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En-visioning the dance: the audience as mirror

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The current article is focused upon an exploration of the question of the nature of the art audience, with a specific emphasis on dance considered as a performing art. Five possible kinds of perceiver involved in the reception of dance as an art are discussed in order to demonstrate that the much criticized metaphor of the mirror can indeed function as a fruitful means to develop an understanding of how dance as an art is perceived, specifically if a more nuanced understanding of the mirror metaphor is applied. In its attempt to rehabilitate this metaphor, the paper draws upon and develops selected aspects of the philosophy of art proposed by John Dewey in his often overlooked *Art as Experience* (1934).

Keywords: dance; mirror metaphor; John Dewey; perception; audience

‘Trick with Mirrors’

There is more to a mirror
than you looking at
your full-length body
flawless but reversed,
there is more than this dead blue
oblong eye turned outwards to you.
Think about the frame.
The frame is carved, it is important,
it exists, it does not reflect you,
it does not recede and recede, it has limits
and reflections of its own.
(Atwood, 1987, pp. 183–84)

As pointed out by Abrams (1971, Preface), ‘a number of concepts most rewarding in clarifying the nature and criteria of art were not found simply in the examination of aesthetic facts, but seem to have emerged from the exploration of serviceable analogues whose properties were, by metaphorical transfer, predicated of a work of art.’ What Abrahams means, in short, is that metaphors can be exceptionally useful in our attempts to understand the nature of and criteria for art.¹ Taking Abrams’s claim seriously, this article attempts an exploration of the question of the nature of the art audience, with a specific emphasis on dance considered as a performing art.² Five possible kinds of perceiver³ involved in the reception of dance as an art are discussed in order to demonstrate that a revised metaphor of the mirror can indeed function as a ‘serviceable analogue’ in developing an understanding of how dance as an art is perceived.

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In most traditional aesthetic theories that exploit the mirror metaphor,⁴ it is the artwork itself that is postulated as the metaphorical mirror, i.e. the use of the metaphor is born out of the premise that art is imitation. The view that underlies such a use of the metaphor is commonly known as representationalism. Representationalism, the standpoint that stresses the ‘privileged nature of the mimetic relation in everyday life, art, science and philosophy’ (Sandywell 2013, p. 69) has been heavily criticized by a number of theorists, including Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Nelson Goodman, Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol, to name but a few. As Sandywell (2013) explains, representationalism relies upon at least four essential components: foundationalism, correspondence, objectivism and objective meaning, and it is these four components that have been shown to be highly questionable by the abovementioned theorists. Richard Rorty deftly summarizes the crux of most objections to representationalism thus:

... to think that to understand how to know better is to understand how to improve the activity of a quasi-visual faculty, the Mirror of Nature, and thus to think of knowledge as an assemblage of accurate representations. Then comes the idea that the way to have accurate representations is to find, within the mirror, a special class of representations so compelling that their accuracy cannot be doubted. These privileged foundations will be the ‘foundations of knowledge’. (Rorty 2009, p. 163)⁵

This article, however, applies the mirror metaphor differently, arguing that it is the perceivers of a dance-work that *make* the dance by being a metaphorical collection of self- and other-reflecting mirrors. The article attempts to rehabilitate the much-maligned⁶ metaphor of the mirror by drawing upon and developing selected aspects of the philosophy of art proposed by John Dewey in his often overlooked *Art as Experience* (1934). Why? Even though Dewey does not deal specifically with dance as art in a sustained fashion, his approach can, in my view, be extended to provide a valuable way of approaching the question of the experience of dance as an art⁷. In addition, his view is, I think, highly compatible with the revised metaphor of the mirror that I propose in the article, and, as I will show, exhibits certain advantages over the position of other theorists such as John Martin.

Dance, as used in this article, is limited to what can be referred to as theatre dance. In my view, theatre dance need not be limited to a conception of dance as a fine art, but can rather be more broadly conceived of as dance that is presented for an audience, specifically to be appreciated as art. As is acknowledged by Grau and Jordan (2000, p. 9), theatre dance could then include, for example, theatricalized ‘versions of social or folk dance’ such as classical Indian and Persian dance, as well as musical theatre dance, vaudeville dance, and dance as it is presented in operas or performed in art galleries. In short, theatre dance stands in contrast to participative or social dance, because it has been specifically created to be presented to an audience. My focus on theatre dance is intentional, precisely because of the aims of this article – to attempt to develop a revised understanding of the mirror metaphor to better understand the perception of dance.

A revised mirror metaphor

The mirror is certainly something that is very familiar to us today, even though it was once a rare and sought-after commodity (Pendergrast 2009, p. 156). The common sense

view propounds the idea that the mirrors we use in our everyday life – the ones to which we normally refer when reflecting upon mirror metaphors and imagery – are ‘naked, flat, implacable and perfect’ (Melchior-Bonnet 2002, p. 98). They are seen as objects that ‘return images of the interior to the exterior, and those of the exterior to the interior’, objects that ‘make a spectacle of everything’ (Melchior-Bonnet 2002). This kind of view is, however, inaccurate when one considers that there are different kinds of mirrors in use today. In the process of their manufacture mirrors can today be constructed with varying degrees of silvering (the so-called tain of the mirror).⁸ So, for example, we make half-silvered mirrors that allow photons of light to either pass through the mirror or to be reflected at an angle.⁹ On the other hand, we can also manufacture totally reflecting mirrors that cause all photons to be reflected.

It is often assumed that the mirrors we use in everyday life and refer to in everyday conversation are totally reflecting mirrors, but these kinds of mirrors are generally reserved for use in laboratory experiments. Rather, the mirrors we use every day are generally not totally reflecting. As such, they are not naked, not completely flat, and certainly not perfect; but rather flecked, stained and sometimes broken. In addition, as the poem by Margaret Atwood that opens this paper intimates, the mirrors we use do not only consist of the light-reflecting part, but are generally held in a frame that has ‘limits’ and so ‘reflections of its own’. If this characterization is right, then the images our everyday mirrors capture are not the ‘true’ reflections of reality that many contemporary theorists problematize when considering mirror metaphors, but rather provide only approximations. If we accept this, then the use of mirror imagery to refer metaphorically to the process of perception does not have to be as problematic as is often assumed in the contemporary literature on the issue. I exploit this revised understanding of the mirror in my discussion of the perceivers of dance that follows.

The perceivers of dance as mirrors

A number of different kinds of perceivers can be distinguished when we consider the experience of theatre dance. A first possible grouping is usually referred to as the audience, in the traditional sense of the word. Yet many characterizations of the audience posit that it is composed of members who are ultimately passive (Ranci re 2007, p. 272) – that is, they only perceive and judge, and that this perceiving and judging are not acting. The idea is that they do not ‘act’ in *any* sense of the word – that they are mere mirrors in a limited sense. This view is inaccurate, because it is based on an understanding of human beings as being ultimately divided between a radically separated inner and outer – a Cartesian mind trapped in a body-prison – and on a view of perception as ultimately passive. To avoid invoking such an understanding, I purposefully call this grouping ‘perceiver-actors,’ nomenclature that resonates well with John Dewey’s understanding of art as experience.

In *Art as Experience* Dewey characterizes the work of art (as well as other things such as philosophical reflection) as ‘an experience’.¹⁰ In contrast with human experience that occurs continuously, and that is involved in ‘the very process of living’, Dewey characterizes the structure of ‘an experience’ as follows: ‘we have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment’ (Dewey 1934, p. 35). How would this come about? Dewey explains that a perceiver first *undergoes* something or some properties (p. 41). Then the something or those properties undergone cause the perceiver to *do* something (p. 44). The process of ‘doing’ and ‘undergoing’ that characterize an experience takes place with the ‘doing’ and ‘undergoing’ always being in relationship,

and it is this that gives an experience a pattern and structure (p. 44). The process of ‘doing’ and ‘undergoing’ continues until the perceiver and the object of experience are ‘mutually adapted,’ ending with a ‘felt harmony’ (p. 44). Why? When the ‘doing’ and ‘undergoing’ are joined in perception they acquire meaning (p. 50), and this meaning, in turn, is given depth by means of the incorporation of past experience (p. 118).

On the basis of his understanding of art as ‘an experience,’ Dewey bemoans the fact that there is no term that covers the act of production and the act of appreciation combined as one thing. The perception and enjoyment of art are often seen as having nothing in common with the creation of art, but Dewey – rightly, I believe – thinks that this is imprecise. Once we see conscious experience as ‘doing and undergoing’ as Dewey encourages us to, we can see the profound connection between the productive and appreciative aspects of art, with the usual distinction between the active creator of art and the passive audience being dissolved. As Dewey says: ‘to perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience. ... There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. The one who is too lazy, idle or indurated in convention to perform this work will not see or hear’ (1934, p. 54).

Perceiver-actors can, in my view, be subdivided into at least two kinds of perceivers. The first is the one that probably first comes to mind, and the one that possibly receives the most attention in the literature – a ‘specialist perceiver’. This is our critic, who engages in repeated viewings of various dance performances over time – that specialist who has access to the often closed language of art analysis.

The second kind of perceiver in this grouping I call the ‘casual perceiver’. This is someone who has watched one or more dance performances, someone who might ‘keep up’ with the art without being a professional critic or professor of art; and someone who generally uses non-specialist language to express his enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the dance. My characterization of this kind of perceiver might be conceived of as being overly broad and in fact a conflation of two kinds of perceivers – of first, the informed theatre-goer, and second, that person who might watch one dance performance every five years. Although differences between these two kinds of perceiver are certainly immediately evident and not unimportant, I here intentionally conflate the two to underline my view that neither the informed theatre-goer nor the person who attends one dance performance every five years responds, to use Noël Carroll’s words, ‘monadically’ to each work of art, ‘savoring each aesthetic experience as a unitary event, and not linking that event to a history of previous interactions with artworks’ (Carroll 2001, p. 18). Carroll’s own analysis in this regard seems to me to imply that only one of these perceivers – the informed theatre-goer – is worth further investigation, because of this perceiver interpreting an instance of an artwork by means of relating it to other instances of such artworks – its so-called historical context. Although I think Carroll is correct to highlight the idea that our understanding of art (and dance) is an inextricably historical process, by excluding the casual perceiver from his 2001 analysis, Carroll forgets that neither of these perceivers could *ever* have such a monadic view. Why? Specifically because of a human being’s inextricable situatedness in time and space.

As both Martin Heidegger (1967, 1985) and Han-Georg Gadamer (1989a, 1989b) convincingly argue, our very ability to understand at all comes from our participation in the various contexts in which we exist. As Heidegger explains in *Sein und Zeit*, we can never escape our situatedness in a particular context:

In an *ontologico*-existential sense, this means that even in that which such a mood pays no attention, Dasein is unveiled in its Being-delivered-over to the 'there.' In evasion itself, the 'there' is something disclosed. (Heidegger 1985, p. 174)

Das Dasein weicht zumeist *ontisch*-existenziell dem in der Stimmung erschlossenen Sein aus; das besagt *ontologisch*-existenzial: in dem, woran solche Stimmung sich nicht kehrt, ist das Dasein in seinem Überantwortetsein an das Da enthüllt. Im Ausweichen selbst *ist* das Da erschlossenes. (Heidegger 1967, p. 135)

Heidegger's point is that no matter whether our mood is such that we are paying no attention to the world, we are always a being-in-the-world – a being situated within a specific history and language – a context. Crucially, for both Heidegger and Gadamer, it is our situatedness in various contexts that makes reality meaningful to us in the first place.¹¹ All new understanding depends upon our ability to relate new phenomena to our already existing set of understandings and concerns, even if these pre-understandings are not necessarily *directly* related to the new phenomenon. In addition, it must be noted that our pre-understandings are not static – they change as we encounter new objects or have new experiences. If both the casual perceiver and the informed theatre-goer are indeed united in their essential hermeneutic situatedness,¹² my conflation of the two on this count could be considered as warranted.¹³ Indeed:

... being an audience for anything is never a simple or singular process. It is a process that begins in advance of the actual encounter, as people gather knowledge and build expectations. ... In other words, audiences bring their social and personal histories with them. (Barker 2006, p. 124)

Before considering a second grouping of perceivers who can be posited as being involved in the experience of dance as art, I turn first to exploring whether using a mirror metaphor to describe the first grouping of perceivers that I have identified can be developed in any meaningful sense. If we accept that the mirror to which we are referring here is not totally reflecting, i.e. one that is imperfect, and one that both reflects and allows light to pass through it, then such a revised mirror metaphor can certainly be effective. Because of their historical situatedness, both the casual and the specialist perceiver cannot claim full and objective access to the experience of the dance. This is *one* of the reasons why conventional mirror metaphors fail. In my reading, however, the fact that the audience's experience is always already coloured and distorted by prior experiences and expectations finds its echo in the way that the tain of our imperfect mirror can never allow for a pure reflection of an image. Just as the attention of the perceivers during a performance is never complete or total, but always disrupted in some way, our mirror does not reflect all the light but, as a result of its construction, allows some of the light entering it to pass right through it.¹⁴ As such, the essential historicity of the perceiver is also accommodated by the revised metaphor. A further point (one that is in fact raised by Dewey) is also accommodated: Dewey claims that unconscious processes are often involved in our experience of art (Dewey 1934, p. 122).¹⁵ Smudges on our mirror that partially obscure the image it reveals could be seen as representative of this aspect of being a perceiver of art.

But does the mirror metaphor as I conceive it allow for a resonance with my claim that these perceivers are not merely passively receiving information as they experience the dance? Are they 'acting' in any sense? I believe Dewey can provide us with some clues here.

For Dewey, the activities of the perceiver are comparable to those of the creator – receptivity is never passivity (1934, p. 52). Perception then involves a 'going-out' of

energy which is always already a ‘plunging’ into the subject-matter (p. 53). In addition, Dewey claims that perception requires the implicit involvement of motor response throughout the organism (p. 53).

Dewey’s view that the audience in the traditional sense of the word is both perceiver and actor can be thought of as a precursor to the work currently being done in terms of so-called ‘kinaesthetic empathy’ by theorists like, for example, Ivar Hagendoorn (2004). This concept finds its origins in the work of John Martin, a contemporary of Dewey. Martin specifically writes about the relationship between dancers and perceivers, and introduces concepts such as ‘metakinesis’ and ‘kinesthetic sympathy’. He writes that ‘not only does the dancer employ movement to express his ideas, but, strange as it may seem, the spectator must also employ movement in order to respond to the dancer’s intention and understand what he is trying to convey’ (Martin 1989, p. 1). Martin’s claim is that the perceiver of a dance engages in an ‘inner mimicry’ of the movement onstage, eventually internalizing the dance into his own neuromuscular system (p. 1). He asks:

What, then, is the means of contact between the dancer and the spectator? When we see a human body moving, we see movement which is potentially producible by a human body and therefore by our own; through kinesthetic sympathy we actually reproduce it vicariously in our present muscular experience and awaken such associational connotations as might have been ours if the original movement had been of our own making. The irreducible minimum of equipment demanded of a spectator, therefore, is a kinesthetic sense in working condition. (p. 84)

With Martin’s work as inspiration, the basic argument presented in most current theories of kinaesthetic empathy is that kinesthesia – which I will broadly define as an agent’s sensation of movement and position – is central to perceiver response, and so that dance audiences can experience the physical effects of the movement of dancers they are watching without actually moving their bodies. The effect is beautifully described by Liesbeth Wildschut (2008):

In the Utrecht Kikker theater I watched *Burn* (2006), seated in one of the chairs which were set in a small circle. This setting made me feel strongly aware of the physical presence of both myself and the spectators in the other chairs. I watched Dylan Newcomb narrowly missing us while moving past, sometimes touching us in a casual way, meeting our eyes for a moment. He took my body along as he accelerated and clenched up. In that same theater my body went rigid right at the opening scene of *Bacon* by Nanine Linning. Three bodies were hanging upside down, high above the floor, their feet in ropes. My body felt what this position induced and wanted to escape from this distressing situation. The strange thing was that when two of the dancers alternately reached the ground again and began their dance, I kept focused on the dancer still hanging above the floor, bending and stretching her torso. An almost impossible effort, according to my abdominal muscles. Only when she made contact with the floor did I feel released from the enormous tension in my body. (p. 237)

However, this view remains controversial for a number of reasons, of which the most important in the context of this article is that neurophysiological research cannot investigate the lived experience of perceivers, and neither can it understand the how their social context affects their perception – an aspect of the aesthetic experience that is so crucial to Dewey. It is for this reason that this article draws chiefly upon the work of Dewey and not of Martin, who largely neglects this aspect of the experience of dance.¹⁶ Indeed, as Reason and Reynolds (2010, p. 55) comment: ‘[Martin’s] approach ties

kinesthetic empathy to a problematic model of intentionality and also ignores the possibility that different audiences expect and receive different kinds of pleasures from dance, watching with different motivations and interpretative strategies.'

In my view, the conclusions of the neurophysiological studies must be tempered by the limitations of the research, and should be supplemented with other research techniques.¹⁷ However, despite the limitations in the neurophysiological research, I think, along with Dewey and in line with the results of contemporary neurophysiological research, that it is still plausible to postulate that the traditional audience of a dance work is not passive, but always already active. The audience takes part in the creation of the artwork merely by being there. On a most basic level, their very presence changes the nature of the artwork, but even more than that, without an audience, in the broadest sense of the word, the dance cannot be. What does this mean? In terms of the characterization I provide of the second set of perceivers whom I postulate as being involved in dance, it will become evident that there need not be an audience in the traditional sense for a dance to be, that is, this first grouping I have identified (the perceiver-actors) may be completely absent.

This is a view that Dewey also holds – the idea that for an artwork (in this case a dance) to be, the artist can function as his own audience. As he says: 'The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works' (Dewey 1934, p. 48). Artist, work and audience are intimately related, and even when the artist works in isolation, she is herself vicariously the audience.¹⁸

Dewey further claims that someone who perceives a work creates an experience in which the subject is new (1934, p. 109). His point is that no two perceivers have the same experience because each perceiver 'creates' his or her own dance out of the same performance. The work of art *is* only actually such when it *lives* in a person's experience (p. 4). As a result, from Dewey's perspective it would be absurd to ask the artist what she meant by her dance-work, for she would find different meanings in it at different times. But does this not mean then that any interpretation is as good as any other? Dewey emphatically says no. Why?

To understand why Dewey can avoid the charge of relativism, we must consider what exactly relativism means. One of the classical forms of relativism is based upon the distinction between appearance and reality. A relativist in this sense would claim that humans can grasp only the appearances of things and never reality 'in itself'. In other words, a relativist denies the possibility of climbing out of our human point of view, so to speak, and grasping things as they 'really' are. In the context of interpreting works of art, this view would posit that there is a 'real' meaning of an artwork that can be accessed. However, this view rests on at least two problematic assumptions. Firstly, it assumes that our everyday relation to things is a relation to mere appearances and not to the things themselves. This view is challenged by many theorists, including Heidegger, who argues that such an account is wrong because it conceives our fundamental relation to reality as one of estrangement (Heidegger 1982, p. 64). It ignores the fact that our most basic relation to reality is one of being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1985, p. 84). Heidegger is not claiming that this precludes the possibility of error, but rather that the very fact that we can make errors presupposes a prior access and openness to reality (Heidegger 1984, p. 167).

The second problematic assumption upon which the charge of relativism is based is that it assumes that our prejudices and prior knowledge block our attempt to grasp things as they really are. As previously mentioned, both Heidegger and Gadamer argue that our

pre-understandings are not barriers, but rather that which makes it possible for us to understand in the first place. Reality shows itself through our pre-understandings.

The point is that acknowledging our situatedness in history need not lead to a relativism about our experience or interpretation of art, and it is this idea that comes to the fore in the thirteenth chapter of *Art as Experience*, where Dewey discusses the nature of judgement as it pertains to art criticism. He claims that the material out of which the judgement of the critic grows is ‘the object as it enters into the experience of the critic by interaction with his own sensitivity and his knowledge and funded store from past experiences’ (Dewey 1934, pp. 309–310). As such, the critic ‘reveals himself’ in his criticisms (p. 308).

For Dewey, good judgment requires a rich background (pp. 311–312), and the capacity to discriminate and to unify (p. 314). Dewey believes that although there are no set standards for critical judgment, there can still be criteria of judgment. These criteria are not rules but rather means of discovering what the work of art is *as an experience* (p. 325).

How can the preceding discussion be reflected in the revised metaphor of the mirror? Our mirrors that both reflect and absorb light to varying degrees do, I think, provide find a useful analogue for Dewey’s claim that perception always involves a ‘going-out’ of energy which is always already a ‘plunging’ into the subject matter (p. 53), i.e. that receptivity is never passivity (p. 52).

The second set of perceivers I demarcate and discuss in the context of interpreting dance as art could be considered contentious, possibly because of the often unquestioned schism set up between actor and perceiver in the performing arts – a distinction that I reject. This separation is expressed well by Augusto Boal, when he says: ‘In the beginning, actor and perceiver co-existed in the same person; the point at which they were separated, when some specialized as actors and others as perceivers, marks the birth of the theatrical forms we know today’ (1995, p. 14).

Contrary to the view that actor and perceiver are separate, it is my view that actor and perceiver must co-exist in the same person (the dancer) for the dance to be. For dance performance to take place at all the dancer must be able to *see and feel* himself¹⁹ dancing (in both a metaphorical and literal sense) – to be his own perceiver, and the perceivers of his fellow dancers, if there are any – whilst also being the actor – the executor of the movement and stillness of the dance.

So if the dancer perceiver is the first of the second set of perceivers to which I draw attention, who are the others? The second kind of perceiver involved in dance as performing art in this set is the choreographer-perceiver, who is engaged in attempting to transform his vision of a dance into reality. Closely related, and often the same person as the choreographer-perceiver, is the director-perceiver. In order to attempt to reveal an interpretation of the meanings that the choreographer-perceiver envisages, the director-perceiver must have some grasp of *both* the overall structure of the dance work *and* its finer elements, as well as of the particular dancers involved in making that dance.

All three types of perceivers that form this grouping I call ‘actor-perceivers’, once again to underline my view that action and perception are not separated over a gaping chasm, but rather that in action, the human being is always already involved in perceiving, and vice versa. I do reverse the order of the terms actor and perceiver in my chosen terminology, since I do admit that one of the pair could be claimed to be more overtly dominant than the other in each grouping. My point, however, is to underline the idea that perception is an action and action is a perception, and that in dance as an art this idea can be brought into relief.

So how is it that actor-perceivers *make* the dance in the sense of being a series of self- and other-reflecting mirrors? In the same way that the revised mirror metaphor was applied to the first grouping of perceivers, I believe the dancer, choreographer and director are all involved in this (imperfect) perception and action that is, I think, well-illustrated by the idea of the half-silvered, beflcked and sometimes broken mirror.

The argument presented in this article emphasizes the value of the modified mirror metaphor in highlighting the contextual situatedness of those involved in the perception of the artwork, as well as rejecting the idea of perception as passive, in a way that a traditional mirror metaphor is unable to do. Yet the use of metaphor should be acknowledged as providing only a partial, and never a total, understanding of a concept or idea. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003, p. 10) point out, ‘the very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another ... will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept.’ Does the application of the revised mirror metaphor to theatre dance as I have presented it occlude any aspects of the perception of dance? As has already been mentioned in a footnote, the metaphor could be said to be limited in terms of its predisposition towards privileging the ocular dimension of human sensibility. The perception of dance as an art is certainly not limited to the visual, but is rather a multi-sensory experience, engaging, for example, the auditory sense in the hearing of the music, the noise (or lack of noise) created by the dancers moving on a stage, the whispering of other audience members, and so on. This concealment of the multi-sensory nature of the perception of art notwithstanding, it is still, as I have shown, particularly rewarding to employ a revised mirror metaphor to understanding the nature of the perceivers of dance.

Conclusion

This article has drawn upon some key ideas from Dewey’s philosophy of art, most pertinently his idea that the work of art is really what the dance event does *within* experience, i.e. that art is the quality of a thing or event. In an attempt to explore this point, the article considered various kinds of perceiver involved in dance as an art, arguing that the role of each of these perceivers can be fruitfully explored by means of exploiting a specific metaphor – that of the half-silvered, imperfect and beflcked mirror. Although I have shown that the revised mirror metaphor still suffers from at least one possible deficiency (the privileging of the ocular), the revised metaphor of the mirror has been shown to be fruitful in the context of understanding the audience of dance considered as art. The point was to show that the mirror metaphor does not need to be considered as hostile to a contextualist view of the perceiver, and that it in fact can be complementary to approaches to art that deny the hegemony of the “I” of the Western cogito’ (Mercer 1996, p. 165).

Notes

1. The use of metaphor is naturally not only limited to our attempts to understand art, but is also widely applied in our attempts at understanding other phenomena. Richard Dawkins’s ‘selfish gene’ metaphor is one example of an instance where a metaphor has been used (and admittedly widely criticized) in the context of biology. What is significant, I think, is that the metaphors used in any of these contexts are only useful to the extent that they are thought to reflect the reality they are meant to represent.

2. As I discuss presently, the definition of dance I use in this article is admittedly narrow, specifically for the sake of clarity and brevity. This does not, however, mean that my conclusion cannot be extended to a broader definition. I discuss some of the difficulties involved in defining dance in Botha (2013).
3. Since perceiving any art form is a multi-sensory experience, I use the word perceiver purposefully to avoid the privileging of the ocular that result from the use of words such as 'viewer' or 'observer.' This privilege accorded to the ocular in Western discourse is problematic for another reason – it 'assumes that the visual world can be rendered knowable before the omnipotent gaze of the eye and the "I" of the Western cogito.' (Mercer 1996, p. 165).
4. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed historical overview of the use of the mirror metaphor in the philosophy of art. Consult, for example, Abrams (1971), who provides a detailed and useful tracing of how the mirror metaphor has been applied specifically in terms of the conception of art as imitation.
5. It is not the aim of this article to discuss the history of representationalism and criticisms of it, but rather to focus upon how a revised mirror metaphor can indeed provide a fruitful means of understanding the perception of art. In this context Hubert Dreyfus (1991) provides a development of the phenomenological critique of representationalism that was inaugurated by Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the context of the philosophy of mind that is particularly clear and useful.
6. There are exceptions to the generally negative appraisals of the use of the mirror as a metaphor. Jacques Lacan's (1977) influential work on the 'mirror stage' as a stage in the development of the human infant as being representative of a permanent structure of subjectivity in human beings is one example of such an attempt. Lacan's postulation of a mirror stage has, however, been heavily criticized, with a number of theorists drawing their evidence from more recent experiments. See, for example, Mahler and McDevitt (1982), and Lewis and Brooks (1985).
7. I do not engage in a critical discussion of Dewey's aesthetics in this article, since my aim is to draw upon selections of his work to enhance my attempt at rehabilitating the mirror metaphor. For discussions of some of the problems that emerge from aspects of Dewey's position, see Gauss (1960) and Haskins (1992).
8. Tain, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, refers to the tinfoil that lines the back of a mirror – a dull surface without which no reflection would be possible (The Compact Oxford English Dictionary 1991).
9. See Malin (2012, p. 129) for an explanation of the half-silvered mirror and its applications.
10. I do not discuss Dewey's characterization in detail here, but rather only draw upon those elements that I consider particularly insightful in terms of understanding the nature of the audience conceived of in terms of a revised mirror metaphor.
11. Although I do not here discuss the points of difference and similarity that emerge between these thinkers, Dewey's view is, I think, highly compatible with the ideas of both Heidegger and Gadamer in terms of his also proposing a (proto-)contextualist type of view of understanding. Dewey says, for example, that human beings' tendencies of 'observation, desire and emotion are shaped by prior experiences' (Dewey 1934, p. 122). See Jeannot (2001) for an in-depth discussion of the points of confluence between Dewey and Gadamer.
12. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a full discussion of the position of either Heidegger or Gadamer. However, it should be noted that contextualism should not be interpreted as being a relativistic position, nor as functioning within an arbitrary framework. As Hoy (1982, p. 69) notes, from a contextualist position, 'Since no context is absolute, different lines of interpretation are possible. But this is not radical relativism since not all contexts are equally appropriate or justifiable.' See Scott and Sallis (2000) for an excellent overview of such a position.
13. It should be noted that this kind of reading poses a challenge to George Dickie's (1984, see also 2003) assertion that the 'artworld' is determinant of what art is. Like Dewey, I think that in attempting to provide philosophy with an 'objective' means of delimiting the realm of art in the manner of Dickie, a great deal of contemporary art has become unapproachable to those outside the so-called 'artworld,' something that Dewey vehemently resists (Granger 2003). For Dewey, art should not be placed 'on a pedestal' (Dewey 1934, p. 5).

14. Herbert Blau's (1982, 1990) call to consider performance always 'at the vanishing point' is accommodated by my reading here.
15. See also Dewey (1934, p. 71).
16. In addition, as Wildschut (2008, p. 238) points out, Martin's 'presupposition that watcher and dancer experience the same emotions has been abandoned' by theorists who draw upon his thinking.
17. It is beyond the scope of this article to engage in a discussion of the debate between theorists such as Martin who claim that an inner autonomous self interprets the dance, and neuroscientists, who propose that selfhood is continually re-forming in response to the dance. Although I grant that the basic idea that perception 'involves the co-operation of motor elements even though they remain implicit' (Dewey 1934, p. 53) seems reasonable, it is certainly tempting to blithely draw upon current research in this area, making conclusions that go beyond what the research allows. Susan Leigh Foster (2010) provides an excellent discussion, as do Stevens and McKechnie (2005). They point out, for example, that the experience of dance cannot necessarily be squared with the experience of other forms of movement, such as gesture communication. Warburton (2011) also provides a detailed discussion of recent research in this area, and its applications and limitations when considering the perception of dance.
18. This approach accommodates Bennett's (1997, p. 16), claim that distance is 'intrinsic to art.' The distance does not need to be a physical distance between the traditionally conceived audience and artist or artwork, since when critically appraising his dancing, the dancer, for example, stands at a metaphorical distance from his dancing.
19. To avoid any stylistic awkwardness resulting from the use of paired pronouns, I choose to use the masculine pronoun throughout this article. I leave quotations by other authors in their original format.

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