

Dramatologies of knowledge?

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In 1923, Georg Simmel wrote in his essay “On the Philosophy of the Actor”: “‘Playing a role’ – not as sham and swindle, but as the manifestation of one’s own life in a form one has found, somehow pre-existing and pre-defined – is one of the functions that constitutes our actual life.”¹

There are two important turns within this description. First, Simmel is using a transformed concept of the theatrical; second, he attributes “life-constituting” powers to theatrical enactment. He portrays the theatrical as an overarticulated presentation of enactment, as a function which constitutes our actions in our daily lives. In this passage, acting becomes a mode of knowing social life.

Simmel’s philosophy is only one example of a broad interest in theatrical practices in the early 20th century, an interest my research investigates as a dramatology of knowledge. Using the concept of “dramatology,” drawn from Joseph Vogl’s “Poetology of Knowledge,” I aim to “correlate the emergence of new objects and areas of knowledge with their modes of representation,”² being, in this case, practices of the theater. This form of knowledge does not become knowledge until it goes through a process in which actions are taken. It is, more precisely, a dramatology of non-knowing or of “practical” knowledge. Practical knowledge, according to Andreas Reckwitz, is characterized by an “the ‘informal’, tacit logic of practices and the location of the social in practical understanding and know-how techniques; the materiality of practices as dependent on bodies and artifacts; [and] finally, the tension between routinization and basic incalculabilities of social practices”³

Practical knowledge continuously changes as it is applied, it does not allow much if any reflection about its own history and therefore contains many blind spots. It is form of knowledge assembled from many parts and it must *function* (Knorr Cetina 1999; esp. chapter 4). This kind of experiential knowledge was long dismissed as a “lower” form of knowledge, hardly worth historicization. Nevertheless, we are surrounded by it, whether in

¹ Simmel, Georg. 1968. “Zur Philosophie des Schauspielers.” In *ibid. Das individuelle Gesetz*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt/Main, 79.

² Joseph Vogl. 2008. *Kalkül und Leidenschaft. Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen*. Third edition. diaphenes: Zürich, 13-14.

³ Andreas Reckwitz. 2003 “Basic Elements of a Theory of Social Practices.” In *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 32/4, p. 282–301; 301.

microbiology, in management or in self-help books. And it is a democratic form of knowledge.⁴ Through best practice, complex processes and phenomena are popularized and simplified and thus made accessible to a large segment of the public. Experiential knowledge does not need a theoretical framework, it only has to work. Nevertheless, these forms of practical knowledge are not innocent or without consequences. To the contrary, in the course of the 20th century they have become part of a highly differentiated culture of self-optimization that also makes use of epistemological practices of the theater.

In the following, I would like to delve more deeply into this emergence of the dramatology of (non-)knowledge in the early 20th century, using the example of two research projects that focus on rhythm and dance in their attempts to optimize working procedures. I shall first outline the movement research done by the psychologist Fritz Giese, before moving on to Rudolf von Laban's practical linkage of dance and management in an economy of movement. Giese's theoretical analysis and Laban's practical research won their insights from epistemological practices of the theater and used these to manage human beings. As we shall see, the dramatology of knowledge is intimately connected to a marketization of the psychological, irrational, subjective, "human-centered" aspects of work. In the 1920s, this culminated in what could be considered a preliminary form of the human relations movement, a movement that took leave of molding people to the dictates of industrialization with the use of psychotechnology and discovered the "social man," the worker who regulates himself within the collective.

Labor, rhythm and knowledge

Dance, body work and work are all linked by one concept at the turn of the 20th century: rhythm. Everywhere, rhythm became synonymous with the new times, the new technical era, with its new media and its burgeoning traffic, factories and also new artistic concepts. One need only think of Walter Ruttmann's *Symphony of a Metropolis* or Adolphe Appia's stage sets, his "rhythmic spaces" for Emile Jaques-Dalcroze's Institute of Education in Hellerau, or Ludwig Klage's critical 1934 essay "Vom Wesen des Rhythmus" (On the Nature of Rhythm), a seminal text for the German gymnastics movement.

⁴ On this see also Thomas Macho. 2010. "Was tun? Skizzen zur Wissensgeschichte der Beratung." In Thomas Brandstetter, Claus Pias and Sebastian Vehlken (eds.). *Think Tanks. Die Beratung der Gesellschaft*. diaphenes: Zuerich: 59-85.

More than anything, the concept of “rhythm” united the rather undefined German *Körperkulturbewegung* (physical culture movement, literally “body culture movement”; see Wedemeyer-Kolwe 2004), a heterogeneous movement that included gymnastics (e.g. Louise Langgaard, Hedwig von Rohden), expressive dance (*Ausdruckstanz* – Rudolf von Laban, Mary Wigman) [Bild2] and rhythmic education (Jaques-Dalcroze, Isadora Duncan, Rudolf Bode, Franz Hilker), as well as somatic therapies (e.g. Bess Mesendieck, Hedwig Kallmeyer, Elsa Gindler, Gerda Alexander). These diverse strands of the larger artistic, musical and educational reform movement were all united by the concept of rhythm, a term which itself was not really defined (Wedemeyer-Kolwe 2004, on dance see in particular Huschka 2002; Klein 1992; Brandstetter 1995).

What they share in common – if I may dare to bring them all together – is that they all wanted to combine physical and emotional awareness, and elements of music and dance, to form a holistic, creative, free way of living. In other words, the rhythm of bodies moving in a group always also held the promise of each individual developing to his or her full potential, or the promise of a better life. At the center of this belief was the body, which became the site of utopian and socio-political visions, but also the site of knowledge. Exercise and training became modes of knowing.

Rhythm was thought of as a means to counter the deformation brought on by modern, technical-industrial civilization (Wedemeyer-Kolwe 2004). The German *Körperkulturbewegung* in particular saw itself as critical of the reigning culture. It was atheoretical, decidedly anti-intellectual and based on collective experience. Beyond the culture of words and writing, the rhythmic *Körperkulturbewegung* promised a new, ancient form of “immediate” communication that directly accessed participants inner beings through vibrations (Huschka 2002: 156). The rhythmic bodies themselves in turn allowed insight into psychological conditions. For example, dance critic and writer John Schikowski, in his 1926 essay “Geschichte des Tanzes” (History of Dance) wrote: “Dance is nothing other than the art of giving visible expression to mental conditions and processes through rhythmic bodily movements”(Schikowski 1926).

The idea was that these rhythmic movements could provide direct access to the “deepest instincts of nature” (Schikowski 1926). Our original nature can thus be read through movements, bearing and behavior. The concept of rhythm became linked to ideas about the liberation of the body together with the emancipation of soul and mind. At the same time,

rhythmic education was seen as an instrument of self-regulation that provided access to subjective psychological phenomena such as will, motivation, creativity, self-confidence and self-awareness, which in turn were seen as efficient mechanisms for controlling and disciplining the body. Training behavior was understood as training the body and vice versa. Within the *Körperkulturbewegung*, which made rhythm into a kind of mode of knowledge and into a self-regulation mechanism, the German psychotechnics movement also saw an opportunity to optimize working practices. From the end of the 19th century, the rhythm of work was a constant topic in this movement.⁵ It seemed absolutely necessary to synchronize human performance and the tempo of the new machines. The cadence, the rhythm of work moved to the center of varying attempts to rationalize labor. These concentrated in particular on optimizing the human factor in order to increase production, on adapting workers to the technical and organizational conditions. Within a fully rationalized technological working environment, the individual worker becomes the source of more productivity (Jaeger 1985: 98). Already in Taylorism, “human capital” was seen as the best guarantee of increasing production. But each individual’s way of working needed to be adjusted to fit a standard measure, calculated as the most energy-saving action. Frederic W. Taylor studied the movements and times of workers in industrialized mass production and measured their “rhythm,” that is the temporal structure of each working movement, in order to calculate exactly this measure.

Image: Gilbreth’s movement studies.

The “scientific management” (Taylor 1911) of mass production was based on studies of movement meant to calculate which work was necessary; its underlying concept was rhythmic efficiency. It’s goal was industrial labor processes that had been optimized as regards energy and time, a method of production that adapted individual ways of working to a norm – one standardized procedure for all.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a movement began in academia and industry in Germany – much more intensively than in other countries – that went by the name of psychotechnics (Stern, Münsterberg). It aimed to fit the human factor smoothly into the rationalized factory by screening for aptitude, vocational guidance for workers, and training. However as early as the 1920s there was talk of the crisis of psychotechnics, which itself ended up in the sights of rationalization efforts at the eve of the economic crash. At the

⁵ At the time, the standard work on this relationship was Karl Bücher’s *Arbeit und Rhythmus* (1899).

same time, there was an increasing focus on the “human side” (Giese 1927; 381) of rationalization, which was recognized as a problem: Weariness, lack of motivation, senselessness and monotony. Fritz Giese, a German psychologist and psychotechnician, saw the “necessity and opportunity to now, over ten years after the rise of psychotechnics in Germany, shed light on the human side of technical labor in industry and to use the results of this comprehensive exploration to further that branch of rationalization that is rooted in practical psychology (Giese 1927: 381). Hans Rupp, one of the leading German psychotechnicians, believed that psychotechnics should be expanded to act as a guide for living right (Rupp 1929). But not only in Germany, also in Great Britain – industrialization’s country of origin – and in the USA, a movement arose that wanted to put a more human face on the idea of rationalization found in scientific management. As early as the 1910s and ‘20s, and thus before the Hawthorne study – conducted in the 1930s and today considered the starting point of human relation management (Witzel 2012: 139-142) – there had been intensive research into the opportunities to perhaps be gained by the “management of people” (e.g. Mary Parker Follett, Meier Bloomfield and Ordway Tead).⁶ The budding field of psychology also played a decisive role in these new approaches. Ordway Tead’s “The Instincts in Industry: A Study of Working-Class Psychology” (1918) linked the new ideas of psychology (James Sully, William James) with the demand for a new style of management. Lillian Gilbreth, known for the time-motion studies she conducted together with her husband, Frank Bunker, also studied *The Psychology of Management* (1914) intensively. Rhythm played a central role in this discovery of the humane side of rationalization. Fritz Giese even made rhythmic movement his object of study in his research on the economy and labor. Giese not only links psychotechnical studies to movement studies (*Körperseele* 1924),⁷ he also, in his book *Girlkultur. Vergleiche zwischen amerikanischen und europäischen Rhythmus und Lebensgefühl* (1925; *Girl Culture. Comparisons of American and European Rhythm and Attitude towards Life*), uses a comparison of dance in Germany and the USA to show, in what is almost a discourse analysis, how movements constitute particular epistemological potential.

⁶ See for example the contributions in the 1916 *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. For a more thorough analysis of this development see Morgen Witzel. 2012. *A History of Management Thought*. Routledge: New York, esp. 133-139.

⁷ Pertinent studies by Giese include “Berufpsychologische Beobachtungen im Reichstelegraphendienst (Telephonie und Siemensbetrieb)” (1923); “Psychotechnisches Praktikum” (1923); “Psychoanalytische Psychotechnik” (1924); “Psychologische Massenprüfungen für Zwecke der Berufsberatung” (1924, co-authored by Emmy Lang); “Theorie der Psychotechnik” (1925).

Image 3: John Tiller Girls The Tiller Girls in front of a cityscape curtain in the show “An und Aus” (On and Off) by Herman Haller, 1926, in : Wolfgang Jansen, *Glanzrevuen der 20er Jahre*, Berlin 1987.

It should be mentioned that the Tiller Girls and other precision dance troupes were often seen as a paradigm of the new industrialized mass culture of the 20th century and of the “distraction” offered by entertainment. Siegfried Kracauer even voiced the opinion that the Tiller Girls ushered in a transformation of the way we see the body, no longer determined by the individual body, but by the mass composition which norms and commodifies the individual body. Costumes, synchronized movements and anonymity or exchangeability made the dancers, in Kracauer’s eyes, into a symbol for a faceless, commodified mass. The dancing girls, who have no erotic aura whatsoever, are ornaments of the revue.

Kracauer understood the Tiller Girl’s success as an expression of the Americanization of production, which forced people to conform to the assembly line rhythm of mass production.⁸

The women without qualities – each of whom should look more or less alike: the same “girlish” figure, costumed, so that the signs of hierarchies of class and age disappear – represented for Kracauer’s contemporaries on the one hand the emancipation of a young generation of women. On the other hand, precision dance was repeatedly referenced in cultural criticism to bemoan the de-individualization of society.

Giese in contrast compares “Girl culture” with the German gymnastics culture, based on “discipline, obedience, following orders and toughening the body for future wars” (Giese 1925: 10). But the women’s movement and the demand to train both men and women changed, according to Giese, this style of gymnastics and movement. “Girl culture” brought “consciousness” into each gesture. “Instead of signaling with extremities, instead of adapting the semaphore culture of cannon fodder, it is the will of the body. A culture of the body” (Giese 1925:11). Giese describes Isadora Duncan’s barefoot dances and Dr. Bess Mensendieck’s gymnastics, developed from François Delsarte und Genevieve Stebbins, as

⁸ On this see Siegfried Kracauer. 1977. *The Mass Ornament*. Trans. Thomas Levin. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA. Also Anne Fleig. 2005. “Tanzmaschinen - Girls im Revuetheater der Weimarer Republik.” In Sabine Meine and Katharina Hottmann (eds.). *Puppen, Huren, Roboter. Körper der Moderne in der Musik zwischen 1900 und 1930*. Edition Argu: Schliengen; Gesa Kessemeier. 2000. *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich: das Bild der ‘Neuen Frau’ in den Zwanziger Jahren; zur Konstruktion geschlechtsspezifischer Körperbilder in der Mode der 1920 bis 1929*. Edition Ebersbach: Dortmund; Jost Lehne. 2005. “Massenware Körper. Aspekte der Körperdarstellungen in den Ausstattungsrevuen der zwanziger Jahre.” In Michael Cowan and Kai Marcel Sicks (eds.). *Leibhaftige Moderne. Körper in Kunst und Massenmedien 1918 bis 1933*. transcript: Bielefeld.

originating from “free America,” whereby the “German spirit [... enhances] the American origins” (Giese 1925: 11).

Image Duncan

In his opinion, the peak of this movement was in “artistic solo dance or in the Laban-Wiegman groups” (Giese 1925: 12f). Standing on this peak, he sketches a “view of the breadth of practice” (Giese 1925: 13). Within this movement, he sees the possibility of a rhythmic, *Körperkultur*-oriented “question of the human being” even in Fordist and Taylorist production systems, through which Europe could rise to the heights of the dynamic American economy.⁹ In the final analysis, this is where Giese’s study is going. He sees rhythmic as a reform movement that puts people and their consciousness at the center of an all-encompassing social and economic interest. To him, they offer a way to understand and harness the changes in economic and social life. Giese believes not only that the body provides access to consciousness, but also that rhythm provides a path towards understanding modern society and its labor force and economy.

In this, Giese is in opposition to the German cultural pessimism that was the driving force for the gymnastics and *Körperkultur* movements. Instead, he sees the future in American “rhythm.”

Not that America is the be-all and end-all. But it does hold certain characteristics, exaggerated and coarsened by the economic situation, which are present in our own culture, which simmer and seethe under the surface and which will soon come to light. For this reason, for the sake of analysis, it is perhaps advisable to look at America to also understand those things that appear to be complementary to the official, techno-economic culture, marginal zones of being which however lead us to the core: the human being. One of these marginal zones is the man of freedom, of rest and of recreation; man in his private life. That which cannot be directly expressed in salaries or labor and production statistics, which cannot be observed in any Ford factory or Taylorized business, is revealed in things far from the place of labor. From the opportunities offered by the margins of culture, let us take dance, dance in dancing America.(Giese 1925: 14f)

⁹ “We Europeans find conflict in work. We see how work tears us apart, how it fragments us. [...] You don’t hear Americans complaining about this. These are problems that concern only theorists at their desks.”(Giese 1925: 130)

The rhythm of American dance is for Giese the expression of a “marginal zone” and he believes the analysis thereof promises insight into the new forms of labor under Taylorism. Giese traces the “unconscious elements” of the varying types of rhythmic movements.

His analysis is founded on a certain conceptual theory, namely that a person’s potential is revealed by rhythmic movements, by their “body language.” This language of behavior or, following Kracauer, this “surface-level,” presents the observer with material from which it is possible to “read” how a person will develop (Rieger 2001: 90). The body becomes an object of prognosis within an experimental setting which is the site from which the questions to be asked themselves must first be deducted (Rheinberger 2001) and at which the uncertain knowledge of what will come, of potential, shows itself. The body of rhythm, the rhythm of the body and its behavior have a direct correlation. Behavior is not only made visible by rhythm, it can also be controlled by rhythm. Giese believes such behavioral training by means of rhythm is only possible in the USA since in Europe critical talk of “character types” and individuality is ubiquitous, while in the USA “systems” are developed to incorporate the new conditions (Giese 1927: 91). He also observes an intensification of this phenomenon in the USA, which is not however opposed to collectivization. For Giese, “I” and “we” constitute one another (Rieger 2001: 93). In the USA, the self is formed within the collective, statistics and probability do not threaten the individuality of the self, but rather “figures are the first to give people their form, their face” (Rieger 2001: 93; on this see also Giese 1927: 87f).¹⁰

Giese thus sees rhythmic *Körperkultur* as a melting pot of individuals and society. He calls it an “attitude towards life, towards reality” (Giese 1927: 36). The key to a better life is in the body’s “attitude,” and not in a conscious decision or in the will. This suggests a conceptual theory which holds that enhanced individuality and quality of life is achieved by suspending that which was traditionally seen as the prerequisite thereof: rational, intellectual, reflexive thought. In this vein, the doctor and psychologist Willy Hellpach believes that psychotechnics in particular, through “transrationalization,” will lead to a deeper understanding of behavior, especially in the working world (Hellpach 1936: 104). “Rhythm” stands for this suspension of conscious thought in the name of discovering the individual potential of each person. This is

¹⁰ The idea that observing movements gave insight into the “life of the soul” of others was a widespread belief at the time, held also, for example, by the psychiatrist Max Isserlin (1910: 511). Further studies in this vein were undertaken in the field of phonetics as well. On this see Rieger 2001: 95-118.

not about understanding the subconscious, but about analyzing “surface-level expressions.” However this analysis of the surface level focuses on the “unconscious nature” not of the masses, but of each individual as a product of mass society (Kracauer 1995: 75) Rhythm research is thus, in particular for psychotechnicians and later researchers of labor, research on the “transrational,” “unconscious nature” of the social being.¹¹

This research on the performing body, whether undertaken by scientists or artists, focuses on rhythmic movements as a form of “unconscious” research, or on the practical example rather than theoretical knowledge. Fritz Böhme, a German dance theorist and dance critic and fanatic follower of Laban, wrote the following in 1926 about gaining knowledge through rhythm:

One rediscovered the violent force of rhythm, one became interested in possibilities of the primitive loss of the ego, one could see how the movement of the inner organs, their nutrients and their health was closely connected to this rhythmic force, but also with emotional forces. (Böhme 1926, cited in Huschka 2002: 88)

Even inner organs become instruments of learning more about oneself, based in the main on the “loss of the ego” experienced in somatic self-exploration. Rhythmics became a form of practical, experiential knowledge which could be gained only through affect and performance, and not through rationality. That this knowledge could also be used to spur the economy seems strange at first sight, since economics is usually thought of as a “rational” science based on figures and calculations and geared towards optimization and efficiency. Clearly psychotechnical research on the optimization of labor and the introduction of scientific management cleared a path, at least for management, of “transrationality” somatization, emotionalization and aestheticization that we can already observe in Fritz Giese’s work. This can also be seen in the ease with which Rudolf von Laban’s exercises and theoretical concepts of dance could be integrated into corporate consulting.

¹¹ However the unconscious in the Freudian sense was decidedly not at the center of this research, although there were certainly convergences. But what was later to become somatic therapy took as its starting point the fact that psychoanalysis largely ignored the body while it endorsed the idea of unconscious physicality. On this see Geuter 2006.

Laban's Economy of Human Movement

Image 6: Laban

Rudolf von Laban is well known as the pioneer of German expressionist dance, of modern dance and of Laban Movement Analysis. What is less well-known is that after emigrating to Great Britain, Laban, after observing industrial workers, especially women, developed a concept known as Modern Educational Dance (Knortz 2008). Earlier, in 1929, Laban had intensively studied the link between rhythm and work and had choreographed the Viennese pageant of trades and industry (Laban 1935: 174-187, Laban 2004: 376-407).¹² His research on the rhythm of labor went far beyond mere mimicry and its outcome was the performance of dancing rhythms of labor (Knortz 2008: 120f). Critics spoke of a study that “would be well-worth analyzing from an industrial psychology perspective” (Lieschke 1929) and compared the performance to an artistic “experiment” (today we might say “artistic research”) in the tradition of Karl Bücher’s 1899 work *Arbeit und Rhythmus* (Labor and Rhythm) (Jacob 1929). Laban’s central realization from the Viennese pageant was that, traditionally, dance is an expression of contentment with one’s work (Laban 1975: 75); an insight which he in the end turned around, claiming that dance could make people happy about their work (Laban 1951).

After relocating to Great Britain, Laban was able to build on his Viennese work. His student Kurt Jooss introduced him to Dartington Hall, whose owners, The Elmhirst family, were experimenting with forms of communal living, farming, and traditional handcrafts – together with art. Here Laban met Frederick C. Lawrence, one of Great Britain’s first business consultants. At the time, Lawrence was working on optimizing labor processes in industries vital to the war effort, in which more and more women were being employed. He saw Laban’s movement methods as a chance to train women in heavy industries. Paton, Lawrence & Co. hired Laban as a consultant (Knortz 2008: 124). Lawrence and Laban then developed a training method (for Tyresoles Ltd.) which utilized swinging movements meant to help women lift heavy weights (Laban, Lawrence 1942a). Laban and Lawrence departed from Taylor’s principle of using the most time-saving movement in favor of flowing movements meant to motivate workers (Preston-Dunlop 1998: 223). This approach achieved real increases in production (e.g. 30% at Glaxo Company; Davies 2001: 74). Their maxim was:

¹² McCaw, Dick. 2011. “The Pageant of the Trades and Crafts, Vienna, June 1929.” In Dick McCaw (ed.) *The Laban Sourcebook*. Routledge: London, 139-154.

“Bring that Swing and Lilt in Labour Which Makes Efficiency a Pleasure” (Laban, Lawrence 1942a).

Laban and his close colleague Lisa Ullmann then went on to develop more movement routines, including one for Dartington Hall (Davies 2001: 39ff).¹³ The results of this work were published in “Industrial Rhythm and Lilt in Labour” (Laban, Lawrence 1942b), the essay in which they also introduced “Industrial Movement Analysis,” an adaptation of movement analysis for occupational trainings. For Laban, the concept of “effort,” the “inner drive to move,” became more and more important (Laban 1935: 246). Workers should be motivated by their individual drive to move and be placed at the site that best fit that drive. For Laban, rationalization should start not with the least time-consuming or energy-consuming movement, but with satisfying each person’s inner drive to move, which would then “naturally” harmonize the individual with the group of now rhythmic women workers. On the one hand Laban and Lawrence built upon Taylor’s movement studies, on the other hand they searched not for the most energy-efficient (minimal) movement but rather for the “movement potential” within the individual and the group, and the way in which this could best be utilized in the working process. Quality, not quantity, should be more important. The “effort” of the individual’s movement preferences was for Laban the starting point of improved efficiency, and this was mirrored in the rhythm of each person (Laban 1951; Laban 1980; see also Hodgson 1990: 52), which at the same time reverberated within the group. If the “*inner rhythm*” was broken, Laban and Lawrence theorized, it led to production breakdowns. Each work flow must be designed so that it fit in with the individual’s rhythm and the group’s rhythm. „No absolute standard form can be fixed, no individual should be forced to do a job in a pedantically described way.” Rather the potential of each individual should be freed and utilized. “Freedom in the use of the limbs frees the nerves and therefore the mind from unnecessary tensions und distractions” (Laban, Lawrence 1942b: 11ff).

Laban’s exercises aimed to harmonize the demands of the rhythm of each work process with the person’s individual rhythm to avoid said “tensions and distractions” and to harmonize the “whole person” (Preston-Dunlop 1998: 224) and her movements with the group. Lawrence and Laban also paid close attention to the “Psychological Aspects of Effort

¹³ They worked for, among other companies, the foundry W.C. Holmes&Co. Ltd., for Hoover Ltd. and for St. Olave’s Curing and Preserving Co. Ltd. Laban later worked for, among others, Glaxo Company and Marsm and he trained Royal Air Force paratroopers as well as industries vital to the war effort such as Fort Dunlop. It was more than unusual to have a German working in sensitive wartime economy industries at this time, which shows the importance accorded Laban’s concepts.

Control“ (Laban and Lawrence 1947: 62-75), especially the influence of job satisfaction on productivity, whereby Laban believed it possible to increase satisfaction by working on individual habits of movement, or effort. Collective rhythmic movement is, for Laban, a direct regulator of motivation and thus of productivity. This thesis in particular lent itself to transferring Lawrence and Laban’s observations from industrial labor to office work. After the war, Laban and Lawrence founded the Management Training Institute in Manchester, where students such as Marion North and Warren Lamb continued Laban’s consultancy work. Laban’s student Warren Lamb went on to develop Movement Pattern Analysis (originally Action Profiling), a method of analyzing the non-verbal behavior of people in management positions to decipher their motivation, their decision-making skills and their ability to react (“action motivation”) in order to train their behavior and promote targeted “impression management” through the right behavior.

Image: Movement Pattern Analysis

It can be said that Laban, Lawrence and especially Lamb invented choreography of management (Lamb, Watson 1979, Lamb 1965, Moore 2005). In the humanization of management at the beginning of the 20th century, rhythmic movement seems to have offered a means of gaining physical, emotional and subjective knowledge for both management and workers. Movements were observed in order to analyze the surface level and gain insight into the psychological constitution of the other as well as of the self. These observations could be used in turn for economic gain through the self-optimization of the workers. Research and intervention meet in the idea of self-directed efficiency. At the same time, the concentration on the human factor within rationalization endeavors brought the irrational into the experimental setting. Observations of movement and self-optimization of movement revolved around an operationalization of affect, of subjective conditions such as inner drive (effort), motivation, the readiness to make decisions and satisfaction. The economic aim of “humane” work is an experimentalization of the uncertain, of non-knowledge; a tendency that will also lead to the development of processes such as assessment centers or the technique of systemic business consulting, two methods which I would like to touch on only briefly to outline their theatricality.

On the one hand, the assessment center process is based on the technique of group discussion and feedback. One not only observes, but presents one’s observations and compares them with those of others. The insights won in this process of self-observation and

observation by others are discussed in the group. Recalcitrant behavior that departs from the norm comes to the fore and can be self-regulated with the aid of feedback. This is an example of a proto-cybernetic concept of social and economic growth on the basis of information: the efficiency of the group increases as the knowledge increases that each member has about all other members.¹⁴ In the process of observation and evaluation, as well as in the reciprocal divulging of information, knowledge is assessed – in the meaning of estimated – in an act of knowledge generation that works to a great extent without norms and with the utilization of the irrational.¹⁵ The values thus generated, the “competencies”¹⁶ gained are in turn only estimated values, assigned dispositions. The “material” for the assessment is delivered by role plays based on impromptu theater as further developed by Jakob Levy Moreno. Moreno, an Austrian-American doctor, psychiatrist and sociologist, expanded improvisational theater and founded psychodrama as a type of therapy.

Image Moreno

In the 1920s, Moreno experimented with improvisational theater in Vienna and founded his own impromptu theater in 1921 (Horn: 120). Moreno saw himself as an adversary of Freud; his therapeutic role play was a decidedly *collective* technique meant to ground the individual in the social world. “Acting in Moreno’s sense thus becomes a cultural technique that inscribes and practices roles and identities and thus – as a form of therapy – normalizes behavior by making normalcy visible as an enactment” (Horn 121). For Moreno, “psychodrama is the method that finds a base for the truth of the soul through action,”¹⁷ with the goal of setting “human spontaneity” free while also integrating it into the community.¹⁸ Moreno’s idea of role play later influenced the development of role plays in assessment centers, particularly in the USA, as well as in other group psychology methods. While Laban used dance as a source of somatic knowledge and self-regulation, Moreno drew from another form of non-classical theater, the improvised poetic dialogue developed out of

¹⁴ Idem.

¹⁵ On similar forms of testing see Tom Holert. 2003. “Phantome der Norm und Heuristiken des Schlauseins. Die kulturelle Dimension kognitiver Arbeit im Post-IQ-Zeitalter.” In *Norm der Abweichung*. Marion von Osten (ed.). Edition Voldemeer: Zürich, 225-241; Majia Holmer Nadesan. 1997. “Constructing Paper Dolls. The Discourse of Personality Testing in Organizational Practice.” In *Communication Theory* 7: 189-218.

¹⁶ Competence is in turn a concept that was established by a student of Kurt Lewin before it became so popular in linguistics.

¹⁷ Peter Weibel. *Beyond Art: A Third Culture: A Comparative Study in Cultures, Art and Science in 20th Century Austria and Hungary*. New York: Springer, 2005) p. 529

¹⁸ Moreno, J.L.. 1997 [1959]. *Gruppenpsychotherapie und Psychodrama. Einleitung in Theorie und Praxis*. Thieme: Stuttgart, fifth edition; on the concept of “role” in Moreno see *The Sociometry Reader*, 1960; *Psychodrama*, 1964; *Psychodrama und Soziometrie. Essentielle Schriften, Edition Humanistische Psychologie*, 2nd edition, 2001.

the Commedia dell'Arte and abolished in the 18th century by theater reformer Johann Christoph Gottsched and even banned in Austria in 1752. This “wild” theater – the actors lines were emancipated from a script and often had a decidedly critical bent (e.g. the old-Viennese popular comedies, or the stock characters of the German travelling theaters) – could not be upheld in the era of bourgeois drama.

Image Sceno Box and Family Board (Kasperle)

The Sceno Box, developed by Gerdhild von Staabs in 1938, a precursor of Kurt Ludewig's Family Board and thus an important element in the family constellations method still used today in systemic consultation for organizations, is also based on one of these wild theatrical traditions, Kasperle Puppet Theater. Von Staabs was able to build on the work of the psychiatrist Heinrich Hoffmann, who had already established a link between psychiatric/medical interests and puppet theater.

Image Soup Kaspar

In 1844, Hoffmann introduced the the “Soup Kaspar,” the most successful chapter of the world-renowned Struwwelpeter. Hoffmann, who worked in the area of adolescent psychiatry as a senior physician at the Frankfurt Clinic for Lunatics and Epileptics, used the figure of Kaspar to introduce the formerly unknown condition anorexia nervosa to the public.

Thus we can see that theatric forms that did not draw from drama, opera and ballet – and were thus denied access to haute-bourgeois theater – played a key role in the dramatology of knowledge at the beginning of the 20th century, a time at which avant-garde theatrical movements were changing the concept of theater. From this time on, theater could be seen as an “autonomous art form” that “does not serve the mediation of another form, namely literature, but is guided by its own material which is fundamentally different from every other art form – by the human body in space” (Fischer-Lichte 2010: 8). At the same time, demands became louder to “close the gap between art and life and to lead theater into reality” (ibid.). This expansion of the concept of theater meant that “wild” forms of theater such as circus (Kafka) and puppet theater, but also political rallies, sports events or “street scenes” (Brecht) became interesting not only for artistic or political projects, but also for anthropology, sociology, (social) psychology and economics. Matthias Warstat has noticed an increased use of theater as a metaphor in early 20th century anthropology. Helmuth

Plessner and Carl Schmitt for example, use theatricality and power as an anthropological conceptual binary (Warstat 2005: 173).¹⁹

I would like to propose that this is not simply the use of a metaphor, but is a research strategy. My interest is not to make possible analogies between theater, the sciences and society, but rather to describe theatrical practices that generate a kind of knowledge which can actually be described as non-knowledge, and which aims at interventions in collective behavior. Here, as I shall explain more fully in my concluding remarks, we are dealing with theatrical research practices which go beyond text and writing, utilizing the body, affect and psyche to create a practical knowledge of the social that can be used to promote human management.

To make this thesis clearer, I would like to end with a closer look at a concept that acts as a placeholder for the epistemic object of the dramatology of knowledge: competence.

Competence and dramatology

The concept of “competence,” which today – importantly but not only in management methods – describes the epistemic object of a theatrical research practice, is a concept that denies attempts at objectification. It remains vague and delineates uncertain knowledge, non-knowledge, more than a clearly defined category. “Social competence” as defined by Roger White from the perspective of motivation psychology, describes skills which the individual has acquired through his or her own working; they are neither innate nor the product of trainings. They refer to a disposition for self-directed action and behavior, but themselves cannot be measured. Rather they are observed as they are performed and are attributed by observers.²⁰ Competence and performance belong together.²¹ That which can be observed in theatrical research practices thus cannot be separated from its performance. The object of research and the research thereof are mutually reinforcing. What is more, social competence is not first quantifiable in the performance of soft skills, but at the same time refers to the self-management of behavior in the sense of reacting adequately to a

¹⁹ Warstat, Matthias. 2005. “Theatralität der Macht. Macht der Inszenierung.” In: Erika Fischer-Lichte et al. (eds.). *Diskurse des Theatralen*. Francke: Tübingen, 171-190.

²⁰ White, Roger W.: »Motivation Reconsidered. The Concept of Competence«. In: *Psychol. Rev.* 66 1959. S. 297-333.

²¹ Chomsky, Noam. 1965. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge. Chomsky introduced the juxtaposition of the concepts of “competence” and “performance” in linguistics, from which beginnings the concept of performance in particular began its victory march into linguistics and cultural studies. However in this text I am interested not in Chomsky’s concept, but in early discussions of the concept of “competence” in psychology.

social context. One not only performs competence, but also concurrently manages this performance by assessing the performance of others.

This brings us to another important aspect of the concept of competence: it is addicted to the future. Observations in theatrical research or in management practices do not study the performances of people to show that they will be able to meet a particular challenge. Laban does not observe and assess the results of efficient sequences of movements. There are no objective benchmarks for doing so. Rather both observation and performance serve the aim of optimizing and steering possible future behaviors. Competence is therefore not really a parameter that relates to something which exists, but refers rather to an expectation of actors' or agents ability to act, a future enactment that can be improved in the here and now. The category of competence is a category of continuous becoming, of permanent self-improvement, of life-long learning. Competence, adequacy, can and must repeatedly be learned anew. The concept of competence holds the promise of closing the gap between status and demands (Haeske 2008), a promise found within assessment center procedures as well as in Movement Pattern Analysis – a technique in the tradition of Laban. At the same time the concept of competence holds the threat of not meeting diverse, continually changing demands (Gelhard 2012), a threat that keeps the wheels of training and consulting industries turning to this day.

Up until the 18th century, competence (lat. *competens*) denoted an authority vested by law or clerical office. However its meaning began to gravitate towards “*cum*” “*petere*,” a means of seeking for, desiring something, whereby only the performance thereof shows how and where self-regulation is needed, since there is no set, objective norm for “adequacy.” Performance is therefore the test that constantly and emphatically demands that we, in anticipation of the expectations of the other – the observer – measure, observe, and change ourselves.

In the interplay of competence and performance, practical knowledge is constituted. The assumption is that the object to be studied first arises in concrete practice (whether experimental, economic, kinesthetic, a psychological suitability screening, etc.), in action. This object of study does not refer to anything hidden, no innate ability, no “being” or “book of life,” but is constituted in relation to its environment through the research process alone and must continually be reconstituted with the aid of varying objects, artifacts and signs.

What I propose is an expansion of Joseph Vogl's concept of a poetology of knowledge so that it can be applied to the theatrical practices of the social constitution of knowledge through the self-regulation of actions as practiced beginning in the early 20th century. I call this concept the dramatology of (non-)knowledge. Vogl, building on Foucault, formulated his idea of a poetology of knowledge which stresses in particular the importance of literary fiction and narratives, for example the importance of the detective novel for the formation of the humanities in the 18th and 19th century.²² For Vogl, drama is part of the literary poetology of knowledge. For example in *Kalkül und Leidenschaft* (Deliberation and Passion), he describes the politics of power represented in the "state theater" of the 17th century (chapters 1, 16), as well as the "elements of a theatrical poetics of the Enlightenment" which he outlines using the example of 18th century poetics of pity (chapter 17). A dramatology of knowledge in contrast outlines the theatrical processes necessary to the production of knowledge. It focuses not only on the function of texts and monuments, images and machines, but also asks about the theatrical practices of the production of knowledge.

The term dramatology, introduced by Wolfgang Lipp to describe Ervin Goffman's sociological theory,²³ underlines the aspect of acting. Drama, (from the Old Greek *δρμα*) means deed or action and was, following Aristotle's poetics, often understood as a causal series of events with an end and a goal. For Goffman, the term "drama" stresses the activating, interactive aspect of theater.²⁴ Rather than focusing on logically connected series of events in time, Goffman emphasizes observation in a situation in which participants act and interact simultaneously. The spatial relation of actors is at the fore rather than the temporal order of events. The self is thus both an acting agent and at the same time interacts with other acting agents.²⁵ Dramatology denotes the relational generation of knowledge on the basis of actors' or agents (mutual) observations of situational actions. The objects of dramatology are found in enacted actions, in the observation of practices (*praxis* – from the Greek *πράξις*, practice, action, doing) which I call theatrical. The observation of enacted actions becomes in

²² Joseph Vogl. 1991. "Mimesis und Verdacht. Skizze zu einer Poetologie des Wissens nach Foucault." In *Spiele der Wahrheit. Michael Foucaults Denken*. Francois Ewald (ed.). 193-204.

²³ Wolfgang Lipp. 1984 "Kultur, dramatologisch." In *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 9/1+2: 8-25.

²⁴ Hitzler points out that one cannot call Goffman's dramatology a philosophy or anthropology, but rather a research strategy, which Hitzler terms "methodological behaviorism." Ronald Hitzler. 1991- "Goffmans Perspektive. Notizen zum dramatologischen Ansatz." In *Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationen* 20/4: 276-281; 277.

²⁵ "Which characters deal with one another under which conditions and in which settings, how well do those who are interacting play their roles, which scripts they are using and which audience do they speak to." Ronald Hitzler. 1992. "Der Goffmansche. Überlegungen zu einer dramatologischen Anthropologie." In *Soziale Welt*, 43. Jg., H. 4: 449-461; 458.

part a “research strategy” (Hitzler 1991: 277).²⁶ Dramatology thus refers not to a philosophy of human nature or an anthropology of the theater, but to the way in which knowledge is organized, an ordering of knowledge which makes a social “self” observable and in doing so, first constitutes this self.

²⁶ Ronald Hitzler. 1991. “Goffmans Perspektive. Notizen zum dramatologischen Ansatz.“ In *Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationen* 20/4: 276-281.