin and aid in the promotion of grace. Rope-jumping, being in another direction, that is to say, vertical, involves vital and psychic forces. In the quest of spiritual peace the body may revolve in a circle after the manner of the dervishes, or else move along the pathway of a circle (never in a straight line). When this is done with the accompaniment of suitable music and in the spirit of the highest devotion, the self is sublimated.

A word or two may not be out of place here in regards to skating and skiing. In these sports, the dynamic center of gravity is all important. The body and the equipment must be taken as one to determine the mass. As one is weighted, the center of gravity will be physically lowered and

sportsmen instinctively bend over. The skill depends upon control of the mass and the line of direction which has to be grasped mentally beforehand.

Naturally, physical efforts produce fatigue. Right breathing, heart-concentration and union-in-feeling with the dance obviate much of this fatigue. Many of us may believe that “in God we live and move and have our being” but few know how to take advantage of it. We do not realize we are in the midst of a living, throbbing universe. Through the breath one may draw in energy from what might be called subtler spheres, recharging and re-invigorating the body. This might almost suggest endless activity. But when the dance has obtained its goal, which is to say, is completed, it is not sensible to continue merely to exhibit muscular ability or tirelessness. Power has to be balanced with wisdom.

It has been reiterated that movements up and down involve vital life force. If one rises with the inhalation of breath and descends with the exhalation, the force is increased. If one aims a ball at a basket or is jumping rope or hurdling, the rise which accompanies inhalation profits and that which is independent of it brings loss. Ordinarily, we waste breath and so lose vitality. Then the heart may be affected. By right breathing one makes of the body a most useful and pliable instrument, not subject to much wear and tear. And if one does tire, one may lie down for a few moments, concentrate upon the heart, and take a few slow, rhythmical breaths. Ease will come quickly.

From the standpoint of consciousness and meaning, each section of the body has its own significance. Here we may well bear in mind the old Hindu teaching which states that the Brahmin caste sprang from the head of Brahma, the Kshettriya (warrior) caste from the arms and thorax, the Vaisya (merchant) caste from the loins, and the Sudra (servant) caste from the feet.

When the consciousness is in the head, there is thoughtfulness and skill in execution. But if the mind is filled with its own thoughts rather than with those connected with its duty, spontaneity is impeded and there is emotional suffering. Indeed, there is a **vital** center of gravity in the head which is a center of balance, too. It is stimulated by music and disturbed by self-thought. Temperament arises from the inner conflict. Besides this, the center tends to rise under pressure of movement and “air” breathing. This is excellent for the jumper and the imaginative person, but otherwise produces fatigue.

The head is especially important in Javanese dances. In them it acts as an appendage and should not be too expressive of feeling. The feelings, if any, should be demonstrated in the **mudras**, or poses of the fingers. In India, the head still retains its Brahminical significance in the dance. Both Hindus and ancient Egyptians used to cover their heads with animal forms to depict the gods, especially in their religious ceremonials and associated dances. These coverings signified far more than mere form or the qualities connected therewith. The dancer was supposed to become the very incarnation of the character portrayed.

The thorax is the upper part of the torso and as such has no independent movement. The “fire” manifests there and all feelings such as courage, love and duty are felt within the bosom. Heart

and lungs, most important organs which connect the physical with the spiritual, are located here. Fineness in breathing and fineness in feeling develop fineness in character. When the heart is closed or hardened, there may be strength, but there will also be combativeness. The expanding heart brings the solar influence and extends the aura of light. And even physical concentration upon it draws the forces away from the pelvis and aids in the sublimation of the desire nature.

The arms are in many respects the most important mechanical parts of the body. The Javanese even express their emotions through fingers and arms. Recall, too, the period of the silent film, when gesture was so important. The actors had to speak without speaking, so they constantly used their arms, and the knowing readily understood their movements.

Arms display grace, loveliness, tenderness and so much that is beautiful and fine. There is the gesture of kissing a woman's hand, or of coming before an ecclesiast for blessing. There is the bestowal of blessing by priest or prophet. There is the extension of the arms in love. In so many ways are the arms channels of spirituality, yet on the whole, little thought has been given to it.

The dancer does not have to give the arms a separate training. If one trains oneself or is trained, the arms become obedient servants. Those lines which appear on the hands and which palmists claim to read are the terminals of nerves. These nerves pass through the arms, and along them our thoughts wander to and fro. As we change thoughts, we send messages which are transmitted along neural passages and ultimately impress the hands. These thoughts which reach the hands and necessarily pass through the arms manifest in gesture and movement and are most important elements of the dancer's and actor's equipment.

The name of pelvis here applies to that part of the trunk below the diaphragm and includes the abdominal section. It is the home of the vitals and includes the solar plexus. The solar plexus is not a true center of creative activity and was mistaken as such by Isadora Duncan to her ultimate undoing. When too much attention is given to it, psychic power is consumed without there being any proper means of replenishment. This plexus is an instinctive, not a positive emotional center. Concentration upon it lowers the center of gravity, and the vital forces then descend along the nerves and affect the legs and their movements.

Pelvic dances are not necessarily sexual in either the romantic or suggestive sense, although of course, this portion of the anatomy comes to the fore in all sexual dances of whatever character. But there are also movements in which hips, torso and thighs are employed with other meanings, even sacred ones. The Polynesians emphasized this part of the body; the Hula has a quite different significance to the Hawaiian than to the undeveloped European or American. In the dance of Krishna, which is considered most sacred in India, the entire torso is moved; therein the head represents heaven and the feet earth while the trunk stands between the two.

In the West, the general opinion is that unless the feet move, there is no dance. Witticisms are often aimed at those whose norms are different. When the feet are stationary, man is subject to his environment. When he changes his position he becomes capable of controlling it. Besides, many

tasks require change of position. When those are woven into patterns there is a story, a significance, and a beauty.

The legs, in contrast to the arms, are the Yang appendages. In the ape arms and legs are about equal in size, function, and importance. With man the legs are much larger and their functions somewhat different from those of the other quadramana. Legs are the best instruments for psychic power, for its demonstration and also for its increase within the body and within the personality. It is almost evident in the march and in athletics and gymnastics. Now the dance is suggested as a highway for the greater life and the higher life even in the flesh.

The gestures of the legs are, of course, quite different from those of the arms. The little girl, in anger, stamps on the ground. The Zuni is attentive to his feet and has his strange dances. The Nautch girl has her bangles and is mindful of her rhythms. The soldier marches with measured step. The chorus girl is trained to kick with the music. The ballerina speaks with her limbs.

Daily we walk and consume energy, both physical and psychical, but if we do not walk, woe unto our bodies! The hurry, scurry and flurry of life leads to worry, a most common disease. Yet there is a very simple and easy prophylactic: synchronize pace and breath. Spiritual students in the Orient take so many steps to the repetition of a sacred phrase, and thus draw in the power of the sphere. They prove pragmatically that “in God we live and move and have our being.” When one feels the presence of a living deity (in contrast to a God who is largely a “thought-being”), and one accepts with seriousness that there are three witnesses on earth, **water** and **breath** and **blood** just as the Bible tells us, there is an ever greater scope for the zest of life. As one feels the breath currents running down the legs and out through the feet, it gives a sensation like “walking on air.” This lightens one’s step and ultimately lightens one’s heart. It is an excellent antidote to melancholy and self-pity.

Body may be controlled by mind, by breath, and by heart. Each of these has to be given separate study. But if one becomes too intellectual in the understanding of theory, then the aesthetic aspect is lost; we must not separate truth and beauty. Dancers know much that they have never seen in print; their experience is their teacher. The psychology of the dance loses its **tour de force** when viewed too analytically. We must not trespass beyond the limits set by Havelock Ellis: the dance is the veil of life.

The body is a tridimensional, quasi-solid figure with three axes of equilibrium, one from front to back, one from side to side, and one from “tip to toe.” Each axis has its significance, already mentioned; linear motion along the first axis promotes strength, expressiveness and masculinity, the Yang qualities; curvilinear motion in the second phase produces femininity, grace and response, the Yin qualities; movement up and down involves the vital forces which are so often associated with spirituality. When psychic power is pulled downward, the human spirit comes to the surface as it always does under the sexual urge. When the movement is in the opposite direction, upward, the vital force is sublimated. Then the hormones flow freely.

In the consideration of dancing as a health-art, the part of man and woman is irrelevant. Nearly all aborigines dance, but our artificial life and commercialism have aborted us in this regard. Of course, when the male resorts to rotary movements, or the female apes the man with her marching, perversion and homosexuality increase. Whether we enjoy watching drum majorettes or regard their actions as disgraceful, it is fortunate that they are not apes.

Rhythmic movements and controlled breathing confer many benefits. Rope jumping, however, is counter indicated. Landing upon hard cement may strain delicate organs. As it is advisable to avoid hard surfaces when riding horseback, it is best to select softer landing places when jumping rope. In the field sports, the jumpers land in soft dirt.

In dancing one does not have to strain muscles and sinews. While not clearly separated from gymnastics, it endows physical development with meaning. Yes, the different methods of breathing enable one to jump, twist, twirl, rise from the ground, squat and assume various positions. It is possible to achieve these without knowledge of Yoga through the doffing of the cloak of self much as the actor does. Selflessness enables one to move the tendons and muscles as well as the appendages and entire organism.

The system created by Menzendique enables one to practice muscular control with understanding. While chiropractors and osteopaths may know the adjustments which effect stimulation or relaxation, the Menzendique student can gain the same ends by his own efforts. Therefore this art is a valuable asset for dancers. It promotes agility. It enables one to correct abuses. It aids in the restoration of health and the maintenance of poise and balance. Its value extends beyond the physical, for it brings hope and zest and promotes a healthy optimism.

Beyond this, there is a process of refinement by which not only does the Word become flesh, but flesh becomes the Word. That is to say, we can instill life and light into the body and become veritable followers of Jesus Christ in the flesh. He could walk on the water. We, at least, can retain or restore youthfulness, increase longevity, and discover that health is the normal condition and not a seldom-to-be-attained goal. But we must become doers of the Word, not hearers only.

[Chapter 6](#)

Mental Aspects

The dance differs from other arts in one respect, that its mental and physical aspects cannot be entirely dissevered. A painter seldom thinks of more than one theme at a time. He may work upon it for days and days; it absorbs his life. While a poet may finish his compositions in a much shorter time, when he has finished, he may rest before starting anew. The dancer does not always have that opportunity and often passes between two extremes. In mass movements, where she is one of many, there is little chance for self-expression, and she is too apt to be a mere mechanism. And in the recital, by contrast, she has to execute one theme after another without proper adjustments

between them.

The decorative arts have their place in a cultured society. Landscape gardening is legitimate on a large scale or a small one. But the dance has not been so fortunate, and its disciples are too often handled like mannequins or factory proletariat. What happens to the feelings of a refined person, compelled to move like an automaton by a non-participating director? What is the effect upon human faculties when these are aborted in order to produce a mass movement, purportedly to please an unseen audience?

Perhaps the greatest indictment of the capitalistic system from the spiritual viewpoint has been its dehumanizing of workers to secure mass production. This may be necessary in the factory; it is most unfortunate on the stage and screen. Yet whereas Ahab served Baal a little, Jehu would serve him much. In other words, however vicious this system may seem, the alternatives before us today are many times worse. They have surpassed it in their "socializing" of the individual to the loss of his inner endowments; all effort at self-expression is being crushed out.

We are not numbers to be cleverly arranged into statistic columns. We are not geometric elements whose purpose in life is to be fitted into an integrated design. We are not the checkered pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. We are the veritable sons and daughters of the living God.

"Pure" individualism, on the other hand, too often grants freedom, at a price. The piano impresario offers us one piece after another, very loosely connected into a program. What he plays is something outside of himself, except in memory. He does not become his music, he does not even have to improvise or know improvisation. An actress or a danseuse could never be like that. The actress has been trained to live her roles, one by one. But the danseuse is often compelled by custom to put on one "mask" after another, being busy in the intervals changing her costumes.

By practicing what may be called "dynamic meditation" one can free the mind from the thoughts of self which act as heavy weights. Then one can channelize spiritual and psychic power. It is not necessary to deprive one of liberty. The folk arts offer scope for individual and group alike. A new point of view rather than new forms is needed. Even the Shankar troupe offers several numbers on each program. There is a middle way between the freedom of the person which may become indulgence and the satisfaction of the group.

So the audience should learn to participate in the spirit of the dance, even as it unites in spirit with the religious preacher. In the Orient, they regard the musician as the physician of the soul and the audience as his patients. We may learn much from them. But we have been in a hurry. We do not want all the Wagnerian operas because their performance consumes too much time. We need to learn that the Creator is not separate from the creation, nor the dancer from the dance. Jesus Christ said "Be ye perfect," but we don't want to be yet.

A selfless dancer is not an imbecile or moron. It is possible to fulfill a role without keeping everything in mind. Artists have to work unconsciously (or is it "co-consciously?") There has to be

a loosening of the ego-spirit. Once that is accomplished, there will be an increase in understanding and intelligence. We are too afraid to let go, not realizing that that is the best way in which to profit. Our educational system, with its unrecognized masculine background, has laid too much stress upon memory and logic. Now we find that this logic, spurious “revelation” to Aristotle, does not fit our needs at all.

We have been warned not to put too much thought upon the solar plexus. Yet we must recognize that there are instinctive movements and dances which employ the involuntary muscles. Their action produces fatigue, though they work without conscious thought. Reflexes are self-moving, autonomic. But once man has become freed from self-consciousness, he can adapt these movements and embody them in his arts.

The Menzendique system teaches conscious control of the body with much valuable added knowledge thereof. It enables man to demonstrate physically that “the kingdom of Heaven is within.” Anatomical mastery, which first has to be obtained by a disciplined conscious mind, makes each element of the body a partly free, partly coordinating individual. In other words, in Menzendique our muscles, bones and sinews behave one toward another as we ought to behave one toward another in an ideal society.

But thought must not become a weight upon the mind nor the mind a weight upon the body. When this occurs, the body becomes fixed or stilted. The calcium processes are no longer in equilibrium and their hold upon the flesh inhibits grace. But if the mind and heart cooperate, if thought and feeling combine, that middle way between intellectual pounding and refusing to think is open. This is the **media via** toward success.

The mind is an instrument needed for reading, studying, listening, learning and concentrating. It responds to the melodies of music and to the words of poetry. Emotions affect it like the magnet affects iron, without changing its nature. Its creative faculty can find scope in all the arts, including the dance. It responds best under inspiration.

Inspiration is of two kinds. In one of them, there is a degree of verve and emotion which enables one to work with vigor, usually for a personal end. The other is the true inspiration and is really the descent of the Holy Spirit, so far as it can be assimilated. It operates largely through the “genius” aspect of man. The genius has a refinement beyond that of the average person; his powers of conception are better developed. Conception is a stronger and higher faculty than imagination, for during imaginative moments the mind roams free from the control of will, while in conception thought and will cooperate.

Let no one gainsay this inspiration. It is at the fountain-head of religion. The poet may be writing about it, under its spell, at the very instant when his friend, the psychologist, is denying its existence. When our psychologists adopt the humility common to most scientists, no doubt they, too, will be blessed with a knowledge of inspiration.

Inspiration brings a constant and continuous restoration of power which may manifest as nerve energy. Then the mind is refreshed, if indeed it has tasted of fatigue. The emotions seem to travel down the highway of happiness toward joy. Cultivation of joy and ecstasy are most important in aesthetic and spiritual unfoldment. This true inspiration sublimates all the lower forces in man, activates the hormones and makes rejuvenation possible without any need to resort to drugs. This is the *vita nuova* of Dante.

Our nerves are transmitters of mental energy and psychic power. This power finds outlets in the body and is involved in every change of position, movement, or attitude. The dancer who maintains a balanced, abstemious existence need not fear its loss; inspired, she will augment her capacity to assimilate it. Heedlessness in this regard leads to "license." What is "license?" "License" is simply that degree of freedom which robs one of his precious inheritance. We affirm this difference between license and liberty: that the freedom or broadness which brings inspiration is liberty; the broadness which consumes psychic power and vital force is license. We suffer on each plane accordingly as we break its laws.

[Chapter 7](#)

Moral and Spiritual Aspects

The moral qualities of Yin are these: grace, beauty, charm, daintiness. When Yin is centered in the heart these are added: mercy, compassion, tenderness, good-will, and the faculty of healing by touch. The moral qualities of Yang are these: strength and power. When Yang is centered in the heart these are added: perseverance, courage, foresight, and executive ability. When heart is dominant in all things, the spiritual light outshines even the moral qualities.

By moral qualities are meant those which add to man's character, which enlarge his outlook, and which carry him beyond the law of compensation and retribution (**karma**). Then he acts from beneficence, that is, doing good to people regardless of their attitudes and actions toward himself and others. In this sense morality transcends social and sexual relationship, though it includes both.

We can increase Yin by the choice of right rhythms that will cultivate grace and psychic power. Even the march may aid in this. Of course, when Yin is practically eliminated, as in the goose-step, the effect is martial even more than military. This is certainly detrimental to man's character. The direction is toward death, not toward a greater abundance of life. For Yang without Yin produces strife and warfare, being calamitous. Likewise, Yin without Yang leads to luxury and effeminacy, being calamitous. Perfect Yin should contain a modicum of Yang and perfect Yang a modicum of Yin. We may observe this in Chinese cookery, and we are proving it today through endocrinology. But if rhythm alone were needed, we should have perfect music without melody. Rhythm, being devoid of mental connotation, adds only to externals unless centered in the heart, while melody, with its variety and harmony of pitch, may increase the inner stature of man.

Rhythm enhances order, social harmony, good government, patriotism, the family life, education, and social welfare. All of these arise more or less from Yin. Yet Yin superimposed from without fails even as all extraneous morality has failed, ever will fail, and bring the world to ruin. The dance is a method for elaborating and developing the qualities one has, innate or obvious, and thus can be used in character building. The development of the Yin qualities through the dance enhances the qualities presented above.

Melody always increases Yang a little, but sweet melodies contain the gentleness of Yin while strong ones benefit Yang. Under the combination of rhythm and melody in music, man benefits ethically, morally, psychologically, and spiritually. But it is useless to try experiments with compositions by Bach, Beethoven, or Brahms without knowing something of the meaning of the music itself. The Sioux and Zunis have been more successful than we in this field. Our boasted civilization is often lacking in fundamentals. But now we are learning through the school of universal suffering.

Man's unfoldment comes through expression and sublimation. It does not result from repression. Repression is not a way of life, it is the negation of life. When there is repression, talent has restricted scope and the love-life does not attain fruition. That is why there is so much mental and emotional instability. Besides that, the traditional point of view which can be called "ethical dualism" presupposes that spirituality and passion are opposites. But it ought to be evident that bright light produces deep shadows and less light dimmer shadows. The spiritual philosophy calls for the transmutation of qualities, not their destruction. Seldom can a quality be destroyed without affecting the substance with which it is connected.

Sublimation, therefore, is very different from repression. When it stamps out the lower expression it is to afford higher expression. The different parts of the personality have to be harmonized. Everything in this universe has its purpose, and man is here to discover his own purpose. Within the body, on this physical plane, there is constant harmonic activity which indicates how the divine life is seeking its fulfillment right here on earth, in the living temple of God.

The spiritual aspect of the dance is concerned with this sublimation of vital forces and with the suppression of ego. If anything is to be suppressed, it is man's thought of himself, which stands before him as an ever active and vigilant enemy. One can even call it the devil, if one will. The spiritual aspect of the dance, therefore, completes and perfects the moral aspect and helps man to reach the highest moral behaviorism which is that of renunciation.

In renunciation the loftiest heart qualities manifest. Any standard, no matter how noble, indicates a controlling framework which may be a bar to further progress and complete freedom. The conscience is a noble guide, but like imagination it relies upon the past; it does not add to our knowledge. Intuition or insight is a faculty independent of past experience and contains the very key to eternity. It is the key which "The Thief of Baghdad" uncovered on the mountains of the moon. It ultimately links man to God and brings us ever closer to the psychology and morality of Christ. It is not sufficient therein merely to be kind to others; one must attain the universal

standpoint, feel his "allness" and his nothingness, and perhaps both together.

The sacred dances aid in the direct experience and knowledge of sublimation. Those of the Hindus, Hebrews, Greeks and others had something in common, if not in their form, then in their spirit. The altar or tabernacle or sacred image would invoke a state of selflessness. The heart then became filled with gladness. Then through the dance ecstasy would descend like a dove, almost as if it insured the appearance of the Holy Spirit. Then man transcended his ego-self.

Today, joy and ecstasy are far more condemned than they are felt. There are writers who would have us believe that happiness is a state of damnation; that it is selfish or dangerous to partake of strange fruits. No longer the fruits of the tree of knowledge, but those of the tree of joy are regarded as poisonous. So one speaks of trance and another of self-hypnosis, merely because those states are different. The very people who inveigh against anti-racialism because it supposes that the infrequent or the unusual is evil, themselves employ a like "logic" against mysticism. Where would we be today if the scientists had taken this attitude with regard to radioactive transformations! To the faculty of carbon to become a conductor when heated, or selenium when illumined! Often the strange, the unusual contains the key to deep mysteries.

We might benefit by a conscientious study of the Sermon on the Mount and Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. But can we measure ourselves thereby? We need not. The affairs of the external world measure us. "Return ye, return ye" has been the cry of the prophet in all ages. It is a glorious thing that Catholic and Protestant and Jew are meeting in amity. It would be a still more glorious thing if we could feel the Presence of God.

The Sufis of the Mevlevi School, known as Whirling Dervishes, use the ancient psychological methods of the dance for sacred purposes and for the attainment of ecstasy. Devotees repeat their sacred phrases and dance to the accompaniment of the flute and other instruments. This is kept up until self-consciousness is lost in the **hal** or newly acquired "state." Then the dervishes attest to **hal** by stabbing themselves with swords or spikes, throwing themselves on cacti, and submitting to weird austerities. They suffer from contusions without exhibiting the least pain and often without any sign of blood.

Of course, there may be other methods by which a "state" is attained. The contention of the Sufis, however, is that the **hal** is the result of Divine Grace and does not result from man's efforts alone. The resulting transcendency of consciousness brings out the faculties of genius and angel without in the least impairing man's more material abilities. In other words, he seems to be elevated to a higher grade of evolution. The music and associate words seem to have aided therein. Critics overlook the great poets, philosophers, and even emperors who have undergone this training and discipline. The Mogul Emperor Akbar stands out as an answer to half-baked criticisms.

We need not restore the altar of the ancients nor become imitators of the ligamentous Hindus and Javanese. But we can learn from their methods and disciplines. We need not change our religion, whatever it may be, but we can fulfill its precepts. Why cannot we today, with all our learning,

produce psalms? Where is the Homer to which the behavioristic psychology can attest? And who has mastered the elements of the stupendous philosophy contained in those mighty Buddhist Tomes gathered from the cave-temples of Mongolia recently?

Dane Rudhyar has been telling us that the music of the future will be based upon group-tones and group-units. The moral significance thereof is tremendous. Its logical outcome is a new social order, even a new civilization. This civilization may integrate characteristics of those now in existence, but it may be as difficult to predicate details as it would be to predict the group-molecule and hydrocarbon chains from the atomic theory of Dalton. The group-unit is displacing the individual unit as the logical “atom” of chemistry, sociology, botany, psychology, genetics, and all sciences. **The ego-self of a thing is lost, but not destroyed, in the synthetic process.** This is our main teaching.

With respect to it, we might examine three main types of dance. In one, the individual is glorified as a soloist. In another, there are leads and chorus. In the third, the chorus or group alone matters. No doubt this last partakes of the philosophy of a socialism while the first belongs to individualism. But the group acting as a unit may give scope to all its members while developing a harmony among them. It is this type of harmony which was predicted in the *Analects* of Confucius and which underlies his works. In a sense it is the framework of Chinese civilization. Rudhyar’s group-unit is a contemporary adaptation of this to art and culture.

Folk dancing offers some elements of the group-unity, but its forms are too fixed. In Eurhythmics there is freedom of spirit but absence of form. To attain this new norm there must be more general meditation and concentration. It is said that the Spirit of Christ descended upon his disciples and they were blessed with all manner of gifts. The new experience may not be so different. When a group enters the silence, personal ego-expression is subdued. Each one has the same concentration, listens to the same rhythm, feels it in his or her heart. Then hearts may vibrate sympathetically in every sense of the word. Thus a dynamic group sympathy unfolds. This will manifest in the ensuing performance.

This background, training and exercise will bring man closer to the consciousness of genius and angel. In the dance and in the arts more of the genius nature will unfold, and the world has begun to recognize this genius in some respects, at least. And nothing is needed today to balance the mechanical and technological development as a corresponding aesthetic revolution. This will bring order to our one-sided civilizations.

What method then is offered? What is the technique? It is nothing new. We come to fulfill, not to destroy. Relax the body, pacify the mind, feel the life in the heart. Then concentrate all faculties upon a single theme and cooperate with others who have the common ideal. Then let a rhythm be started, softly at first, on drum or gong or suitable percussion instrument (including here even the piano), and let it continue through the period of concentration at least. Then, later, let the melody begin, for the melody contains the key to the performance. But to bring out the highest and best, instrumentalists should understand something of spiritual music and spiritual responses. And better

yet, they should have a modicum of knowledge of the mysteries of the heart and the mystery of breath.

[Chapter 8](#) The Breath

The breath may be said to contain the mystery of life; the breath is the very life. Physiologists and biochemists have given the breath a fairly thorough physical analysis. They know something of the composition of the inhaled air, of the chemical changes during respiration, and of the impurities expelled from the body. They know the functions of lungs, glottis, pharynx, sinuses, nostrils, and skin. Yet, from the metaphysical view, they know little about breath. They can be excused in part because they do not admit the existence of the supersensual in their sciences. Perhaps in the not so distant future they will at least admit the validity of the psychic sciences to the degree that J. J. Thomson did, and then one day some master mind with a complete Western academic education will submit to Yoga discipline and training.

The average physician appears to know little of the progress of biophysics, although many hospitals are establishing physiotherapy departments and clinics. While electrical phenomena connected with breathing have been observed and studied, their importance has not been evaluated. This, though plants and animals alike are, in a sense, electrical bodies. Meanwhile, the caloric source of energy has, perhaps, been overstressed. We are supposed to derive energy from the combustion of food particles in the body. But may it not equally be true that some bodily heat is derived from the transmutation of energy? And where do the nerves obtain their strength? And how?

Western students of Yoga like Major Yeats-Brown and Madame Neel have published works, and no one has disproved their conclusions. They are simply ignored. And when a great Hindu scientist like Sir Jagadis Bose verifies the philosophies of his people in the laboratory, too often the "Inquisition" of the intelligentsia gets busy. We deny the existence of the Almighty; we want our own gods. We give them different names. But let us ask, what sort of energy travels over the neural network? Is it electrical, or bio-electrical, or both, or something else, or something plus these? And is electricity necessarily and absolutely a physical phenomena? Is electricity derived from matter or matter from electricity? We have here the old chicken-and-egg dilemma.

Unfortunately, the appearance of the word "spirit" in biblical translations has befogged the whole subject. Twenty centuries have passed and we have not **realized** the teachings of Christ. It is doubtful whether we can learn while retaining ambiguous words. An example of this may be seen in the authorized version, St. John III:8, which reads: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." What does this mean to the honest reader?

The unbeliever would declare it is all nonsense and supports his skepticism by the example cited. The blind believer might not be better off. Intuitively, he would hold that there is a deep meaning, a very sacred meaning, intended, perhaps, only for a few. But the translators of the New Testament hardly used the word “breath” at all, as if there were no such thing, or it occurred rarely. They rendered the Grecian **pneuma** chiefly as “spirit,” and next as “wind.”

One might offer instead this translation: “The breath breathes (or blows) where it wills and thou hearest the sound of it, but thou knowest not whence it comes, and where it goes. Thus is everyone born of the breath.” The text suggests here that Jesus was trying to explain the mystery of breath to Nicodemus. He was not entirely successful, and, whatever knowledge of the science of breath was present in Palestine of that day, it has disappeared. The Hebrew **ruach** of the Old Testament appears in our versions as “wind,” “breath,” and “spirit.” Many peoples of that age held to their identity.

So far as we can trace, the knowledge of breath was reserved to the sanctuaries. This was true in Egypt, in India, and perhaps elsewhere. Though the mystery schools have disappeared, the thread of their teachings was passed on to the Gnostics and subsequently to the Sufis. In India, Yoga sciences did not have to go underground. Even in this day there are descendants of the schools of yore. And some schools of Buddhism, too, studied the breath and symbology. We find them today in Tibet and Japan.

Of course, there has been a constant challenge as to the relationship of the spiritual with breath. So long as spirituality is regarded as a special religion, doctrine, philosophy, way of life, or anything that separates man from his fellows, there is hardly a connection. Here we posit the definition of A.E. and call that spiritual which unites, synthesizes, joins, harmonizes. Romain Rolland offers essentially the same interpretation. And those who have journeyed on the path of Yoga know from personal experience that breath is a channel from individual to cosmic consciousness.

In the esoteric schools, disciples sit before their master in meditation. In his peaceful presence, their breaths begin to take on the same rhythm as his. Gradually expiration and inspiration become refined. The rhythm and refinement attract the qualities and characteristics of the master. The disciple becomes a different person. Whatever he had that was in attunement with the master remained, whatever was not in attunement was lost. The “new birth” becomes a reality.

The esoteric view is that the whole universe is composed of many series and ranges of vibrations. These are purveyors of qualities and faculties. As the heart becomes sensitive to these vibrations, it enhances the corresponding qualities in a person. The attunement to the teacher helps to elevate the pupil, and telepathic communication between them becomes natural and normal. This view also holds that the finer vibrations are, the more planes they penetrate. Therefore, heart qualities may manifest in mind and body, and those of the mental plane appear in the physical world. But the reverse is untrue: gross material things do not exist as such in the mind-world, and reason and logic find no haven in the heart.

Philosophers have long argued over the question of the relation of mind to matter. There are theories such as parallelism, interactionism, monism, dualism and pluralism. But they leave unsettled the nexus between mind and body. Here the Yogi might step in with his proposals.

Yeats-Brown and Brunton have each in their characteristic way offered the Western world the theory and practice of Yoga with suitable exercises. But they and other writers warn that it is inadvisable to go beyond a certain point without a suitable teacher or **guru**. And at all times an attitude of reverence is required, and breathing must be regarded as a sacred duty.

A Sufi teacher has said that there is no gain other than repeating the praise of God with every inhalation and exhalation, and no loss other than failure to do so. St. Paul has said: "In God we live and move and have our being." Yet such teachings do not readily dawn upon human consciousness. Most people think breath is unimportant, though here again the Bible repeats that there are three witnesses: **water** and **breath** and **blood**. Few have ventured into Hatha Yoga; fewer still among Westerners have gone further.

The earth, with the rocks that form the petrosphere, has practically no breath in the usual sense, although there is the faculty of occlusion. That is, the faculty by which a solid absorbs or adsorbs or "dissolves" quantities of gas for a limited period. Vegetation however, breathes. No doubt, in the daytime plants consume far more carbon dioxide as food than they give out in respiratory processes. Yet many people regard it unhealthful to have plants in their bedroom. For at night, the plant breathes as we do, and its presence then increases the quantity of noxious substance in the atmosphere.

From this point of view, it may be possible to study the relationship between the evolution of the nervous system, the respiration, and the faculties of animals, and even of plants. The ants, these seemingly most intelligent insects, have a complex and well developed breathing apparatus. This consists of a network of trachea or tubing extending through their bodies. By increasing the internal pressure, the animal can carry a weight beyond its own mass. This is really a type of physical yoga, and ants do possess yoga-like qualities. If man, the sluggard, went to the ant, he might learn from him how to carry greater weights. But he was not meant to be a super-ant or super-robot or even a super-moron. The Kingdom of Heaven is not to be gained by violence.

It is possible to enhance pneumatic breathing and draw in more air. And every change in the quality and quantity of respiration affects the psychic faculties and the mind. If we could increase inhalation, it would become easier to rise from the ground. Nijinsky was an adept in it, he became a psychical "glider," almost a human balloon, but he lacked understanding. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, could walk on the water. The Holy Spirit, the Divine Breath, was a reality to him which he had learned to absorb. May it not be that the most refined breath, that of the Holy Spirit, which conveys the rarest vibrations of the cosmos, penetrates all things and connects us with all things and beings?

Here the dancing student would recognize increased facility through right breathing. But we are not

to become ants; we are to walk in the light of Christ. The flesh does not have to be frail or weak. Divine vibrations with all their blessings are before us here and now. So the mystics teach that there is cosmic energy in the breath, and by right breathing one can increase in power (or Yang) and in refinement (or Yin). **He may even gain in both directions simultaneously.**

Through concentration and attunement, the breath may be directed to any part of the body, or mind. Agility with the fingers, grace of form and figure, skill in movement, strength to hold a pose, perseverance in effort, and unconscious memory of each phase of the dance can be gained through the right combination of meditation and refined, rhythmical breathing.

The understanding of rhythm and attunement will enable the dancer to discover the essence or “soul” of her art and her theme. By understanding is meant not something strictly mental, to be learned in an intellectual sense, but rather something to be comprehended practically, which is not apart from experience, or life. Little children learn by observing birds and animals. Then they cultivate the rhythms needed to portray suitable dances. If they are poor in observation, concentration will help them, yet good observation also helps the latter. And here we must bear in mind that each will execute his theme according to his nature. Just as artists, copying the same model, do not reproduce with exactitude.

When dancers, especially teachers, become interested in the deeper phases of breathing, both they and their art will prosper. They should not be afraid of the spiritual philosophy. Its teachers are not clergymen or philosophers. Besides, one cannot circumscribe the highways to Godliness. The

Psalmist sang: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” We can recognize the divinity within and without. We can illustrate it in art and music. The sincere dancer is one of the best workers for universal harmony, and so, for universal peace.

[Chapter 9](#)

Heart Aspects

When the word “heart” is mentioned one may think of love, but, as has been explained in the section on the metaphysics of the dance, heart has other aspects or faculties which have been called feeling, intuition, and will. The cultivation of each of these may seem separate. Nevertheless, all will arise in the stout heart when the inner sun of life pours its rays upon the personality. As the physical sun has its rays, so the spiritual sun pours forth its rays, too. The physical sun offers us energy which we translate as light, heat, electromagnetism, etc. The radiations of the spiritual sun are endowed with life and living qualities.

When man attains to soul-realization or cosmic consciousness (see Paul Brunton’s works for details), or has the experience of the beatific vision, he discovers that life and love are one and identical. It is life from the standpoint of the receptive ego, and it is love from the standpoint of the

radiating ego. That is to say, life through the “Mask” becomes love, and love without the “Mask” is life itself. This substance is **su generis** and is not affected by man’s logic concerning it.

Only the heart understands the heart, only the heart can heal the heart, only the heart can cure the heart. In spiritual concentration, the whole consciousness is focused upon heart that it may be awakened and its living qualities flood the personality. Love and pain, whether these be two or one, also effect the same end. The sun of love and life radiates from the heart, even in this abode of flesh. Its aura extends outward far beyond that aura seen by psychics. What they witness is more or less electro-magnetic and mental. The spiritual auras of Jesus Christ, Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai, Gautama Buddha, and Mohammed, if we are to believe the records, were quite visible. The light from them poured forth with tremendous power and vitality.

The bodies of great sages and saints seem to become condensers for spiritual light in much the same way as material condensers act for electricity. Spiritual light emanates from the very Logos or spiritual sun, which is within us, though we know it not. It can supply such light that our very skins may reflect it. But this is the result of vast heart development. Those interested in occult phenomena can easily be deluded or delude others without attaining to real knowledge. The more cosmic the sphere of activity, the greater the reverence and devotion needed.

This radiant life-light-electricity is extended to every part of the body by the bloodstream which is the ocean of life turned inward and included in the physical vehicle of man. It is possible to activate this universal force until the covering of flesh becomes transmuted and is thereafter known as a **nirmanakaya**, or body not subjected to control by a personal mind.

Although we read about the **nirmanakaya** mainly in Buddhist literature, the knowledge of it helps to explain resurrection and illumination. Apparent miracles surrounding the lives of Buddha, Moses, Jesus Christ, Kabir, and others fall into definite categories. What is supernatural is neither unnatural nor impossible. But the intellectual part of man, seeking to explain everything from its limited outlook, too often falls back upon a faith, more or less blind, or else seeks refuge in a skepticism still more blinding.

In the quadrupeds, the blood surges back and forth in the horizontal line of activity. But in man, **aner**, the upright one, the vital energy moves up and down a vertical plane. Mystically, man may be pictured as a creature standing between earth and heaven. In the book of Exodus he is first a slave in Egypt, the land of darkened heart, or ego, where he is slave to his passions. Later, he is delivered and so can enter the land of Promise. He becomes a son of Israel, meaning the man who sees God. The whole Passover saga deals with the liberation of mankind, individually and collectively. And both the Hebrew and Christian teachings of spiritual deliverance at least vaguely indicate it is connected in some manner with the blood.

Those who have practiced heart-concentration have discovered that there is a greater absorption of vital energy within the body. Health and vigor may be enhanced. This energy is carried by the bloodstream to the centers, such as the brain and ductless glands, and there the faculties of the

“soul” make their appearance. These organs seem to select those vibrations and qualities for which each was fashioned, until they become as living candles within the flesh. Together, they form the symbolic candlestick of the Scriptures. Then, phrases such as “fountain of living waters,” etc., take on new meanings. There is brilliance to the eye, radiance to the skin. And then man proves the statement of Jesus Christ, “If thine eye be single (or simple) then thy body shall be full of light.”

Devotion and meditation remove the covers over this light. But the devotion of the dancer need not be separate from her action. Here, every theme and performance can become sacrifices to the Supreme Deity. She need not repeat any special number called “sacred dance.” Wherever there is love, wherever there is harmony, wherever there is beauty, there is Divinity. Love may come from the heart, harmony from the music, beauty from the movements. All life can be sacred, and to divide the spiritual from the non-spiritual may void both terms.

Love emphasizes “I am not” upon whatever plane we examine it. An artist-lover reveals that in his creations. A dancer should be deeply interested in her art. Commercialism has often overstressed monetary returns and so produced inner conflicts which force the artistic soul into a sort of “Egyptian” bondage. The introduction of propaganda into art has had even worse effects. For propaganda, no matter how worthy, is mental and emotional and contributes nothing to the aesthetic and spiritual. Every dance, every movement, “has a meaning of its own,” but only the heart understands the communication of heart. We cannot truly translate heart-language into meaningful words any more than we can properly describe the sun by an examination of its rays or by a study of the color yellow.

The greater the interest of the dancer, the stronger her efforts, the more life automatically will rise in her heart, flow through her arteries, and manifest in her movements. The very space will seem to contain the pattern she must follow. Memory will no longer be a burden but will become a guiding light. The identity of dancer and dance is the surest sign of spirituality.

The teacher may instruct, may correct, may tell—the pupil must do. The teacher must be patient and regard pupils as tender flowers which will mature in due time. The dancer ought to be mentally receptive to her teacher, and yet feel her heart as if it was in command of all her movements. **This of itself is one of the paths to spiritual liberation.** We do not have to attach or exclude any philosophy or religion. We seek the life and life ever more abundant.

There is another aspect of heart and love. In it one has deep love for another, or for many persons, or a burning passion to please an audience. Then the divine spirit dances through man, whether it produces ecstasy or not. This association with God is superior to ecstasy, although few attain to it without the other experience, for we are too deeply buried in our ego-molds. When love is shared, life is shared. This is the true communion. Therefore, every effort to please or elevate others is spiritual, even though vanity be attached. Verily, saith the wise Solomon, all is vanity.

If love seems to be the negative side of the spiritual sun (it is not, really), life is the positive side. Love removes the excrescences of ego. When these go, divinity manifests. Then come the

blessings of longevity, health, and skill. Every breath will absorb blessings from the sphere. Life is movement, stillness is death. The dancer moves, for she is a living, throbbing, breathing being. Her perfection in her art is one fulfillment of the purpose of her life.

Let it be remembered that Miriam led her maidens in dance when Israel was delivered. Orpheus and Bacchus offered the religion of interior development through the dance. Coomaraswamy has written *The Dance of Siva*, which presents the Hindu viewpoint in this regard. And the Sufis, especially, have looked with favor upon the dance as a highway toward God, and that every movement in it can be endowed with holiness.

It might be that the heart is blessed with immortality or eternity. At least it can become a constant, pulsating source of life. Yogis avail themselves of this when they suspend animation and continue in their strange state. Is it life or death-in-life? We desire life-in-life, we seek the life abundant, we are willing to go to the threshold of ecstasy and to share its blessings.

How afraid we have become of this word “ecstasy”! It is associated more with phobias than with blessings. There seems to be a veritable storm of propaganda against it. The one who seeks it is selfish. He desires a private paradise, a personal nirvana! How puerile! Most of those who so contend have never tasted true joy. We ought to know our subject before we discourse upon it.

Yes, there is always a danger of making any temporary goal the aim of life. Yes, there is some confusion between recognition of the path to God and union with Him. Yes, there is an intoxication which, especially if one be weak, affords an escape mechanism for man. But look at the multitudes bound by their egos, by their personal limitations! For every person who has the least inkling about ecstasy, there may be a million, even many millions, who know nothing of it. What we first must learn is to stand outside of the limited self. Far more good has been accomplished by radio contests which require the entrants to forego the use of “I,” “my,” “we,” and “our” than by the well meaning who warn us of the perils of something still in the far beyond.

Aye, to seek ecstasy for its own sake may be a selfish urge. Not to seek it is still more selfish when it means a turning back upon life and a continued attachment to our lower nature. “Happiness,” said the mystic Whitman, “is an efflux of the soul.” Millions of us were genuinely thrilled by Shangri-La in Hilton’s *Lost Horizons*. We may have laughed at it, we may have cried, we may have sneered, we may have sighed—but we did react. We are still seekers after “The Blue Bird.”

The kingdom of heaven is not far away; the kingdom is at hand. What is needed are practical methods by which it may be attained. The dance which delimits personality and encompasses space enables one to draw into the consciousness the fine qualities of the sun of the soul. The quivering, throbbing heart-center bursts into flame, and the whole being becomes illuminated. Then one is; his deity dominates his movements. His inner being dances, his outer being responds, and he becomes the servant, if not the very self, of the **Lord of the Dance**.

The Olympic Greeks said, “Many are the thyrsos-bearers, but few the Bacchoi.” Christ said,

“Many are called, but few are chosen.” That was, and is, and ever may be true. But have not great poets told of that intoxication which is so deep, so enlivening, so masterful and all-compelling, that once drawn into it we can neither escape nor do we desire to? The experience of bliss can only awaken us and deepen our sensitivities and sensibilities. It should make us see far beyond our present vision in every sense of the word. It should lead us into channels of wisdom, compassion, and understanding.

We do not seek joy, we seek God. But by recognizing God as Perfect Beauty, it is natural that light, color, fine scenery and springtime freshness enter into our lives more and more. We want this to be a better world for ourselves and all. We do not want to escape anything; we would be better equipped to solve the problems that have been befuddling us. Rival intellectual schools sooner or later reach an **impasse**. The soul can pass beyond that.

Myself when young did eagerly frequent

Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument

About it and about; but evermore

Came out by the same Door as in I went.

There was a Door to which I found no Key:

There was a Veil past which I could not see:

Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee

There seemed—and then no more of Thee and Me.

—Omar Khayyam

[Chapter 10](#)

Sex and the Dance

Sex immediately infers those dances which are suggestive, invitational, and associated in some way or another with the attraction of the male for the female and of the female for the male. Romance, physical love, and more intimate corporeal relations might be within its ken. From the standpoint of life they ought not to be considered “immoral,” although many of them may be regarded as of low morality, low in the sense that the vital force is manifested on a low plane, the physical. Mental and aesthetic dances would be higher in the scale of morality. We need not call “bad” what may be nature, for many dance-forms have risen out of biological urges.

Pelvic concentration tends to throw the blood, the life-stream of the body, into that region. Its glands are stimulated and the vital fluids are drawn thereto, instead of being transmuted in either a physical or alchemical sense. The physical sense properly means the production of hormones which enhance the promotion of finer qualities. The alchemical sense is almost the same. And the dance may become one of the best means to further sublimation.

The animal man and woman may delight, even revel in sexual dances. Their brains are so constructed that these things make a greater appeal to their consciousness. They may not understand things which do not appeal to the senses. Whether they find beauty or enjoyment in some larger sense does not matter. They are impressed only by what they are impressed by. They may be bored by ballets and program-music.

Sexual dances do increase the magnetism in the pelvis and so arouse the desire-nature. They meant much to the birds and beasts which had this form of art, and equally they may mean much to man. Seeing, touching, feeling all have their significance. The movements are not dead gestures. Accompanying words and music may arouse passion. The Tuaregs are very honest about that. We can be equally honest, however, without becoming Tuaregs.

The main objection to overindulgence in sex comes out of itself. Physical attraction alone too often does not last, does not bind people together. There are periods of attraction, repulsion and even revulsion. Yet in the dance, intimacy is needed. How can we regulate that intimacy so that it brings us happiness and does not degrade us?

It is difficult to evaluate popular dances. They change from time to time and from generation to generation. Rhythms are modified and new words are constantly in demand. This makes it almost impossible for these words to become fixed upon the race consciousness. Only such words can have a deep appeal, will touch the emotions, and beyond that the heart center. Boys and girls are made to be gregarious. And those of the white race, or more particularly among the Europeans and Americans, have played together. But what is the effect of body touching body? Is it a substitute for other relationships? Or an introduction thereto? Is there any method by which we can control our impulses and reactions?

Professionals are compelled to be most intimate; they have no choice. Yet the emotional outlook of man and woman is not the same. If partners are harmonious, so much the better. A few minutes silence now and then will help to draw them closer in spirit. They may become less sensitive of one another in some respects and more sensitive in other respects. Sympathy is always desirable, but man must become master of his passions if he would develop spiritually.

The mingling of auras has been disregarded by Western people. Some Orientals—and their influence has been felt in sections of Southern Europe, too—hold that if the sexes are segregated, each becomes better equipped to fulfill his or her functions, and their mutual magnetism is increased. Constant mingling of men and women may deaden certain sensitivities and lessen charm. Here the Occidental might reply that mental attention to sex arouses the same forces

without providing suitable outlets. Perhaps Oriental and Occidental each might learn from the other.

Those whom we call “human” or “normal” have other than corporeal interests and their outlooks are very varied. They have even tended toward the extremes of Puritanism on the one hand and libertinism on the other. There are those who have intellectual pursuits and ideas and yet are quite aware of their instincts and impulses. Others are more indifferent. But we do not grow from fear, weakness, inability, or repression. There is a true sublimation to be acquired which does not consume vitality wantonly, but raises it to the highest level for which we have capacity.

The spoken and even the written word has not elevated us. The problem of frustration can be solved on quite other lines than those suggested by Freud. Freud attracted attention because it was obvious that multitudes of us have reveled in our retreats. We need mental hygiene, social hygiene and heart-hygiene. We hope that the psychologists of the future will become as broad as Jung.

We have much to learn about the varying effects of music. There are rhythms, there are beats, there are motives, there are melodies which touch and awaken the many parts of our personalities. All the people at the symphony concert do not go to hear the music or study the forms or watch the conductor. Some are affected emotionally, others psychically or instinctively by what they hear. And even if our psychologists were to take reaction tests, they would not learn much because what we call music is a highly complex institution which has departed from tone as much as the automobile factory has departed from simple mechanics. We have to return to fundamentals first.

There are many types of people who do not lead the sexual lives which are supposed to be normal. (And what is **normal**?) Many aesthetes apparently think, act, and live quite differently. When we begin to recognize the genius type, we shall notice that their “sexual” life finds parallels in pre-adolescent juveniles. Perhaps just as the infant and “angel” show resemblances, so do the child and “genius.” As the pituitary gland develops, it draws upon the other glands, especially the gonads. We are just beginning to learn about hormones and the effects they have upon the glands and personalities. The next step will be to follow Havelock Ellis, in his psychological studies, and classify people, not for the sake of condemning them, but to understand them better.

There are apsaras and gandharvas in the flesh who are not so concerned with their vitals. Then there is that type of person, popularly known as “fairy,” who is either a throw-back or, as he may claim, quite advanced. Here we may recall that before puberty boys play with boys, girls with girls, “lovers” fight and quarrel, and “lovers” are attracted with a purity rarely found in their elders. And when they dance, they do not experience those emotions common to lads and lassies a few years their senior.

The homosexual has been called a person with the body of one sex and the emotions of the other. This may not be entirely true, though it is not unfair. Jesus Christ has said that there are eunuchs that were born and eunuchs that were made and eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. So there are invert and pervert born and made. There are homosexuals who find their career in

the arts, and there are artists whose careers carry them over into this social abnormality.

Ted Shawn has propagated the philosophy of the male dancer, though there is not necessarily a male dancer any more than a male eater or a male breather. Something in us which is more than the body dances; the body is but the instrument. But we can say there are male dancers and female dancers, and there are definite Yang movements and Yin movements.

When a man indulges in Yin movements, or a woman specializes in Yang movements, homosexuality often follows. Marching, muscular exercises, gymnastics, and even walking on a straight line promote Yang. Attention to details of fingers and arms, rotary motion of pelvis and hips, and agility with curves promote Yin. Each type of action arouses the corresponding psychic and emotional phases. The Hindus have stated that perfect nature (prakrit) always contains a modicum of spirit (purusha) and perfect spirit a modicum of nature. Here it is held that perfect Yang has a trace of Yin, perfect Yin a trace of Yang. And now the endocrinologists advise that the male can produce **female** hormones (we should prefer "Yin" hormones), and the female can create **male** (we should prefer "Yang") hormones. According to our lives and the actions thereof do we establish our glandular activity and its concomitant results.

Perhaps we shall also come to recognize the magnetic field or the many fields of energy about a person. These are charged or discharged sexually according to our habits and thoughts. A male, surrounded by a flock of females, may be forced to answer magnetically their several demands, or to counterbalance their several emanations. Then his appetites may be increased, or may be sated, or he may be indifferent or even repelled. The female tumbler with a male troupe may have a reciprocal experience. These people may become insensitive, they may become roused, or they may even seek refuge among members of their own sex for satisfaction, pleasure, or equanimity.

It may be that both the polygamous and homosexual outlooks are "normal," or at least not pathological. The changes in the numerical relationship of men and women due to the present social horrors may increase either or both. We can prepare ourselves for these eventualities and their attendant problems. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

We can give that education to boys and girls which will tempt them to follow the path of "social normality." We can have separate dances for boys and girls. We can see to it that, even from early childhood, what may be called "solar currents" are stimulated in the boy and "lunar currents" in the girl. The "solar currents" are the results of Yang, the "lunar currents" of Yin. We ought to give more care to the legs of the boy; to the arms and hips of the girl. More regard should be given to physiological changes during formative years. The researches of Dr. Granville Stanley Hall have been taken more seriously in Russia than in America; we ought to be ashamed of that fact.

Of course, all geniuses are not "fairies" nor all **gandharvas** and **apsaras** perverts. Many of them are careerists who prefer to work alone. They may desire fame; they may want to be themselves. Occasionally they revel in their idiosyncrasies. When several of them are in a chorus or cast they will disturb the others by incessant demands for an individual role, no matter how small. And in

meeting these demands it is strange that socialistic Russia should be awake, while “liberal” Hollywood has cultivated “socialistic” forms. The social aesthetic may be excellent for the average man, but for aesthetic and spiritual unfoldment, personal peculiarities should be observed and opportunities should be offered to those with any degree of genius or talent.

Here the dance takes on another purpose. It can be included in character building. Thus, a shy child will have stage fright. This means that selflessness has to be taught to her through patience, silence, and the instilling of self confidence. Again, it is not enough to see that a pupil is awkward. We can seek the cause for it and correct it accordingly. The bony person has a Yang body and needs some Yin development; the fleshy person has a Yin body and needs Yang—this regardless of sex. But a bony male requires only a limited degree of Yin, and fleshy woman a small amount of Yang. We must not strain the organism or impair the health.

Costumes also have psychic and aesthetic significance. Neutra has said that so much of our architecture is based upon superstition; the same might apply to garments also. Applied to the dance, it may be said that metal and wooden costumes promote Yang and soft draperies Yin. But the tunic or robe is not essentially feminine, nor is the trouser positively masculine. We could point out many examples. Indeed, this whole subject could well be studied from the aesthetic viewpoint.

Suitability is most important in the dance. Sometimes a child has to put on an animal garb. Sometimes much clothing is needed, at other times very little. The “genius” probably prefers less clothing. A sensitive maiden may not like heavy clothes or anything that would cause perspiration or odor. We must provide for our Lohengrins and Joans of Arc, as well as for our swan-maidens and soldiers.

The Mardi Gras festivals enable people to throw off restraint and artificiality. Nice, Rio de Janeiro, New Orleans and other cities have each their peculiar modes of celebrating. Though the term “carnival” has lost most of its early religious significance, the institution that has grown out of it has a most important place in society. Today “carnival” means any large public festival in which ebullience is encouraged. Then men and women are encouraged in their aesthetic and emotional display. There is complete choice as to costume and even a degree of masquerading.

As a rule, girls are more wont to dress as boys than is the contrary. Of course, in institutions confined to a single sex, impersonation is to be expected. The donning of the garb of the opposites may broaden one to understand the point of view of the other. In sections of India there is an accepted institution of dressing and living like the opposite sex for a while, for this very purpose. Whether we take this seriously or frivolously, we do gain more tolerance and more beauty in our lives.

Westerners have been too prone to overemphasize the sexual aspects in the dances of strange peoples. And possibly, in turn, natives take the cue from tourists to respond to this urge. Among the Polynesians, men dressed in grass kilts performed symbolic dances and tribal rituals. Our stages and entertainment halls have entirely transformed them. And the same applies to the dances of

many peoples. But even if the sex motif is important, we should adopt a saner and more scientific attitude. One need not go over the ground so well covered by Ellis and Kraft-Ebing. But like them, we can face undaunted all the aberrations of human behaviorism or misbehaviorism.

Outwardly, our bodies have been fashioned like those of the higher beasts. Yet they can become vehicles of the highest wisdom and the Holy Spirit. This can be proven by Yoga. Each body assimilates just those energies and vibrations for which it has capacity. This capacity can be changed. It is changed through love, pain, and our ability to withstand the blows that life brings us. There is a maximum of efficiency when the male can be developed as a male, when the female can be perfected as a female. Revulsion is negation, and negation is devitalizing.

Sacred dances have been devised to sublimate these currents and energies. From first to last, in the spiritual processes we must regard both the body and dance as ultimately holy. It is not necessary for any dancer to truckle to her audience. Please them, yes. She should not be compelled to perform without understanding. Her art is her message. If the dancer is a man, then **his** art of itself is significant.

Spirituality in the dance is not dependent upon special techniques. Unity, said a wise man, is not uniformity. There are many pathways to God. What we need mostly is a change in attitude. The study of psychic forces indicates that movement tends toward a definite result whether performed by ballerina or tangista or morris dancer. When dancers understand their body and its movements, and the "secrets" of their art, they will develop spiritually and pass by the Scylla and Charybdis of gross sensuality and homosexuality.

There is still the angelic type to be considered. She may be pure, innocent, ignorant, receptive, responsive. She may be moral or amoral, but she is never really immoral. She can be a creature of moods, and she will react to them rather than think out her patterns. She may dance alone under the spell of the waterfall, the butterflies, the flowers, the sunshine. She is also likely to dance in company with others. She can reflect the feelings around her, whether these are derived from persons or from the general environment. In class, she is always obedient, though sometimes apparently stupid. She may be lacking in Yang qualities and does not always possess physical stamina.

Sex does not mean so much to this type. The angelic woman is qualified to dance with children. The angelic man makes an excellent Pied Piper. Either is naturally childlike. Their bodies are not gross. If they are compelled, for economic reasons, to indulge in sexual or passionate activities, it may mean little or nothing to them, or it may cause their ruin. They have little of the spirit of opposition in them. Once influenced, however, they do not readily turn aside. They are only superficially milk-and-water; underneath there is solid ground.

The perfect man is one who includes all aspects of personality in his makeup and can simulate many roles. Here drama and dance meet. Each requires the donning and doffing of emotion, quality, and activity.

Here a question may be asked: Where is the dividing line between the sexual and the sacred, since phallicism has been so important in religion? May it not be that cosmic forces are expressed through sex? Yes, it may be, but it also may be that even through the perfection of sex we can come to the perfection of our humanity.

[Chapter 11](#)

Psychic Aspects

The psychic aspect of the dance has been mentioned many times, largely because it does not seem to have been mentioned in literature. Talk to the dancer and she will recognize your meaning, whereas the strict (sic) logician may not. Every dancer has her feelings, emotions, and reactions, and she lives in that world more than practical people live within themselves. The psychic realm, in a sense, forms a bridge of vibrations between the seen and unseen portions of the universe. Psychic sciences have been recognized in some countries, ignored in others. To the unacquainted, the word “psychic” suggests the medium, the real or fancied communication with the dead, and similar phenomena. But there is no more reason to ignore them than there should be to ignore the chemistry of explosives because children play with firecrackers.

Every movement of the body involves forces, some of them not being sensuous, whether material or not. The adjectives “subtle,” “etheric,” “metaphysical,” and “occult” often have too nebulous a connotation to impress us. Pure objectivity is a rarity. When it becomes confused with materiality and sensual phenomena, we reach a limit of knowledge. The barrier, however, is of our own making.

Around the body is an aura, or maybe several auras, forming an aureole or aurora (originally this was a Semitic word meaning “light upon light”). It is not universally recognized as yet, though its existence has not been experimentally disproved. We know little of its composition, yet from it the “ectoplasm” of psychic research emanates. Under certain conditions, the vibrations of the aura can be photographed. Clairvoyants claim to see it, or at least its colors. Both its colors and lines of force appear to have significance, and the aura may result from an admixture of several types of energies.

We live and move in a realm of psychic forces, and they move in and through us. The aura changes in size and luminescence according to our emotional condition. It appears to react to other influences and to expand in moments of exaltation, pain, duress and cosmic love. Indeed as our outlook expands, so does it expand. When we fall into self-pity, it contracts. As our thoughts tend toward the earth, it assumes one color, and as they rise toward heaven, it takes on another color. Emotions, also, affect its hues.

The aura is not developed by direct means. It follows us, not we it. As we change physically, emotionally, mentally, morally or spiritually, it becomes altered. When our development attains to a

certain height, it becomes as a lamp of pure light. Then even a sensitive person will recognize it. And many who are not clairvoyant can, in a sense, feel a developed aura.

The study of both static and dynamic symmetry in the sense used here shows that there is a living center in each of us. This acts as the nucleus of the aura, as a potential lamp. When we sit in one spot, as for example in a chair at home, we leave our vibrations upon it. The more we sit there, the more comforting it seems. It is because we have come back to our own atmosphere, in a sense, to our “home.” We delight in our own beds. In strange places, we feel strangeness. This is because the aura, which is the personal atmosphere, rests best when it returns to its haunts. It sends its magnetism into the space we cover or upon the spot where we stand. It relaxes best when it returns to the same places or spaces.

One can conceive the body as a huge dynamo with fields of forces all around and through it. These fields may be more complete and complex than those around an iron bar-magnet, an electromagnet or a charged wire. Both Vedantists and Sufis, as well as other inner schools, have taught that we inhabit or inherit several bodies. To them, the soul is covered by many sheaths, separated by qualities and properties and vibrational ranges. We may refer to them as heart-body, mind-body, physical-body, etc., instead of repeating their Oriental names. These bodies are concentric so far as space is concerned, the “central sun” and “heart” being related.

Every word, action, thought and feeling that we produce or react to has its concomitant vibrational movement. The energies thereof pass along lines or curves in the field of the personal atmosphere. The higher energies give rise to lower energies or undertones. The psychic currents belong to this class, being between mind and body. The consumption or wastages of these energies weakens us. Their restoration strengthens us. Right breathing, silence, repose and relaxation are among the best means of restoring our bodies and minds, but diet is not to be overlooked. As the “metaphysical” vibrations have their undertones and overtones, what is best for one sheath benefits the others.

No art is so intricately related to psychic forces as is the dance. Of course, we might except love-making, if it is to be restored to that rank, as it is hoped, but otherwise the dance stands preeminent in this respect. If a dancer were to stand in one spot and either not take her feet away or merely move in a small area around it, her atmosphere would permeate that region. As she moves over a greater area, her atmosphere would cover that, too. A spot may be magnetized by dancing or whirling upon or around it. In ancient times, magnetism was supposed to be drawn to altars by such dancing and circumambulation. The devotees would feel that magnetism. The prelate would use it in blessing. In the true blessing, the minister or priest makes use of the highest vibrations toward which he can set as a condenser and share them with the worshippers.

We can study the psychic forces involved in religious rituals and in the “stances” and postures of prayers. Hands clasped together; hands with palm to palm pointing upward; the same placed just before the heart; hands extended upward and outward; moving joined hands upward or downward—all these are more than symbols. They have definite meanings, they represent realities,

they touch the realms unseen.

In a few parts of the Orient, mudras, or finger postures, are employed in religious ceremonies. It is difficult to delineate these mudric rituals from dances, as the two merge into each other imperceptibly. Where the priest performs, it is a rite, where he is absent it is a dance. One might say that the prayer is static and the religious dance dynamic though their intentions be the same.

A word or two might not be out of place here with respect to the use of the "V" sign as a symbol for victory. Whether the originator of it was aware or not, the writing, scrawling, tracing, and marking of this letter is a direct application of psychic power. Germans have used this power ever since their establishment of the totalitarian state. Adolph Hitler's voice is very magnetic, even hypnotic. He seems to have had a mentor who gave him excellent instruction. And we may need psychic vehicles as well as physical stratospheric planes to overcome him and his satellites. So every repetition of **V-for-Victory** by speech, word and gesture should be effective. To these we may add prayer, stretching out our arms toward heaven as we do, making the sign of supplication in the form of a V. And dancers can include this movement, and so evoke psychic power.

There are two extremes to be avoided. One is to assume that movements have no particular meaning, and that perhaps dances have no meaning. The other is to permit thought to become as a weight, and to be overcautious in action. The Brahmsian philosophy was that music, though born of the heart, had no especially mental significance or might "mean all things to all men." This point of view has made headway in painting and leads to the ridiculous in interior decoration. The opposite view, or Duncanism, in dancing might turn to "drunken-ism," unless there be insight and inspiration. Beauty has its own language; it is for the artist to employ and for the audience to enjoy.

Every muscular movement affects certain nerves and sinews and has its definite psychic aftermath. In the chapter on sex, and elsewhere, some attention has been paid to particular examples of its actions. A true discussion of sex, however, cannot be divorced from the study of life. Sex is not the aim of life so much as life is the aim of sex. That is why it is included in a treatise on spirituality.

The march, as has been stated, has direct and definite psychic import. Bands play patriotic music as the soldiers march by. There is a fervor, cheering, the waving of handkerchiefs, the throwing of hats. It belongs to the same general psychic whirl. Indeed, mobs are moved psychically far more readily than the individual is. Every movement of the body has its psychic import. It is possible to tell character from walk and gesture. Observation, together with an intuitive perception, makes it easy.

Now, how can the dance be used as a psychic prophylactic? Can it at the same time correct extreme tendencies while promoting grace, finesse, and agility? Can it aid in restoring vitality to the body? Can it be employed in rejuvenation? Yes, no doubt the dance almost of itself awakens the "jinn" in us. That is why dancers appear more youthful, for the "jinn" or genius is not so covered with materiality or bestiality. Again, the movements and themes of the dance suggest to the participant moods which of themselves work in the direction of life, away from senescence and

“that tired feeling.” As long as one feels free, it is well, but when personal efforts are made, there may be an unfortunate action. To get the best results from psychic power one has to move beyond the ego’s sway.

Is there a secret to rejuvenation? Let us propose that physically it is connected with vitamins and hormones. Psychically it is interlinked with the balance between Yang and Yin, with the control of currents and forces, and with the sublimation of pelvic sexual activity. Mentally, it is dependent upon one’s motive, the purpose from which he cannot easily be swayed. To these may be added the ability to draw in life energy with the breath and to recognize our dependence upon or oneness with an all-pervading Deity, or its equivalent. This is not offered as an exact recipe, however. We have not reached omniscience.

Here we must avoid by all means the temptation of Faust. We should not sell our souls, so to speak, to any devil, personal or otherwise. Monkey glands are not the receptacles of eternal grace. Yet, there is an intuition which has never been eradicated from men’s minds, that longevity is a possibility, and that it is connected with the mysteries of life, perhaps with a “kingdom of heaven.” That is why heart-concentration is stressed, because when we can draw incessantly upon the heart, we help to make the “kingdom” manifest here and now. We express immortality without leaving earth.

Another psychic aspect of the dance is the growth of sensitivity. This begins with a greater awareness of the body, mind and emotions of oneself and others. People are attracted or repelled as if instinctively, unaware of the surrounding psychic energies. Impulse plays a part in it, but that does not explain anything. We are compelled to battle with impulses all day. We do not realize how much fatigue comes therefrom. It has been said that people do not die of hard work. Real hardship comes from constant battling against foes within and without, seen and unseen. It comes from incessant struggling with social, mental, and psychic forces. In this battle, victory does not come easily.

Sensitive people may be easily aroused and are often perturbed about small things. They have finer constitutions and may not be able to help themselves in that respect. Dancers may suddenly rebel against the music, the scenery, the costumes, about one or a thousand things. This is regarded as a sign of that “temperament” so often found in artistic people. But the word “temperament” does not explain its source, cause or cure. There is certainly disturbance of mind. There are apparently uncontrolled emotions.

Everything in this world has its vibrations. There is an occult science known as psychometry which treats with the human recognition of these vibrations. Its adepts appear capable of reading the history of any article they touch, or of any room they enter. Psychometric power is often an unconscious faculty. A gross person would not notice what a dainty person feels, and if he did notice, it would not mean much to him.

The knowledge of the breath and of the forces connected with it, and an understanding of the

“elements” and how they operate through the personality would enable one to respond to, and to control psychic forces. And although spiritual development should never be undertaken for the sake of attaining strange powers, it often happens that its adepts do gain supernormal faculties. By these means and others one can control the storms of temperament. And if nothing else suffices, periodical periods of quiet or meditation will do it. We are here on earth and we have to face the problems of earth even while we are struggling onward toward better things.

The world is as yet in the cradle of psychic studies. The learned object to the inroads that the ignorant have made in that direction. We do not study physics for the sake of making refrigerators, nor chemistry merely to manufacture better bombs—although in a depraved society this may be so. In other words, a true science is not finalistic. So metaphysics, parapsychology and cognate studies must be learned in the same spirit as the accepted sciences are.

In this sense, too, we would add aesthetics to the sciences. We would give greater scope to beauty in life, nor yet insist that truth is beauty and beauty is truth. The free man does not insist.

[Chapter 12](#)

Technique

Too often when a new idea is offered, it tends to further divide a confused world. With each new approach in philosophy, a cult may be founded. Let someone come to liberate the world and a small group will congregate around him, endeavor to exclude others, organize, and establish their own preeminence. This is the last thing desired here. There can be no school for “spiritual dancing.” Life is an established fact. We want to increase it, perhaps, in a certain sense. We come to fulfill, not to destroy.

So no special technique is offered for spiritual dancing, other than the examples and suggestions cited. These can be studied and performed by followers of any school or method. The preparation, rather than the details, is stressed. Students of flamenco, carioca, ballet, tango, cake-walk, clog or any other school will benefit from the spiritual and other exercises and methods. They will benefit those interested in Gypsy and Cossack and Japanese dancing. They apply to the disciples of Zemach or to the devotees of the new schools. The purpose is to spiritualize life through the arts.

When we separate the spiritual from the “real,” the “practical,” and the “beautiful,” we build a concept which of itself is not spiritual. Our **thought of God** is not divinity. It is one of the many thoughts of our mind and is less than we. Korzybski has pointed out that the word p-e-n-c-i-l is not a writing tool, it is a word. The word G-o-d is not the Divine Being, nor is the thought we hold the ultimate reality. Spirituality is beyond word and thought.

We may speak of God as the perfection of Beauty. This is not a new concept. The Greeks were quite familiar with it. But if anything is needed today it is an aesthetic revolution, one which will

instill this dictum in our hearts and become effective in our lives. This revolution need not be destructive. It could further trends now on earth, integrating and selecting whatever is needed from the present or from past ages. We should strive to increase the beauty in life in general and in that of the individual in particular.

The Russian Revolution abolished old forms. It substituted a new social order and an accepted social philosophy. Human nature did not change therefore, and psychologically the upheaval was less than what appeared on the surface. To its friends, it introduced a group of messiahs. To its enemies it meant the substitute of tyrants without ancestry and breeding for those who certainly had ancestry and occasionally had breeding. But the revolution did stimulate art, especially the heterodox and new schools. And encouragement was given to the people to become more interested in all arts.

Then came a counterstroke. Art had an aim: not beauty, but propaganda. The new order started out to uproot everything ancient. But it had to admit that science is science and that chemistry and physics do not change because the cabinet falls. (That was before the time of “Pure Aryan **Science**.”) Those who talk about socialistic biology and capitalistic biology are not very convincing. The demand for great ability and skill became more important than one’s private philosophy of art. The popularization of art in Russia stimulated the aesthetic movement. Every talented person was encouraged, though handicraft became a state craft.

The revolution proposed goes deeper. It does not abrogate skill, but would offer encouragement to every type of artist. Even burlesque may remain. It does not say of the ballet that its principles are contrary to physiological mechanics. It does not believe that the study and performance of ancient dances should be detached from art and joined to anthropology. All forms and methods would be utilized. Only a sincere feeling for beauty would be demanded.

In and around Hollywood there is at least one teacher whose methods are based upon cardiac mechanics and heart-concentration. Its pupils learn, more or less consciously, to invoke psychic forces. They imbibe philosophy from the dance itself. Their spiritual faculties unfold without anything being said of them. At the same time, they emphasize interpretative rather than program dancing. To them, the right interpretive dance offers full scope to the will of the performer and gives her every opportunity for self-expression.

The changes that are taking place today and may take place tomorrow may have their counterparts in the past. When Akbar was Emperor of India he proposed methods which were at once revolutionary and synthetic. What he accomplished in the political and religious arenas is more or less known, what he did with the arts has not been so broadcast. This great eclectic strove to preserve all the earlier culture and traditions that might be used for the benefit of his empire and its peoples. He encouraged all the arts and crafts, and rescued those that seemed doomed because of the clash of many conflicting interests.

His work with the dance is noteworthy. He worked hard to restore the ancient Vedic themes of

apsaras and gandharvas. He encouraged Hindu teachers to come out of hiding and train their pupils openly. He protected the Islamic schools, too often engaged in bickering with one another, when they were not combating “idolatry”—that is to say, Hinduism. He encouraged the introduction of Persian forms and Arabic instruments. The Shankar whom we admire today is greatly indebted to this marvelous ruler.

Fundamentally, Akbar was a spiritual man and only incidentally an aesthete. He gave his allegiance to his spiritual teachers, Selim Chisti and Mubarak, Sufis of the Moin-ed-din Chisti School. This school specializes in the use of music for spiritual development, employing all three forms: vocal, instrumental and dance. Mubarak’s sons held the highest positions at the Mogul court and cooperated loyally with their monarch. All arts were encouraged and wonderful buildings constructed. The work of Akbar was completed in the reign of his grandson, the celebrated Shah Jehan, builder of the Taj Mahal.

There have been societies in many places designed to preserve the folk arts. The harm done to them by this diabolic war can never be measured. The folk dances have a direct appeal. Their spirit belongs to the people. They illustrate the dance as an index to human character in accordance with Havelock Ellis’ famous “What do you dance?” When civilization and order are restored, as restored they must be, let us remember that man does not live by bread alone. His spirit needs sustenance. The peacemakers should do their utmost to encourage these arts.

Folk dancing serves to preserve custom and costume. It offers outlets to the young in harmony with their lives, surroundings and physiognomy. By nature the Swede is built for his national dance and the Cossack to perform his. Every art in a sense is like an unwritten scripture containing the epitome of a civilization. And our understanding of dances will enable us to understand the people that perform them.

Like his great forerunner, Emperor Akbar, Sufi Inayat Khan strove to unite the peoples of East and West in their devotional outlooks and in their quest for love and harmony and beauty. He saw in religion, in general, the search for the same supreme goal. He also wanted to maintain all the nationalistic and aesthetic methods of the arts to aid humanity in its quest for beauty. And generally speaking we are on the road to that goal. In America, for example, Massine and Mei Lang Fan, Astaire and Shankar have won public favor. This has not interfered with the restoration of the old square dances, once so popular. Nor has it affected the dance hall and salon. Indeed, there are many groups trying to popularize the dance in its many facets.

In this sense, too, we may need both classicism and romanticism. The social anthropologist would hesitate to destroy forms. If we were to go through libraries burning outmoded books, there would be an immediate cry of “censorship.” We have come to accept our drama, our music, our dances, like full grown Minervas, miraculously sired by mysterious Zeuses. Comparatively little attention has been given to their background, evolution and growth, until a very recent date. And without a suitable foundation we should not plunge into a war among schools. We have been solicitous about preserving classical symphonies, but paid too little attention to the dances upon which they were

based or which were used along with them.

To understand symphonic development one ought to know something of Lully and the minuet, and the artistic movements known as Baroque and Rococo. Weber and the waltz belong to the age of romanticism, which, in music, did not flourish until the time of Beethoven and later. Waves of tendencies rise and fall, manifest and disappear in the arts. In the twentieth century, the conclusion was reached that both romanticism and classicism had become effete. Ravel and Schoenberg ushered in vast experiments. Music was going everywhere and nowhere at once.

Cyril Scott sought the philosophical reasons for these movements. He studied the metaphysics of art. He preached revolution and practiced synthesis. He would follow in the footsteps of Akbar. But his interest in occultism and theosophy were either misunderstood or else turned people away from him. (This subject is developed further in a projected companion work on music.)

Changes in music have found parallel expression in the dance. The clusters of Cowell and the gong music of Rudhyar may be reflected in new methods of group dancing. But we protest against stilted dynamic geometric patterns which appear so delightful on the screen. They turn performers into automata. Even communistic Russia has not dehumanized the individual dancer so much as Hollywood has. Those who battle fearlessly against gearing man to a machine, say to a belt in an automobile factory, have little to say against group-robot dances. Bear in mind: "Fear not them that torture the body but rather them that torture the soul with hell-fire."

In folk-dance gatherings, in ball rooms and night clubs, couples and groups may perform for pleasure or for beauty or for self-expression, without need for any special ideal. We do not rail against frivolity and we do not expect to obtain from people that for which they have no capacity. The war, the common suffering, and the tremendous problems which confront mankind will help to enhance that seriousness and sobriety which will elevate us all, individually and collectively. We need no warner here; life itself is warning.

Many stage dances have elements of the group-unit which may become the basis of the new aesthetic and new civilization. Dane Rudhyar has been a sort of modern prophet in this respect. He seems gifted with an insight to foretell coming changes in the world of art. The group-unit may have the fellow-feeling and attunement that might be expected of members of an orchestra. When there is a common spirit in a troupe, the same psychic currents will touch all. There will be a common zest for life. Group silences and concentrations will prove to be most valuable here, and they are needed if we wish to face the new age with sanity.

Here a question may be asked, must we not first popularize dancing? Yes, and never more than when we are preparing for war, or at least, arming our young men. The U.S.O. is being supported for social and moral reasons; it should be looked upon too as a great aesthetic and spiritual asset to our nation.

The art and music appreciation courses in public schools have done something to awaken ideals

and ideas in the young. We must not stop there. We need to avail ourselves of methods now left to private schools of art. For it is not enough to awaken only the practical or “human” qualities. We must foster genius. Just glance at all the attempted suicides among the young! Ask the psychologists how many more have pondered this fatal step. Maybe we should be thankful that we are now arising beyond the period of crass materialism to a broader outlook.

After all, what does the dance do for us? First and foremost, it inculcates the sense of rhythm and enhances our response thereto. This is really a response to life. It makes us more living, which is to say, more spiritual. It brings out beauty of form and movement, and envelops our personalities in the enjoyment thereof. It takes us beyond ourselves, bringing an incipient state of non-being, which is really a balm for the soul. Whether one follows classical, romantic, popular, exotic, Oriental, Occidental, or personal models, there is a modicum of intellectual significance added to the dance therewith, and body, mind and heart can unite.

No doubt we can learn from the Orient and in return can teach Asiatics. If we need anything from India, it is the spirit, particularly that spirit which underlies the sacred dances of that country. We have our peculiar physique, our traditions, our forms. We need abandon nothing. We do not protest against accepted styles. We want to employ everything we can on the pathway toward God-realization.

[Chapter 13](#)

Sacred Dances

One might say that sacred dances fall into two classes: those associated with a particular religion, and those which have a psychological or mystical value quite apart from any cult. No doubt these overlap and are not always distinguishable. Every religious dance is not essentially spiritual in the sense conveyed here, and many spiritual dances are hardly religious in the traditional sense.

Ubiquitous is the magical dance. For planting and plowing, for harvesting and reaping, there have been themes and motifs in which the celebrants might unite in a veritable communion. There were also hunting and fishing dances, and those connected with crafts and trades. Witness the “Dance of the Apprentices” in “Die Meistersinger.” For all things come from life and to life return, and each activity can have its celebration. Our Polynesian and Melanesian researches, our inquiries into the culture of the Incas, our aboriginal studies, our investigations of snake cults, have brought added outlooks. Whenever we divest ourselves of the “microscopic” habit and realize our humanity, we can notice the universal life in all people. We can discover the capacity, evolution, and culture of dark skinned and light complexioned. Verrell has found it so in the Americas, Goehrer in Africa and Malaysia, Prurok in his journeys into out-of-the-way places, Rosita Forbes everywhere.

Traditions hold that gods once inhabited the earth. These gods may not have walked like us nor talked like us. Their language may have been music and what appertains to music. Music and the

motion which is life produces the dance. So, originally the dance was sacred. Great esoteric cults, like those of Egypt, strove to maintain it in that form. The priests of that land knew the effects of dancing upon human consciousness, and they knew something of the magic thereof. So for selfish and unselfish reasons, they controlled the arts of their land.

According to the Hindu Vedas the spirit of poetry was in man in most distant times. The ancients did not write because they, as individuals, felt an urge. Rather did they believe that the cosmos was speaking through them. “Sing, goddess,” dominates the works of Homer, and the echo of the ever repeating divine voice became his poetry. “I sing,” croaked Virgil—and who cares? The forms are similar, but Homer sang to his divinities, while Virgil was ever aware of the powers that be on earth. Respect these powers, well and good, but reverence them and the sacredness is gone.

Even the symbolic religious dance does not necessarily elevate devotees to a higher state of consciousness. The ancient Bacchantes may have thought so, but until one creates an additional capacity he cannot rise to a new level. How this may be done has already been presented. There are beautiful rituals in some of the Japanese Shinto cults. They may appeal to the heart, but they soothe rather than elevate. The Japanese ideals instill beauty, but the practical aspects of their nationalistic trends have been contrary even to their own traditional ethics. Yes, Japan has a marvelous politico-ethical code (called Bushido), comparable to chivalry. Until recent times it was dominant in statecraft. Now it is gone, and with it so many of the artistic values of the Orient are disappearing.

Both the Christian and Hindu religions possess ceremonies which, if transmuted from the static to the dynamic phase, would become dances, or inspire dance-forms. Christian rites have developed into tremendous dramas, and also have given rise to the music which is characteristic of the West. The Hindus have not stopped there. This, perhaps, because of the reverence paid to the rishis, their holy teachers. Religion has been a never terminating fountain of inspiration to her artists.

There is some evidence that wise men have appeared before all peoples and have instituted dance patterns among them. They saw the magic and potency of it. They used it as a channel for the directing of psychic currents. Those who have witnessed the Hopi snake dances and traced the ensuing rains must admit at least a “coincidental” connection. That is, unless they are rigid egocentric skeptics. It does rain soon after the dance. Sometimes the ceremonies themselves are interrupted by a deluge. Nor does this seem to be an isolated phenomenon. In so many lands, the “magic” of the dance works.

The Hindu **Sama Veda** is more than a book. We may wonder why hymns have been repeated, ad nauseam, in sacred Sanskrit works. The reason is that they were used for different purposes. The **Rik** was for the Yogi, the **Yajur** for the scientist and magician, the **Artharvan** for the masses, while the **Sama Veda** was for all classes of artist, most of all for musicians of every type. One repeated Rik verses to unite with the gods, or mount higher. One repeated Sama in order to serve the gods on earth. A Hercules in Greece, a Vyasa in India, a Homer in Greece, a Narada in India, a David in Palestine—the means and the ends were not so far distant.

The dance purportedly enabled the artists of the age to become apsaras and gandharvas while still in the flesh. The theory was that man occupies more than one body. The music was supposed to vibrate the finer bodies and to instill them with life and movement. The art-form included theme, concentration, devotion and **Samadhi**—that is to say, a state of consciousness in which the self and non-self became as one. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy has explained this in his *The Dance of Siva*.

In our day, too, the scholastic mystics of Eire have sought to reawaken forgotten “truths.” Traditions which die hard must have life beneath them. Why is the metaphysics of James Stephens almost identical with that of the Sufis? Why does A.E. respect the rishis and devas? How could Yeats bring back ancient esoteric teachings (in *The Vision*), unless there be a universal divine spirit, not limited to time or clime!?

So if it be asked: “Can we today perform a sacred dance?” it may be answered in the words of a modern rishi: “Yes! yes! yes!” (See the Agni Yoga Series, Agni Yoga Press, N.Y.) Hold before our heart’s eye the vision of divinity, the feeling of divinity, the spirit of divinity, and divinity we shall become. We can partake of the cup of nectar; we can again turn into Ganymedes to pour and quaff the Olympian ambrosia. Nevertheless, we must be willing to embrace the divine Sarasvati, goddess of music and art, even as Kali, the monster. When heaven and hell are found within and recognized as but small portions of our being, we can become as gods and move and whirl. We may express all that is and was and will be; the veil of Isis again may be lifted.

How much of this can be imparted, it is difficult to say. Certainly a laughing, applauding, self-conscious though appreciative audience will not behold, though they have keen ears and eyes. Goodwill will bring them nearer to the dancer but not to Him Who is the Spirit of the dancer. When we watch in wonder, in silence, in reverence, then the Holy Spirit may be manifesting to and through that person who is performing before us and can communicate blessing to us. The term “mystery” connotes silent lips and open eyes. The uninitiated could not partake of the mysteries; this was true yesterday, is true today, will be true tomorrow.

The dance of Siva stands out preeminently as one in which the performers, be they soloists or troupe, must feel the presence of God, however they conceive Him, whatever be their worship. It is primarily for Yogis. Here we would interpret this word in its broadest sense to include all who unite in some fashion with the Godhead and who partake of a Holy Communion. When it degrades into mere imitativeness, it is the dance of Hanuman, the monkey-divinity, regardless of its title. One who has not tasted of ecstasy, or gone even beyond that, will never successfully introduce this dance.

But man, the Bible tells us, should not dwell alone. He requires a mate. So however perfect, however beneficial, however supreme be the dance of Siva, for our daily lives we need practical love and human recognition. Therefore the wise invented **Ras Lila**, the perfect dance for man and woman, joined by love and by holy communion. To perform it the man should regard his woman partner as the embodiment of divinity, and the woman should regard her male partner as the embodiment of divinity. Lingam and Yoni, Siva and Shakti, here appear at their best. The forces of nature, life and sex are spiritualized. Call it a phallic dance, it is a phallic dance. See in it the dance

of life; it is the dance of life. In it the twain become one.

In the dance of Siva, heart and mind behold perfection. When Krishna and Radha render Ras Lila, the eyes of the body also perceive perfection. In it man and woman harmonize, and in the highest sense. They give and receive all that they regard as holy. They complement one another, so that two seemingly imperfect beings constitute the nexus of perfection.

Ras Lila is for lovers, sweethearts, wedded couples, else it must be performed only in the highest devotional spirit. The currents should be directed upward as to God, never to the partner. Thus, this dance belongs to **Tao**, the Supreme, and not to Yin or Yang. **Kemal**, perfection, holds forth here, rather than Jelal, majesty, or Jemal, beauty. Yes, Krishna has been regarded as the perfect embodiment of all qualities, including sexual and psychic power. We can follow him there. But a debased Krishna worship becomes a superstition-mongering phallicism. We ought to remember that the wise came to elevate mankind to divinity, not to be worshipped themselves.

The influence of India has spread to Java, Bali, Tibet and other countries. In many of them we still find sacred dances. We can recognize Yang and Yin, or Siva and Shakti, in the dances of Bali. The Malaysians seem impelled by nature to the dictum that art is religion. They are not philosophers or metaphysicians. Whatever they be otherwise, in aesthetics they are supreme.

The sacred dance is still an important institution in Tibet. There, there are priests specially trained for it. In great monasteries, as at Hemis, in Ladakh, mighty religious pageants and dramas are presented under a dance form. One can witness lamaistic counterparts at the Christian Passion Play and the Islamic Martyrdom of Hasan and Hussein. The participants have to undergo rigid disciplines and instructions. The immediate ideal does not always seem so noble to foreigners, but the same universal spirit is there.

Tibetan dances are replete with symbolism. The dramatic skeleton is not strictly historical. The religion with which they are connected is a branch of Mahayana, the Buddhism of the great vehicle. Its culture is not so strictly divided into artistic, philosophical and scientific aspects as our learning is. The religion has its spiritual, psychic and magical facets which are not easily distinguished, so much do they overlap and blend. Its sacred books are often dramatic in form and have tremendously stimulated the arts.

Hinduistic influence has extended to the puppet plays of the Far East. They are generally based upon the Scriptures and poetical works of that people. Next to the Vedas, the Mahabharata, Ramayana and Gita Govinda have been valuable sources for inspirations that have developed into sacred dances and sacred arts. Javanese puppetry has well preserved relics of Hinduism, and this art lies very close to the dance.

The Hebrew people worked along other lines. Often their religion and art seem far apart. Yet David with his psalms and the Levites with their **chul** and **hagg**, implanted important seeds. These seeds seem to sprout now and again as if they drew sustenance from an "undying fire." An excellent

example of this is the Chassidic movement which spread among the Jewish people in the eighteenth century.

Chassidism has been reviled more than studied even by the Hebrews themselves. What is not understood in mysticism and spirituality is only too easily called superstition and charlatantry. Yes, the Chassids did fall into errors which proved to be death-blows. The spirit of the prophet was accompanied by the function of the priest. Their Zadiks came as holy men and went as ecclesiasts. A pure Chassidism might have rescued Israel from the shackles of orthodoxy and "Ghettoism;" an impure Chassidism defiles and defines the very meaning of the word.

The Chassid is literally the "pure one." Chassidism has risen and fallen again and again in Israel. It is based upon the union of mysticism and practicality. Religion and joy were parts of one whole. And these Chassids expressed their joy in the dance. This dance was born of mystical ecstasy. And it took on substantially the same form under which it manifested among the Sufis and their forebears, the Bacchantes, Egyptians and devotees of India. Given certain concentrations, devotions, attitudes and the cultivation of holy ecstasy, a definite mystical state will be induced. The body is then affected and moves out in regular lines of force. The forces of the cosmos seem to be there, to impress the devotees who feel that they are in the presence of God, and so express themselves. Regardless of the religious covering, the psychological and mystical elements are the same. It is no wonder that the resulting art-forms are similar.

Apart from the strictly mystical stream, Hebrew traditions are not devoid of possibilities. Zemach has been demonstrating this. His dances are vital and vitalizing. He has added to the world's store of culture. When the world recovers from its insanity and the Jewish people rise above their materialism, we may expect many Zemachs, in Palestine and out.

Indeed, we look for a universal spiritual-aesthetic revival. The cultivation of ecstasy and attainment of superconsciousness are steps on the way. We are here to complete our humanity, not to avoid it. Therefore, we must hold before ourselves the idea of the holiness of man and the sacredness of the body. Institutions, themes, forms and ideas are inferior to man, for man was created by God, and these things made by man. As man grows in understanding, in consideration and in compassion, spiritual art will unfold itself accordingly. Man's heart-awakening must come first.

A warning note should be expressed here; if the dance or any art be cultivated for psychic or magical purposes, the world will not evolve, it will retrogress. On the other hand, if there is the hoped-for spiritual awakening, then all the arts will reach a higher status. Perhaps then the magic, the psychic powers, the unknown forces and faculties will appear as if quite natural. With the coming of the Kingdom of God in the human heart many marvels will be added.

This will lead to contemplation, that most profound of practices. In it man assumes the Omniscience and Omnipresence of God to begin with, and holds it ever before him. Therein prayer, meditation and concentration unite. There is no distinction of religion or even of personality. The mortal is elevated toward immortality. In a sense the resurrection may be experienced without any

departure from the body. "Ye must be born anew," said the Master. "We must be born anew, we shall be born anew" is the echo of the coming dawn.

[Chapter 14](#)

Dancing and the Other Arts

Dancing has been discussed here as the art in which the human body and the human personality are instruments of expression. This is true morphologically, but analogically, dancing cannot be separated from art in general. The art of Tibet is the analog of mathematics and engineering elsewhere, while its dance approaches the drama. The dance of Polynesia is the story of Morocco and the grand opera of Italy.... With this broad view we approach the universal aestheticism.

It is obvious that marching and gymnastics have elements in common with the dance. Morally, psychically and even physically these principles may be applied to them. But it may be questioned whether they, and tumbling as well, should be classified as "art." It is difficult to draw an exact line, and it is not necessary to do so. Tumbling may be regarded as a variant of the dance in which the vertical plane is used by partners or by a group. Its spatial handling is in that respect different from the dance. Spiritually, we may regard tumblers as a group-unit, and their faculties and methods harmonize with the proposed aesthetic order. They can also gain from the exercises and disciplines presented here.

Skating is another allied art, especially in the form presented by Sonja Henie. Mechanically speaking, the friction between shoe and floor, between foot and ground, is removed when the body is mounted on gliders. Movement is greatly facilitated. The weight can be thrown in various directions so that there are a number of graceful gyrations and permutations possible upon skates.

Roller skating again differs because the performer is then really moving on a pair of machines or vehicles. Their smallness is in contrast to the size of the body, and the comparative facility with which they can be handled, especially by an expert, renders the use of roller skates as adjuncts to the arts. Both kinds of skating permit rapid movements, so the psychic effects are more transient.

The connection between dancing and music is more intimate and well known. Dancing depends upon music, and music may be completed by the dance. The symphony, greatest of the European musical patterns, itself arose from the dance. Choreography has, in turn, availed itself of many symphonies, even of those which seem to have become independent of dance-forms. Whatever their composers may have had in view, it is almost inevitable that some master dancer will interpret their music with movement. And why not?

This union of music and dancing is in a sense too clear and too close to necessitate detailed comment. However, not many writers and critics have given it full attention until quite recently. In this era, George Gershwin has reunited dancing and symphony, and the cinema has further welded

this union.