

A Divinely Tolerant Political Ethics: Dancing with Aurelius

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ABSTRACT: Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* constitutes an important source and subject for Michel Foucault's 1981 lectures at the Collège de France, translated into English as *Hermeneutics of the Subject*. One recurring theme in these lectures is the deployment by Hellenistic/Roman philosophers such as Aurelius of the practice and figure of dance. Inspired by this discussion, the present essay offers a close reading of dance in the *Meditations*, followed by a survey of the secondary literature on this subject. Overall, I will attempt to show that, despite Aurelius's self-consciously critical comportment toward dance, dance nevertheless performs a critical function in the construction of what I will term his "political ethics." This political ethics, I will argue, is composed of an ethics of patient tolerance funded by the generosity that flows from the micro-political power generated by cultivating the god (or daemon) that Aurelius identifies within each of us.

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I. DANCING WITH AURELIUS'S DANCE WITH SELF

In the following reading, I attempt to “reverse engineer,” as it were, a pattern in Aurelius’s text which led me (as a dancer and choreographer for the last twenty years, and despite Aurelius’s overt deprecations of dance) to recognize powerful dance resonances there. More specifically, I will claim that Aurelius’s thought in the *Meditations* is dance-like insofar as it is an ethics of tolerant patience that intersects (or engages in a partner dance) with a politics of self-deifying generosity. Throughout, I will use Martin Hammond’s recent (2006) translation unless otherwise noted.³

Beginning with the ethical partner in this dance, the word “tolerance” (according to the OED) comes from the Latin *tolerare*, meaning “to bear, endure,” and “patience” derives from the Latin *patior*, meaning “to suffer.” And moving to the dance’s political partner, “generosity” derives from the Latin *generosus*, meaning “of noble birth, noble-spirited, of good stock or breeding (of animals or plants), superior.” Thus, the phrase “tolerant generosity” is a dynamic unity, a kind of partner dance between ethics and politics, patience and generosity. And the synergistic effect of this partner dance is a political ethics along the lines of: “nobly enduring one’s capacity to suffer from the strength of one’s superior spirit.”

Another reason to think that Aurelius’s ideal here is dance-like is that it could be appropriately described as the enactment of a virtuosic performance—like a skillful dancer in a partner dance—facilitated by the self-fulfilling prophecy of acting as though one is as politically powerful as the gods, and can therefore be divinely generous. Put differently, as the embodiment of Roman political power, Aurelius models here a kind of perpetual-motion machine of ethical creativity—comparable to dancers’ beautification of their dances through loving patience, enabled by their perception of their own prowess, showered on each less-experienced partner.

Both partners in this ethical-political dance take the stage as early as Book I of the *Meditations*, in Aurelius’s lengthy discourse of overflowing gratefulness to his various relatives and instructors. This discourse, that is, shows that the secret of patient tolerance lies in remembering one’s dependence on, and indebtedness to others, even though they also often try one’s patience and treat one unjustly. In this way, this first gesture—in the dance-like performance that is the *Meditations*—sets a tone of excessive gratitude, on the part of no less a personage than the Roman Emperor, the most powerful person in the entire Western world, and as expressed in a personal notebook intended for his eyes alone. In other words, his gratitude overflowed from his self-directed imperial power.

One might object that the *Meditations* are not in fact dance-like insofar as Aurelius was writing to himself, and would thus appear to lack a partner. Many dances, though, are “solos,” performed alone. Additionally, Aurelius’s dance does involve

partners in two important respects. First, there are his loved ones and teachers to whom he here expresses gratitude (like the choreographers who compose a solo dancer's routine). Second, there are his previous versions or performances of self whom he meets whenever composing a new diary entry or reviewing the previous entries (like a dancer watching recordings of prior performances in order to perform even better the next time). In this way, one might say that Aurelius-as-danseuse claps hands with his various teachers and past selves-as-danseurs, who thereby lift him into more perfect future positions.

This grateful discourse of Book I begins with Aurelius's grandfather, who shares Marcus's original second name, *Verus* (Latin for "truth"), thanking him for (in part) his "mild temper" (i.1). This mildness is connected, first, to the (patient) ethical partner of Aurelius's ethical-political dance, followed (in the third paragraph) by its (generous) political partner (in that he praises his mother's "generosity," and generosity presupposes excessive interpersonal power) (i.3). Re-uniting these partners in one sentence, one could say that one should channel, in a thankful spirit, that which is generously offered to oneself into a mild comportment toward others.

Much of the rest of Book I can be understood, using Pierre Hadot's term, as a series of "improvisations" in this ethical-political dance. The first such improvisation, located near its beginning, is found in an entry devoted to one of Aurelius's numerous teachers, the Roman (Junius) Rusticus. Widely regarded as one of the foremost Stoics of his era, Rusticus taught Aurelius "to be readily recalled to conciliation with those who have taken or given offense" (i.7). Notice here that, in addition to the popular idea that one should forgive those who have "trespassed against" one, Rusticus added the more demanding requirement that one should also patiently reconcile with those who feel offended by one, whether or not one was actually in the wrong. And this frequently amounts, of course, to pretending that one was in the wrong oneself, in what might be termed the delicate dance of intimacy and forgiveness.⁴

The second improvisation on this dance appears in Aurelius's next act of thanksgiving, directed to his Stoic philosophy instructor, known as Apollonius of Chalcedon (in Asia Minor). Apollonius, Aurelius writes, taught, through "his living example, that a man can combine intensity and relaxation" and also "not to be impatient in explanation" (i.8). The former instruction (regarding intensity and relaxation) could be understood as referencing the (political) partner of power-funding-generosity, combined with its (ethical) partner of flexibility-funding-patience. And the latter instruction (regarding patience with questioning) implies that the one who patiently answers another's questions possesses the political power and authority necessary to occupy the institutional role of teacher. Here, that is, one finds a generously patient dancing pedagogy.

The third improvisation on this ethical-political dance, from yet another of Aurelius's philosophy instructors, derives from the Stoic philosopher Sextus (who hailed from the municipality of Chaeronea in ancient Greece). In this case, Aurelius thanks his teacher for two different things which correspond, separately, to the ethical partner of the dance I am describing and that dance's political partner. Regarding, first, the political dimension, the first thing Aurelius mentions regarding Sextus is "a kindly disposition" (i.9). Being kind is often contrasted with "being nice," such that the former seems (comparatively) strong, deep and autonomy-respecting, while the latter appears (comparatively) weak, superficial, and potentially manipulative. The political point here is that when we say someone is "being kind," the implication is that s/he has the power to be cruel, and that the exercise of kindness is to some degree both effortful and altruistic.

As for the second, ethical, moment in this entry devoted to Sextus, Aurelius also thanks the latter for teaching him "tolerance of both ordinary people and of the emptily opinionated," which (as with Rusticus's advice above) goes beyond the commonplace ethical imperative of being patient with ordinary folks, to the much more difficult imperative of being patient with those who boast false knowledge (i.9). Here, then, Sextus describes the ethical complement to what one might call a metaphorical social dance in one's local community (which often includes literal social dancing as well), wherein one's partners (both metaphorical and literal) include both the pleasant and the insufferable.

The fourth dancing improvisation, from Aurelius's grammar instructor Alexander, is "not to leap on mistakes" (i.10). Although the text of the *Meditations* was written in Greek, Aurelius's native tongue was Latin, so it is possible that, before he physically penned the Greek word for leap, he first imagined the Latin equivalent, *saltare*, a word which also means "to dance" (as exploited in Hegel's pun at the beginning of his *Philosophy of Right*).⁵ Inspired by this possibility, perhaps it would be helpful to put this quotation in the following dancing terms: it does no good (not for oneself, nor one's partner, nor the dance, nor the dance's surrounding community) to harp on every mistake one's partner makes. On the contrary, one should patiently allow such mistakes to contribute their own singular forces to the flowing river of the dance, perhaps allowing them to stir up captivating whirlpools and exciting rapids. In this connection, moreover, the *Meditations* itself occasionally invokes river imagery, in what W. O. Stephens interprets as a debt in Aurelius to Heraclitus.⁶

In the fifth improvisation of Aurelius's grateful dance, he writes that he learned, from Alexander the Platonist, "rarely to say or write to anyone that 'I am too busy'" (i.12). Keep in mind, again, that the person thus admonishing himself is the most powerful person in the Western world, who thus had the best imaginable excuse for saying "I am too busy," but who nevertheless directed this awesome power to the patient work of affirming the importance of his peoples' problems. This point,

then, puts the priority of political generosity, the political partner of Aurelius's dance, in stark relief.

In the sixth of these improvisations, Aurelius writes that the Stoic professor Cinna Catulus taught him "to speak of one's teachers with wholehearted gratitude," along with "a genuine love for children" (i.13). In this way, Aurelius introduces a "meta" level to this broad plane of thanksgivings—that is, thanking a teacher for teaching him to be thankful to teachers—which retroactively explains Book I's very existence. Put differently, Aurelius's generous patience with Catulus, one of his (obviously) numerous teachers, enabled him to realize and affirm the importance of patient gratefulness to teachers per se, which in turn enabled him to profoundly internalize and embody his various teachers' insistence upon patience to the dramatic degree illustrated in this text. In short, Book I of the *Meditations* can meaningfully be understood as a kind of self-reinforcing, virtuous circle dance of patient generosity.

The seventh and longest improvisation, though, is dedicated to Aurelius's adoptive father, the Roman Emperor Antoninus, and begins with "gentleness" [*hemeros*] followed by (ironically from a contemporary perspective) "putting a stop to homosexual love of young men" (i.16). Alternatively, George Long translates *hemeros* here as "mildness of temper," while Gregory Hays has "compassion" instead.⁷ According to Liddell and Scott's lexicon, however, *hemeros* mean "tame, reclaimed, domestic" in reference to non-human animals, "cultivated" in reference to trees and—in metaphorical extension to humans—"gentle, civilized."⁸ The advantage of Hammond's choice of "gentleness" then, is that it hearkens back to the first and foremost attribute sought in animal breeding (to prevent the domesticated animal from injuring humans).

Antoninus also apparently practiced what he preached on this topic, since Aurelius commends him for not being "particular" when it came to "youthful beauty in his slaves" (i.16). Perhaps, though, given the caveat here of "young," and given Antoninus's position as emperor, Aurelius's point here is less about the homoerotic per se, and more about the potential abuse of power inherent in pederasty in general, or even ruler/slaves pederasty in particular. An important part of the dance, in other words, is to know with whom to dance, and when to refrain.

The grateful first book of the *Meditations* closes with Aurelius's thanking the gods for providing him with all of these aforementioned teachers, with honorable mentions going to the philosophers Apollonius, Rusticus and (Claudius) Maximus (a Roman Stoic philosopher and statesman) (Hammond 129, endnote to i.15). It seems significant, finally on this point, that Aurelius earlier celebrates two of these three philosopher-teachers (as I noted above) for emphasizing this ethical-political dance of generous patience, which further buttresses the already-evident importance of this dance.

Further supporting this dance's importance is the fact that Book II opens on the same scene, spotlighting the ethical partner of the political power lavished generously on Aurelius, as just recounted in Book I. "Say to yourself first thing in the morning," he begins, "today I shall meet people who are meddling, ungrateful, aggressive, treacherous, malicious, unsocial. All this has afflicted them through their ignorance of true good and evil" (ii.1). Note that the second trait in this series, "ungrateful" (also used in Long's and Hays's translations) is the exact opposite of the virtue Aurelius has just performed so intensely in Book I. Similarly, the third trait here, "aggressive" is the opposite of the virtuous tolerance that both features prominently in Book I and is also performed here by Aurelius.

"But I have seen," Aurelius continues, "that the nature of the offender himself is akin to my own . . . a sharing of the same mind, the same fragment of divinity" (ii.1). Aurelius therefore concludes that he "cannot be harmed by" these offenders, nor can he "be angry with my kinsman or hate him" (ii.1). On the contrary, "We were born for cooperation, like feet"—suggestive, in the larger context of the *Meditations*, of the skilled feet of a dancer—which entails for Aurelius that "to work in opposition to one another is against nature: and anger or rejection is opposition" (ii.1). Note here that Aurelius explicitly appeals to divinity to "endow" his ethics of patience (in the dual sense of "logically justify" and "psychologically empower").

In the next paragraph, however, Aurelius turns to a polemic—repeated throughout the *Meditations*—against the body, and by implication against dance as well. "Now the flesh," he writes, "you should disdain," offering the following example: "breath is: wind—and not even a constant"; and dance, for which proper breathing is vital, is centrally a work of the body (ii.2). In another 180-degree turn, however, Aurelius in the next paragraph affirms the gods in terms of "the spinning and weaving together of the threads governed by Providence," and spinning is (as noted above) linked to dance (ii.3).

Later in Book II one finds a similar juxtaposition of dance-denigrating and dance-affirming moments, beginning with Aurelius's observation that there is nothing "more miserable than one who is always out and about, running round everything in circles," followed, paradoxically, by his observation that "all things have been of the same kind from everlasting, coming round and round again" (ii.13, ii.14). The dance connection here lies in the (pejorative) going round in circles, close enough to touch, as it were, the (valorizing) coming round again of the cosmos.

This juxtaposition can be found, a third time, at the end of Book III, which inaugurates a new pattern-variation built on the ancient metaphor, already prominent in Plato's *Laws*, of "the puppet-strings of impulse" (iii.16, Book 1: 644d). Specifically, at several different points in the *Meditations*, Aurelius makes a pejorative reference to "puppet-strings" and then almost immediately makes an

affirming reference to “the thread of fate” (iii.16). The common, dancing thread here is the “string” or “thread” as such, which, in addition to being repeatedly connected to dance in Plato’s *Laws* (Book 1: 644d, Book 2: 658c, Book 7: 804b), is later incorporated by Aurelius himself with dance, in the following: “puppets dancing on their strings” (vii.3).⁹

The fourth example of the broader denigrating/affirming juxtaposition also constitutes Aurelius’s first explicit mention of dance in the *Meditations*. Found at the beginning of Book V, this mention is prefaced by Aurelius’s rebuke that he “does not love” himself, as evidenced by the fact that, while others “love their own pursuit and absorb themselves in its purpose,” Aurelius criticizes himself as follows:

You have less regard for your own nature than the smith [*toreutes*] has for his metal-work [*toreutikein*], the dancer for his dancing, the money-grubber for his money, the vainglorious [*kenodoxos*] for his little moment of fame [*doxarion*]. Yet these people, when impassioned, give up food and sleep for the promotion of their pursuits: and you think social action less important, less worthy of effort? (v.1)¹⁰

According to Liddell and Scott’s lexicon, the former pair of Greek terms in this quotation involve “working in relief,” a sculptural technique in which metal (in this case) is carved away to give the impression that figures are raised up, emerging from the background (710). As for the latter pair of Greek terms, the lexicon defines *kenodoxos* as “vainglorious,” from *kenos*, which means “empty” (372), while *doxarion* is simply the diminutive form of *doxa*, and thus means “little opinions.” In combination, then, *kenodoxos* could be defined in something like the following way: “a person who loves little opinion because s/he is empty of her/his own.”

Note, therefore, the extremely negative company in which Aurelius places dance in this quotation. To be vainglorious is to be marked by a particularly petty vice. A “money-grubber” is a particularly odious subtype of the already problematically materialistic type “merchant.” And that which the relief artist loves is a mere illusion (making the viewer believe the metal is actively rising, instead of having merely been cut away). All three of these cases, then, involve a kind of superficial, excessive ornamentation (of artistic effect, wealth, and empty flattery, respectively). It is perhaps for this reason that Aurelius implies that none of these “pursuits” qualify as social action.

Many kinds of dance, however, are eminently social actions, including in ancient Rome. To clarify this fact, I will now offer a brief overview of ancient Roman social dances, followed by an analysis of the specific dances toward which Aurelius’s critique appears to be targeted. The social dances include the seasonal affirmations of rural Italian folk dances (including wedding dances), the social criticism provided by the *Atellenae* (or Oscan) farces and “Fescennine verses,” and the religious and political symbolism of “the exotic dance of the *Salii* (‘Leap-

ing Priests’)” (Griffith 27, 28, 29). Focusing on the example of the Fescennines, Richard Beacham relates Horace’s account of their part in the Italian farmers’ holiday recreation.¹¹ He describes it as an annual, dance-accompanied “earthy abuse,” which eventually “became cruel, and soon overtly savage,” until finally “a law was passed, with a penalty forbidding abusive slander in poems” (Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.139ff., quoted in Beacham 3). The Fescennines were also occasionally performed at weddings, and Beacham observes that “a possible derivation of the word itself suggests that they may relate to a form of black magic by which the phallus is evoked to ward off evil and ensure fertility” (Beacham 4).

As for the dances which Aurelius’s criticism appears to target, Beacham relates how Rome acquired its basic political structure from the same people from whom it had acquired its earliest theatrical dance. “Earliest Roman society,” Beacham explains, “had been modeled on the Etruscan division between an all-powerful aristocracy” and “everyone else: slaves, peasants and craftsmen, as well as artisans, dancers, and musicians” (Beacham 13, emphasis added). Eventually, a Roman middle class emerged, whose members included professional dancers, and who gained political power through “urban commerce” (14). On the one hand, for the conservative aristocracy, “such things were viewed with suspicion, as morally threatening and not legitimately ‘Roman’”; but on the other, since “argument and oratory could be used to impress and win support” from the electorate at these events, “despite whatever moral reservation or antipathy they might have felt toward the theatre, ambitious members of the aristocracy had strong reasons for supporting it” (15, 16). Unlike in Athens, however, in Rome “drama was to provide entertainment, not enlightenment,” for example with the games known as the *Ludi Florales*, which Beacham describes as “a deliberate act intended to please” the masses (16, 18). Such games were also, he continues, “an expression and function of Roman religious life,” which were “directed by the aristocracy,” who “took on the task of determining divine will and laying down the measures necessary to fulfill it” (21). Unsurprisingly, therefore, even in its beginnings, Roman theatre became known for bawdry and escapist comedy rather than intellectual and politically engaged tragedy.

Also full of political relevance are the most famous genres of Roman theatrical entertainment, mime and pantomime, in which performers spoke, sung, gestured and danced. Originating in Greek culture, with names that mean “to imitate,” mime and pantomime were enormously popular and long-lasting, and were performed mostly by slaves whose “social status” was “even lower than that of dramatic actors” (Beacham 131). Consequently, they were looked on, by most of the aristocracy, with both aesthetic/moral contempt and calculated political interest. The Stoic Seneca (himself a tragedian) wrote that “‘the whole theater would resound’ with approval when some particular words of wisdom or insight ‘were acknowledged by general agreement to be true’” (Seneca *Dialogues* 9.11.8

and *Epistles* 108.8, quoted in Beacham 130–1). Cicero, for his part, “expected to gauge from comments at the mimes the popular reaction to Caesar’s death” (131). And returning to Marcus Aurelius, Beacham writes—thus further buttressing the present essay—that Aurelius “*tolerated* them, and showed favor to a mime writer, Marullus” (137). As Annette Lust notes, the latter was specifically due to Marullus’s satires, which would thus have more edifying potential than a typical work.¹²

As for pantomime (in Greek, “all-imitating”), Beacham explains that it “has its roots in the mimetic dance from which the earliest dramatic forms of tragedy and comedy probably evolved” (Beacham 141). Beacham’s survey of its influence merits quoting at length:

Livy records that performers who danced, but did not sing, were summoned from Etruria [home of the aforementioned Etruscans] in 363 BC to help in exorcising a plague. By the time of the second Punic war dance was a well-established feature of Roman life, performed not just by professionals but by members of the aristocracy as well, who evidently took it up with what some saw as an unseemly enthusiasm. Scipio Aemilianus condemned the mania of young people for dance, recording the dispiriting sight of some 500 boys and girls in a school performance; including even a twelve-year-old son of a noble house, dancing with castanets like some disreputable slave. (Beacham 141)

Later, dancers were even “expelled for a time in 115 BC along with other theatrical personnel,” although “the upper echelon continued to cultivate dancing and dancers” (141). Lucian’s famous piece, “On the Dance” is also dedicated to pantomime in particular, defending its intellectual, ethical and political worth against its detractors, in part due to what Augustus, himself an avid supporter, termed “pantomania” (145).¹³ Famous pantomimes were also caught up in career- and life-ending sexual scandals with no less than the emperors, including Nero (who was also himself an untalented yet self-aggrandizing pantomime) (147).

The political implications of this connection between dance and the ruler were enormous, since an emperor “by virtue of the *auctoritas* and *dignitas* of his person, as well as through patronage and personal charisma, could create awesome spectacles of mass appeal and engage in acts of potent demagoguery” (149). On this imperial note, and to return again to Aurelius, Beacham notes that the pantomimes’ “pay was curbed and their performances limited” by Aurelius, “who was perhaps ill-disposed to pantomimes because of the rumor that the Empress Faustina, consorted with them” (152). Overall then, this overview of ancient Roman dance offers a third reason to think that Aurelius, when he speaks of “dance” in the *Meditations*, does not mean dance in general, but rather the typical “low-brow” mimetic theatrical dance that his fellow moralists agreed posed a threat to Romans’ political virtue.

The fifth example of this pejorative/affirmative juxtaposition is found in Book VI, where Aurelius first denigrates “jerking to the puppet-strings of impulse,”

only to affirm shortly thereafter that “Up, down, round and round are the motions of the elements, but the movement of active virtue follows none of these . . . it is something more divine, and it journeys on to success along a path hard to understand” (vi.16, vi.17). The same could be said for the frequent complexities of dance choreography. Book VI also contains the sixth example of this negative/positive juxtaposition, in which Aurelius derides the “puppet-strings of impulse” right before affirming how “one thing follows another in due order through the tension of movement” (vi.28, vi.38). As in the previous case, one could define choreography as “the set of tensions whereby one movement follows another in due order.”

The seventh example of this general juxtaposition, and the second example of the more specific impulsive/cosmic juxtaposition, is found in the beginning of Book VII. There Aurelius’s pejorative reference to “puppets dancing on their strings” is followed in the next sentence by his advice that, “amid all this, you must keep yourself tolerant” (vii.3). This use of a metaphor explicitly linked to dance in both Plato and Aurelius (as I noted above), in the context of Aurelius’s ethics of tolerance, further buttresses my claim that this ethics is intrinsically connected to dance. One might object, however, that even if there is a dance connection here, it is an entirely pejorative one, and thus constitutes no reason to believe that dance is positively connected to Aurelius’s ethics. Not far below the preceding quotation, however, the following additional dance-connoting moment appears, and this one is at least implicitly dance-affirming:

Keep on saying to yourself: ‘I am a limb of the composite body of rational beings.’ If, though, by the change of one letter from *l* to *r* [*melos* to *meros*], you call yourself simply a *part* rather than a *limb*, then you do not yet love your fellow men from your heart: doing good does not yet delight you as an end in itself; you act still as a mere duty, not yet as a kindness to yourself. (vii.13)

The dance connection here is the conjunction of “limbs” and “love,” since dance arguably involves a loving movement of the limbs (whether the love in question is directed to one’s partner, one’s fellow dancers, dance per se, or even life itself). Rephrasing the above quotation in this light, one could say that we humans are all the flesh of the same cosmic dancer, engaged in the same dance for the love of it, and to such a degree that not loving any other participant in this dance entails a fundamental lack of kindness on our part.

The eighth negative/affirmative juxtaposition in the *Meditations* (and the third impulse/cosmos juxtaposition) is found later in Book VII. After yet another reference to the “puppet-strings of impulse,” Aurelius makes an intriguing dancing/wrestling comparison (vii.29). “The art of living,” he writes, “is more like wrestling than dancing, in that it stands ready for what comes and is not thrown by the unforeseen” (vii.61). Admittedly, Aurelius’s original description is not inac-

curate regarding wrestling (in that Aurelius does not present not-being-thrown as a sufficient, but rather as a necessary, condition of being a good wrestler). This description is still inadequate, however, to dance (especially partner dances such as contemporary Latin club dancing or Contact Improvisation). In both of these two dances, being prepared to react appropriately to one's partner is essential, as is not being thrown (often literally) by the partner's unexpected movements.

I will return to this passage below when I consider a similar analogy in the *Meditations* in which the boxer (which, along with wrestling, comprised the original Greek sports), is favorably contrasted with the gladiator. For now I wish to observe that this passage, overall, constitutes the fourth moment in the *Meditations* in which it is clear that Aurelius is not thinking of all dancing, but only something like a voyeuristic relationship to dances. By contrast, Aurelius would perhaps be willing to concede that other kinds of dance (such as salsa or Contact Improvisation) might serve as well as, or even better than, wrestling as a metaphor for this political ethics of generous tolerance.

The ninth example of this negative/affirmative juxtaposition stretches from the last paragraph of Book X into the first of Book XI. What makes it unique, however, is that Aurelius alters both the nature of this juxtaposition and also the order in which its terms are presented. Specifically, although a reference to "puppet strings" still comes first, this time it refers to the positive phenomenon of rational action. As Aurelius puts it, "what pulls the puppet strings is that part of us hidden inside [*Memneso hoti to neurospastoun estin ekeino to endon egkekrummenon*]: that is the power to act" (x.38). Although Aurelius's emphasis here is clearly on this hidden agency (rather than the puppet strings), his claim nevertheless implies that these strings cannot be bad in themselves, insofar as they are merely tools of that hidden agency. Problems only arise, then, if someone else is pulling one's strings—when one is, to quote two popular sayings, "dancing to someone else's tune," rather than "to the beat of one's own drum."

Right afterwards, however, as if Aurelius were anxious, perhaps feeling that he granted too much here to these dance-connoting "puppet strings," he explicitly denigrates dance yet again, contrasting the shortcomings of "a ballet or play or suchlike, where any interruption aborts the whole performance," with the positive way in which, "in every scene and whenever it is cut off the rational soul has its own programme complete and entirely fulfilled" (xi.1). Aurelius is perhaps referring here to the ancient Roman phenomenon of "instauration," whereby if the play was in some way interrupted, or there was the smallest omission or mishap, it had to be repeated from the beginning just like any other formal religious ceremony. (Beacham 21). Note that Aurelius's explicit linkage here of dance to theater constitutes a fifth justification in the *Meditations* for interpreting Aurelius's hostility as directed exclusively to certain (theatrical, voyeuristic) kinds of dance. Any non-narrative kind of dance, on the other hand—i.e., any dance

which is complete in any moment (such as the easy gyrations of the audience at a reggae performance)—would seem to be, in fact, an exemplar of the rational soul for Aurelius.

In other words, one could divide dance into two genres: the narrative and the non-narrative. The former, under which one could include most art dance (including operatic, balletic, modern and postmodern dance), involves a linear performance through time and space, and any moment of such a dance is dependent upon the rest of the performance/choreography for its meaning. In terms of the preceding account of ancient Roman dance, this would correspond to the dances at the *Ludi Florales*, mime and pantomime. The latter genre, however, under which one could include most social dance (like at a wedding or house party), involves a non-teleological performance inhabiting a vague region of space-time, and any moment of such a dance is a relatively spontaneous movement independent of any other such movements. In ancient Rome, this would include rural Italian folk dances, the *Atellanae* farces, and the Fescennine verses (among many others).

In Book XII, finally, between Aurelius's tenth and eleventh such positive/negative juxtapositions Aurelius introduces the (similarly dichotomous) boxer/gladiator contrast that I mentioned above.¹⁴“The model for the application of your principles,” Aurelius writes, “is the boxer rather than the gladiator. The gladiator puts down or takes up the sword he uses, but the boxer always has his hands and needs only to clench them into fists” (xii.9). There are two important points here for my purposes. First, what is at stake in both this dichotomy and the wrestler/dancer one above is not so much dancing per se, but rather the superiority of participatory Greek sports to theatrical Roman ones (with wrestlers and boxers as the Greek exemplars and dancers and gladiators as the Roman ones). Second, we dancers too “always have” our feet, and “need only” begin the dance anew.

Lest the reader conclude, however, that this latter point is merely a glib and opportunistic association, I will now conclude my interpretation of Aurelius by identifying a new pattern in this dancing “string” or “thread” of various pejorative/valorizing juxtapositions. For Aurelius, (a) the puppet strings that, in her/himself, the Stoic must wrest away from mere impulses in order to choreograph them into the Stoic's own rational course of action, are—in virtue of humans' shared divinity—(b) the same strings which pull almost everyone else with whom the Stoic interacts. Most of these people will be unwilling or unable to control those strings. (c) The centrally important ethical-political consequence of this is that the Stoic must channel her/his god-like powers of self-control into dancing patiently and tolerantly with those others. To buttress my conclusion, I now turn to the secondary literature on the *Meditations*.

II. DANCING WITH AURELIUS'S OTHER INTERPRETERS

The most influential contemporary commentator on the *Meditations*, as Foucault agrees, is the aforementioned French historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot. Hadot's overall interpretation of the *Meditations* is that it consists of a set of variations, "sometimes executed, with supreme virtuosity, on a small number of fundamental themes" in Epictetus (201).¹⁵ As I explored in detail above, this metaphor of variations is particularly useful (given the intimacy of dance and music) in explicating the dance-resonance of Aurelius's work. As for the themes from Epictetus on which Aurelius improvises, Hadot argues that they consist of three types of disciplined judgment—"desire and aversion," "action," and "assent" (201). And "these three areas (*topoi*) of exercise correspond," Hadot explains, "to the three aspects of philosophy as it is lived and experienced," that is, the three major divisions of philosophy for the Stoics (logic, physics and ethics) (193). It should be noted, however, that the nature and relationship of the parts of philosophy, and three types of discipline, are much debated among scholars of Epictetus.¹⁶

To clarify Hadot's claims, it might therefore be helpful to consider his interpretations of Epictetus and Stoicism in general. Hadot claims that for Epictetus, "philosophy consisted in explicating the texts of Zeno and Chrysippus, the founders of the school," and "above all in practicing" the "way of life peculiar to the Stoic School" (73). For Hadot, the Stoic school "was born of a fusion of three traditions: the Socratic ethical tradition, the Heraclitean physical and 'materialistic' tradition, and the dialectical traditions of the Megarians and of Aristotle" (73). Similarly triadic is the division into the "dialectics, physics, and ethics" branches of philosophy, which Hadot claims the Stoics inherited from Plato's Academy (78). On the other hand, Hadot claims that the Stoics "transformed" this division "completely" by leveling off the Platonic hierarchy therein, since all three branches for the Stoics are "related to the same *logos* or divine Reason" (78). Additionally, according to Hadot, the three divisions "mutually imply one another," in that the "perfect exercise of any one of these disciplines implies that of all the others" (78). In short, "logic, physics, and ethics are distinguishable when we *talk about* philosophy, but not when we *live it*" (82).

As for Epictetus in particular, Hadot identifies the central theme of his *Discourses* as "the three activities or operations of soul," namely "value-judgments (*hypolēpsis*), impulses toward action (*hormē*), and desire (*orexis*) or aversion" (83). These in turn correspond for Hadot to "three forms or domains of philosophical exercise," "disciplines," or "topics" [*topoi*]—even though the latter word "was traditionally used by the Stoics" to "designate the parts of philosophy" (87–8, 90). Hadot also divides all three branches (dialectics, physics, and ethics) into discourse exercises (or theoretical or intellectual exercises) and "lived" exercises (90). According to Hadot, these two levels are clearly linked by Epictetus, specifi-

cally through pairing assent with logic (as “lived logic”), and impulses with ethics (as “lived ethics”), though Hadot concedes that Epictetus does not take this to what Hadot argues is its logical conclusion, namely pairing desire with physics (as “lived physics”) (90, 91). Hadot’s explanation of how this latter pairing could work is that “the lived practice of the discipline of desire implies, in the last analysis, a specific attitude toward the cosmos and nature,” specifically an attitude wherein one “understands that events are necessarily linked to one another by the will of universal Reason” (91, 92).

I thus return to Hadot’s mapping of the three exercises onto the three disciplines. On the one hand, at the lived level, all three disciplines for Hadot “are but three aspects of one activity, which Epictetus calls ‘the right way of using (*chrēsis*) representations’” (II, 19, 32; 22, 29) (Hadot 93). On the other hand, at the pedagogical level, the student must first be taught to discipline his desires away from the “worries, agitations, and grief” (III, 2, 3) caused by misunderstanding the true nature (*physis*) of the cosmos and our place in it (94). In addition to reducing suffering, Hadot claims that the latter (theoretical) understanding also entails the (lived) experience of “enjoying the spectacle of the entire universe, and looking at the world with the vision of God himself” (95). In short, for Hadot the “discipline of desire consists in re-placing oneself within the context of the cosmic All, and in becoming aware of human existence as being a part, one that must conform to the will of the Whole, which in this case is equivalent to universal Reason” (99). Hadot’s separate monograph on Aurelius’s *Meditations*, *The Inner Citadel*, mentions dance multiple times, albeit briefly, primarily in the two chapters devoted to two of Epictetus’s aforementioned three judgment-types. The first chapter deals with “the discipline of desire” (or Stoic physics), and the second, with the “the discipline of action” (or Stoic ethics). “In order to execute a song or dance,” Hadot explains in the former chapter, “we need to perform each of these units in succession” (134). The reference here is to an important passage in the *Meditations* in which Aurelius advises himself to analyze dance into frozen moments, specifically in order to free himself from dance’s seductive powers (xi.2).

Hadot’s paraphrase of this passage, however, is entirely inaccurate from a dancer/choreographer’s perspective. Dances are not, as Hadot suggests, learned in the form of separate frozen moments, like the individual frames of a film-strip, but rather as movement phrases, moves, or steps. The primary difference between these two styles of learning is that the “units” in the former are timeless mathematical abstractions, while the latter have what Bergson calls “duration.” Hadot thus gets closer to the truth of dance experience when he writes, a few pages later, that such “units” of dance “do have a certain thickness, however slight it may be” (147).

Later on the same page, however, Hadot again misconstrues dance in claiming that dances “reach their goal only when they are finished,” as opposed to “moral

activity,” which for him “reaches its goal in every instant when it is accomplished” (147). In many actual dance experiences, on the contrary, the goal is precisely to be fully alive in each moment of dancing, each being satisfying and fulfilling in itself (what Aristotle describes as the end-in-itself activity of “being-at-work” [*energeia*] as opposed to a mere, utilitarian “process”).¹⁷

Similarly dance-negative is an early comment in Hadot’s chapter on the “discipline of action” which criticizes what Hadot terms “frivolity” (186). He describes frivolity as the “vice which is opposed to the discipline of action,” and as the “opposite to that seriousness or gravity” which is characteristic of the discipline of action (186). In addition to the fact that dance seems frivolous to many people today, the specific connection between dance and frivolity appears in Hadot’s description of the latter as “the agitation of a jumping jack, a puppet, or a top” (186), since all three of these figures have been deployed as metaphors for dance, as I noted above.

Later in this chapter on the discipline of action, however, Hadot pivots in a dance-affirming direction. First, he acknowledges that, insofar “as the very exercise of action is an end in itself, one could compare moral action to dance” (195).¹⁸ Hadot immediately retreats, however, in the very next sentence. “In dance, however,” he writes there, “the action remains incomplete if it is interrupted” (195). Perhaps this ambivalence toward dance was inspired by the similar ambivalence—and the similar pattern of dance-negativity and dance-affirmation—that I explored above.

Hadot swings back toward dance-affirmation on the next page. Hadot claims that Aurelius’s “concentration on the present,” which he views as Aurelius’s primary innovation vis-à-vis the Stoicism of Epictetus, “gives a harmonious form to life, just as, in a dance movement, one passes from one graceful movement to another” (196). Not only is Hadot here describing Aurelius’s primary contribution in terms of dance, but he is also (albeit belatedly) accurately and positively describing the *actual* units of dance, namely complete, discrete, perceivable, real-time movements. In other words, in the same moment in which Hadot condenses, summarizes, and affirms Aurelius, Hadot also (and for the first time in this text) accurately and positively evokes dance. And this simultaneity, in turn, supports my above contention that dance holds similar interpretive potential for the *Meditations* itself.

I will now consider the work of several other scholars who engage with Hadot. John Sellars’s engagement with Hadot, in a book entitled *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy*, is primarily critical.¹⁹ As Sellars’s title suggests, his overall project is to show that the Stoics are above all concerned with engaging in an art (in the Greek sense, *techné*) of living, more specifically “performative art like dancing” (74). As for Sellars’s engagement with Hadot, he begins by objecting to Hadot’s conception of spiritual exercises as “a radical change

in being” (*un changement radical de l'être*) (112n23). Instead, Sellars agrees with Jonathon Barnes's assertion that a Stoic exercise is “a piece of ordinary common sense” (as illustrated in the following expression: “if you want to ride a bike, then you should get pedaling”).²⁰ More importantly, Sellars also objects to Hadot's claim that for Hellenistic/Roman philosophers these exercises and philosophy were synonymous. “For the Stoics, at least,” Sellars counters, “philosophy is an art in which such exercises form but one part” (116).

Sellars's most important contribution vis-à-vis the present essay, though, is his dual emphasis on (a) the Stoic affirmation of the Heraclitean metaphysics of constant flux, and (b) the concept of the soul as a kind of pneumatic tension (*tonos tou pneumatatos*) (151–2). Regarding the latter, Sellars elaborates as follows:

According to Stoic physics, all physical objects involve two basic principles (*archai*), matter (*hyle*) and breath (*pneuma*). This breath (*pneuma*), itself material, pervades all physical objects and the qualities of any particular object are due to the tension (*tonos*) of the breath (*pneuma*) within it. . . . A higher degree of tension would generate more complex qualities such as self-movement. In fact, the Stoics outline four distinct categories of pneumatic tension: a state of cohesion (*hexis*), nature or growth (*physis*), soul (*psyche*), and rational soul (*logike psyche*). . . . There is no substantial difference between these four types of physical entity and the hierarchy is purely one of increasing degrees of tension (*tonos*). (124–5, transliterated)

For Sellars, all of this means that “the Stoic conception of the cosmos is always more biological than theological” (152–3). In addition to agreeing with this conclusion, I would add that this Stoic conception is highly dance-resonant.

Note, first, the etymological connection between tension (*tonos*) and tone, suggesting the musical analogy, so prevalent in the ancient world, of the soul as a kind of harmony. Souls are “tuned,” according to this analogy, to the right “tone” for the “toned” bodies of dancers. “Just as a physical exercise,” as Sellars elaborates, “will improve the tension in one's muscles, so a spiritual exercise will improve the tension in one's soul” (125). More specifically, Sellars continues, “the way in which a Stoic spiritual exercise will work is by an increase in the tension (*tonos*) of the breath (*pneuma*) that constitutes the material soul (*psyche*)” (126). Does this not sound very much like a dancing exercise, one designed to make the soul, through highly toned breath, dance?

In addition to being a major influence on Sellars's critique of Hadot, Foucault is the only Aurelius scholar thus far (whose work is available in English) to have devoted significant attention to Aurelius's discussions of dance in the *Meditations*. For reasons of space, however, I will make do with just two (of the many) interesting moments on dance in Foucault's lectures. First, Foucault refers to what he terms a “striking example” in Aurelius which “involves musical notes, or dance movements, or movements of that more or less danced gymnastics, the panca-

tium” (301). Foucault is mistaken here, however, in describing the pancratium (or “pankration”) as a kind of danced gymnastics, because it was an Ancient Greek sport that combined boxing and wrestling—a no-holds-barred competition in which only biting and eye-gouging were forbidden, a much closer analogy to which, in today’s world, would be mixed martial arts (MMA).

Foucault’s mistake here was presumably facilitated by Aurelius’s own linkage of pankration to dance and music, in an analysis which Foucault summarizes as follows: when “you see a graceful dance or pancreatic movements, try not to see them as a whole, but try as far as possible to” isolate “each movement from the others” (301). In the original text of the *Meditations*, however, while Aurelius names the parts of music as “individual notes,” and the parts of dance as “movement” and “pose,” he does not, by contrast, name the parts of wrestling at all, nor does he refer to wrestling’s parts as related to dance (Hammond 105–6, xi:2). It is not obvious, therefore, that Aurelius considers pankration to be dance-like, nor that he considers it as being constituted by movements or poses (any more than he would presumably consider it to be made up of musical notes); more likely candidates for pankration’s parts would be throws, punches and kicks.

Although it is certainly understandable that Foucault would make this inferential leap (from (a) wrestling and dance both being seductively entertaining composites to (b) wrestling being composed of dance-like movements) he leaps too far, over a critical moment for dance in the *Meditations*. More specifically, Foucault elides the fact that, by placing pankration alongside dance as problematically seductive activities, Aurelius thereby blurs the line between pankration/wrestling and dance. And this blurring becomes crucial later in the *Meditations* when Aurelius contrasts dance unfavorably with wrestling (with, surprisingly, Foucault’s blessing) as potential metaphors for Stoic ethics. In other words, in light of Aurelius’s blurring of his own dance/wrestling distinction, it is not necessarily the case for him that wrestling is simply good and dance is simply bad. Rather, if wrestling has its flaws, then dance by implication may also have its virtues.

On this positive note, I now turn to the second moment from Foucault’s lectures that I will consider in regard to Aurelius and dance. Foucault relates the following metaphor in Seneca (as described by Foucault) which I will term, following Foucault, “the pirouette of emancipation”:

I draw your attention to Seneca’s interesting metaphor, which is well known moreover and refers to the pirouette . . . philosophy spins the subject around on himself, that is to say it performs the action by which, traditionally and legally, a master freed his slave. There was a ritual gesture in which the master turned his slave around on the spot in order to show, to demonstrate and effectuate his freedom from subjection. (213)

For Foucault, then (and perhaps for Seneca as well), one could say that the slave is, in a sense, danced or pirouetted into freedom (to use the technical French term from the vocabulary of classical ballet), in a kind of dancing equivalent to J. L. Austin's concept of the speech act. That is, just as two people saying "I do" to each other in a wedding ceremony constitutes a performative enacting of their marriage, in the same way a master leading his slave in a final dancing turn constitutes a performative enacting of that slave's freedom.

This metaphor also partakes (perhaps unconsciously) of the trope according to which "revolution" is central to both dance (etymologically) and political rebellion (literally)—as captured most concisely in Emma Goldman's famous claim (paraphrased by Alix Shulmen) that "a revolution without dancing, without 'beautiful radiant things,' [is] not worth fighting for."²¹ The reason for this connection, arguably, is that both dancing and political revolution involve a kind of discipline that, to put it in a concise formula, "activates bodies into turning things around." Put differently, both dancing and political revolution channel physical and psychological energy into activities which might seem chaotic and disruptive at the micro-level, but which at the macro-level reveal themselves as strategically deploying a kind of discipline that restructures existing relationships.

Like Foucault, and like Hadot (who is listed in his works cited), Panos Eliopoulos also connects Stoic ethics to politics. In "The Concept of Non-Violence in the Philosophy of the Imperial Stoa," Eliopoulos argues that "there is a significant turn to the recognition of non-violent values" in the Stoics, as well as an "effort" that is "grounded on benevolent and mild action" (28).²² Eliopoulos contrasts this Stoic value with the cultural context of imperial Rome, in which, he writes, violence "prevailed in all forms, either in public or in private life, as part and particle of Roman imperialism and of the general attitude of contempt toward human life," including the very gladiators that Aurelius criticizes in the *Meditations* (28).

According to Eliopoulos, Aurelius in particular (among the Stoics in general), analyzed "the concept of non-violence from a moral, not a political perspective," even though Eliopoulos notes that Aurelius was obviously (as emperor) "incorporated in Roman military and political life" (28–9). By "political" here, however, Eliopoulos seems to mean macro-political, as opposed to the kind of micro-political dimensions that I identified above in Aurelius's ethical thinking. Later in this essay, however, Eliopoulos appears to broaden the scope of the term "political," writing that Aurelius shared in the "Stoic conviction" that "all political questions, including peace and non-violence, must be considered as moral questions" (29). In this conclusion, Eliopoulos perhaps unintentionally echoes Hadot's similar conclusion, from *The Inner Citadel*, that, "the only true politics is ethics" (306).

Of particular relevance for the present essay, moreover, Eliopoulos's concluding section introduces my own favored adjective for Aurelius's ethics. More specif-

cally, Eliopoulos mentions “tolerance” just before he insists that “the Stoic cannot accept the violent proliferation of their ideas or the violent expression of them” (39). In other words, there is a political ethics not just for the content, but also for the form, of Stoicism, and both involve tolerance. Consequently, insofar as Aurelius’s text is explicitly self-directed (following Hadot, Sellars, and Foucault), the *Meditations* seems an ideal vehicle for a tolerant exhortation of tolerance.

Andrew Fiala’s “Stoic Tolerance,” finally, also explicitly links the ethical concept of tolerance in the Stoics to the arena of the political.²³ Fiala’s strategy for making this connection is to try to “shift” a discussion he finds in the secondary literature “from the question of political toleration in order to focus on the moral question of toleration” (150). Almost immediately, however, Fiala acknowledges the difficulty in making such a shift. For example, he claims that, while the Stoics conceive of “an idea of equality before the law that prefigures modern political thought,” it is nevertheless “notoriously difficult to identify something like a natural right that would limit state intervention in Stoic political thought” (151). In this way, Stoic thought appears to resist the attempt to completely purify the natural-ethical of any trace of the political. For another example, Fiala notes that “Stoics are ambivalent about politics in general because they realize that a life of quiet contemplation might be the only life that allows for freedom” (151). How, then, can one transition from the political sphere to the ethical sphere, when it is unclear to what extent the Stoic thought even concerned itself with a separable sphere labeled “politics”?

Fiala’s definition of “tolerance” also suggests these difficulties. First, he claims it involves a “negative judgment” about something (Fiala 152). But positive and negative judgments are inevitably formed and shaped in a political community of interacting judges. Second, he refers to the “power to negate” the thing, but power is perhaps the quintessential political concept (152). Perhaps for such reasons, then, Fiala ultimately appears to shift back to politics, claiming that the “Stoic virtue of tolerance is useful politically to the extent that it allows us to pursue justice in a more rational fashion” (150). In other words, tolerance is not inherently/actively/constructively political, but rather clears the way (so to speak) for an ideal model of justice as fairness. In my view, however, the ethical-political connection inherent in the concept of tolerance goes all the way down. To see how, I now conclude with a brief thought experiment.

III. CONCLUSION: A DIVINELY TOLERANT DANCE

To condense further the preceding argument for my thesis—that Aurelius’s *Meditations* offers a dance-like political ethics of patient tolerance and divine generosity—imagine, if you will, finding yourself on a theatrical stage, as a life-sized puppet from which long strings rise into the rafters. Now imagine that, on this

same stage, there are a number of other life-sized puppets, whose sole important difference from you is that their strings are all being controlled by one indifferent puppeteer, whereas your strings are wrapped around a beam above the stage and dropped back down and attached to the top of your head (such that, by moving your head in complex ways, you control the movements of the rest of your body). Now imagine, finally, that the puppeteer always keeps some music playing, and continuously makes the other puppets dance to it. There you are, suspended from the artificial heavens, bound by strings to a stage that is your only possible home, and all of the other puppets are dancing. What, then, should you do?

Before you answer, consider that you are armed with two vital truths, namely that (1) you alone have the god-like (or puppeteer-like) power to move yourself, and (2) the other puppets are essentially the same as you except for their being powerless to resist the puppeteer. The only rational and politically virtuous course of action, according to Aurelius, is to channel your (quasi)divine power into the patience necessary to—as beautifully as you can, with the other puppets, who after all share that same spark of divinity—dance.

NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005).
2. On another dance-related note, Mark Griffith locates this concept of “the god within”—in Greek, *enthusiasmos*—in the ecstatic state of the dancing “performer of epic scenes and his audience,” as illustrated in Plato’s *Ion*. See Mark Griffith, “Telling the Tale,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 18–9.
3. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. Martin Hammond (New York: Penguin, 2006).
4. See, for example, Harriet Lerner, *The Dance of Intimacy* (New York: Harper, 1989). It also seems significant that, in our patriarchal culture, women are more often willing/able to effect this reconciliation than men (with the latter too entrenched in our foolish masculine pride) without which reconciliation any peace between the sexes would be impossible. Thus, the most important part of what Aurelius learned here from Rusticus is a self-effacing virtue stereotypically identified with, and disproportionately forced in Western culture on, women.
5. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22.
6. See W. O. Stephens, *Marcus Aurelius: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 56–7. I am indebted for this observation to an anonymous reader of this article.
7. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. George Long (New York: Dover, 1997); and Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. Gregory Hayes (New York: Modern, 2002).
8. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon*, Abridged (Oxford: Simon Wallenberg, 2007), 305.

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9. For more on Plato on the philosophical relevance of dance, see Joshua M. Hall, “Re-attaching Shadows: Dancing with Schopenhauer,” *PhaenEx: Journal of Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture* 9(1) (2014), which includes a discussion of Plato’s influence on Schopenhauer in this regard.
10. I have modified Hammond’s translation here by substituting “vainglorious” for his problematic choice of “exhibitionist” to translate *kenodoxos*.
11. Richard C. Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).
12. Annette Lust, *From the Greek Mimes to Marcel Marceau and Beyond: Mimes, Actors, Pierrots, and Clowns: A Chronicle of the Many Visages of Mime in the Theatre* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 25.
13. Lucian, *Lucian V* (Loeb Classical Library), trans. A. M. Harmon (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).
14. The tenth juxtaposition involves one’s “encasing body” being “whirled around in the external vortex encircling us” is contrasted with making oneself “like Empedocles’s ‘perfect round rejoicing in the solitude it enjoys’” (xii.3). In the eleventh, a “mere puppet” is opposed to the “calm” of “the sailor rounding the cape” (xii.22),
15. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Blackwell, 1995).
16. John M. Cooper, for one, translates *topoi* as “themes,” emphasizes their connection to philosophical training (*askēsis*), and contextualizes Epictetus’s surviving teachings in terms of their function as evening exhortations to his adolescent students after a day of intense formal study. From this position, Cooper argues that logic for Epictetus is of tertiary importance, as a kind of self-defense (John M. Cooper, “Moral Theory and Moral Improvement in Epictetus,” in *The Philosophy of Epictetus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007]). In this, Paolo Crivelli concurs with Cooper, describing logic’s role for Epictetus as positive but “ancillary,” and explicitly rejecting Hadot’s mapping of desire, impulse, and assent to logic, physics, and ethics (Paolo Crivelli, “Epictetus and Logic,” in *The Philosophy of Epictetus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007]). In the latter, Crivelli follows Jonathan Barnes, who repeatedly criticizes Hadot, including for this mapping in particular (Jonathan Barnes, *Logic and the Imperial Stoa* [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 34). More radically, A. A. Long interprets Epictetus not as an orthodox Stoic, but as a Socrates-influenced innovator (A. A. Long, *Epictetus: a Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002]). To this Socratic influence, Malcolm Schofield also appends (in a review of Long’s book and elsewhere) a similarly vital Cynic influence on Epictetus via Diogenes (Malcolm Schofield, “Epictetus: Socratic, Cynic, Stoic,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 54[216] [2004]: 448–56).
17. For more on this important distinction, see Joe Sachs’s introduction to his *Aristotle’s Physics: A Guided Study* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1995).
18. In fact, Matthew Sharpe claims that the Stoics discuss types of “performative or praktikē technē like dance” (Matthew Sharpe, “Stoic Virtue Ethics,” in *The Handbook of Virtue Ethics*, ed. Stan van Hooff [Durham: Acumen, 2013]). A probable source for Sharpe’s reference to dance here is from Cicero’s *De Finibus*, book 3, chap. 7, §§23–25 (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), 243–5,

a dialogue in which the Stoic character named “Cato” compares “Wisdom” to dance, on the grounds that (a) every dancer has a particular dance assigned to her/him, and (b) dance like Wisdom has its “end,” “being the actual exercise of the art, contained within the art itself.” The character “Cato” also notes a disanalogy between dance and wisdom, however, in that, for dance, “a movement perfectly executed nevertheless does not involve all the various motions which together constitute the subject matter of the art; whereas in the sphere of conduct, what we may call, if you approve, ‘right actions,’ or ‘rightly performed actions,’ in Stoic phraseology *katorthōmata*, contain all the factors of virtue.” In Gisele Striker’s discussion of this passage in Cicero in *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1996), she concurs that this dance/art of living analogy is “plausible” given the self-containment of dance’ end (314–5). A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley also make brief acknowledgement of the analogy in their *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 399. Several more recent essays on *De Finibus* make no reference to the dance analogy. Brad Inwood, for example, barely even addresses the question of embodiment in general (see Brad Inwood, “*Rhetorica Disputatio: The Strategy of De Finibus II*,” *Apeiron* 23:4 [1990]: 143–64). Robin Weiss’s omission of dance is more surprising given that she discusses both embodiment and the Stoic art of living extensively (see Robin Weiss, “In Cicero’s *De Finibus*, an *Ars Vitae* between *Technê* and *Theôreia*,” *Epoché* 17[2] [2013]: 351–84). Like William H. F. Altman, however, Weiss helpfully emphasizes how the character “Cicero” rebukes the character “Cato” for neglecting the importance of the body in deference to virtue (see William Altman, “Tulia’s Secret Shrine: Birth and Death in Cicero’s *De finibus*,” *Ancient Philosophy* 28[2] [2008]: 373–93). To relate these discussions back to my analyses of Aurelius above, it seems that Cicero, too (like Aurelius) is referring to theatrical dance rather than social or folk dance, given the syntactic linkage of dancing and acting, and the reference to dance as an “art” rather than as a practice or event. And the disanalogy between dance and wisdom is arguably less appropriate for social dance, in that most couples at a social dance execute a relatively small repertoire of basic steps, and the entirety of such movements constitutes the entirety of the dance qua event. Similarly, for Cicero, an event of virtuous action contains every factor of virtue. And even in the case of theatrical dance, especially from a choreographer’s perspective, the perfect execution of a particular movement in a given dance implies the mastery of the entire vocabulary of that type of dance. For this reason, one expert dancer can usually identify another by observing the performance of even the most basic steps.

19. John Sellars, *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2009).
20. See Jonathon Barnes, *Logic and the Imperial Stoa*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 75 (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
21. See Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Shulmen (New York: Humanity, 1996), 15.
22. Panos Eliopoulos, “The Concept of Non-Violence in the Philosophy of the Imperial Stoa,” *Philosophy Study* 1:1 (June 2011): 28–40.
23. Andrew Fiala, “Stoic Tolerance,” *Res Publica* 9 (2003): 149–68.