

**Journal Entry Mar. 20, 2025**

*If I don't dance I am sad. I feel hollow. Like an empty vessel; a flower vase with no water or flowers. If I don't dance I don't know myself or the world. Without one day of dance, I've forgotten how to exist.*

*I realized this after dancing this past Thursday in my trial dance class. After dancing with them, I felt Sophia. I realized why I was alive. What it meant to be human.*

If dance is so revolutionary for understanding who we are as humans as selves, for connecting with the world, why in US culture is dance isolated to the T.V. screen, and deemed “entertainment.” Why is it considered only fun? This is because in the West we live in a society that values the mind over the body. Judeo-Christian values have also marginalized the body while uplifting the soul (Descartes, 2005). Individuality and rationality are valorized while subjectivity and the body are deemed as less than (Lamothe, 2016). This has led to a pervasiveness in disembodiment in the West. A world that locates the human self, in the mind. In doing so, the body has been separated from an identification of self. In my course Principles of Dance Ecology and this paper, one will understand how it becomes crucial to reconnect the body to the self to understand the importance of being alive in this world.

The marginalization of the body to the sidelines has tragically led to a loss of what it means to be human. To be a human is to be a body, specifically to be a body that moves and adapts to the world around us. With the loss of this movement and adaptation, we have marginalized our awareness of our own existence and the existence of others; like the bees, like individuals who have disabilities and like the elderly. All of these populations have been sidelined, and not cared for. This has resulted in a lack of care for the world: climate change and the loneliness epidemic have ensued (Lamothe, 2016)

Embodiment offers us a radical repositioning of the body. A body as a source of self. With embodiment, the body becomes a partner, rather than a hindrance. Psychologist and embodiment specialist Hillary L. McBride asserts in her book *The Wisdom of Your Body*: “I am here to move; I am here to dance into my muscles the reminder that being a body is good, that I am free, that I no longer need to disappear ” (McBride, 26).

As McBride mentions, dance is an avenue to embodiment- an avenue to form a relationship in which your body is a partner. This is so because dance awakens humans to their unique ability to create healthier relationships with

themselves and other beings. This happens through movement creation, DANCING. Dancer and dance philosopher Lamothe Kimmerer says in her book *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming*, “In dancing, we cultivate a sensory awareness of the movements we are making. We learn to pay attention to how those movements feel in our bodily selves—to the feelings of pleasure and pain—and we do so that we can learn to make movements as easily and efficiently as possible...Humans dance because we are primed to feel the pleasure of doing so as a guide to our best becoming as persons living on this planet” (61). This awakening to feeling occurs through the kinesthetic senses, meaning perception through movement.

In many cultures outside of the West, the body is centralized, meaning the body is seen as central to experiencing the world. This is largely because outside of the West, cultures are communally focused. Because of their greater embodiment due to cultural epistemologies, the power of dance is central to daily life as it acts as a learning tool and source of identity. Dance scholar Doris Green says: “Dance is a way of life for African people and is associated with everyday activities...Dance in Africa is a way of life, a source of communication, and history reenacted through movement” (26). This is represented in many traditional dances in Africa that are inspired by the natural world. Specifically, Green says: “In the Sokoto state of Nigeria, live the Birnin Kebbi people. They fish and farm as their main occupations. Consequently, they have many dances which concern fishing and farming” (17). In her book, *Culture and the Sense: Bodily Ways of Knowing in an African Community*, Kathryn Linn Geurts discovers this during her time in Anlo-Land where she realizes that amongst the *Mofiwalo* people of Africa, one’s personality is described through the way they experience balance (Geurts, 2002).

The life of the Birnin Kebbi people of Nigeria demonstrate another crucial aspect of dance, the power to create connection with the social environments around us through movement. For example, “Of the many organisms on the planet, humans can and do learn to make patterns of movement from just about anything---whether tree trunk, waterfall or crow; the predators they fear; the prey they seek; the materials they handle; or the persons with whom they cook, fight, share, and mater. Humans evolve not simply by adapting themselves to what is; they learn from what appears to them (where that appearing occurs as a result of movements they are making), whether berry or boulder, how to move in ways that release “its” potential to

support human life. And they do so for the pleasure of it” (Lamothe, 56). Humans move in the way they do, because of the organisms around us, both plants and animals. Barbara Ehrenreich, in her book *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* calls the particular pleasure of moving together, *collective effervescence*. It is the ecstatic pleasure felt when moving in a syncopated way with others. This is the connection aspect of dance that drives humans to keep creating and sustaining community (Ehrenreich, 2007).

Green, Ehrenreich and Lamothe introduce another crucial aspect of dance, connection and understanding of the social environments around you. This occurs through understanding another’s experience of the world and interacting with it through movement. This is extremely important for community creation, as understanding often leads to love and care.

With our unique inherent trait to create and sustain the social environments around us, it becomes our role as humans to keep dancing. For, if we do, we will create a world where everyone feels connected to one another (Lamothe, 2016). My dance course ‘Principles of Dance Ecology’ because it offers a space for humans to learn how they can become embodied and create connection with the world around them. To dance is to make the world a home for all creatures who dwell on this Earth.