Moving towards Compassion: Butoh's Embodied Methods to enrich Śāntideva's 'Exchanging Self and Other' Meditation

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Together with my fellow movers, I am standing on one side of the dining room, currently functioning as a dance studio. It is 8 PM, our evening practice has just started. We have been in Hakuba for a few days now, a village in the mountains of Japan. The air is cool and pleasant. Our eyes are fixed on Maro Akaji, our butoh master, eager for his instructions. Our silence makes the excited tension tangible in the room. Then Maro's calm, deep voice starts talking in Japanese, immediately translated by the interpreter: "You will now swallow a horse." We nod, full attention. "You will first say your name, and then you will feel your sense of self dripping into the floor." We have practiced this earlier by looking at ourselves from a third-person perspective. We imagined sitting somewhere near the ceiling and looking at ourselves from there. "Then, you will close your eyes and imagine a horse hovering over you. When you are ready, you will open your mouth and slowly feel the horse entering into your body until it fills you up completely. No more you, just the horse." And so, we transform.

This exercise of becoming a horse is an example of a butoh exercise.[1] In this article, I explore how such butoh exercises, which center around ego-dissolution and embodied transformation, can be used to enrich a specific Buddhist meditation on compassion: Śāntideva's 'exchanging self and other' meditation.

[1] This is a description of Dairakudakan's Summer Intensive 2024, which took place from 27th of July until 4th of August 2024 in Hakuba, Japan.

Butoh is an avant-garde dance style that was developed by Hijikata Tatsumi, Ohno Kazuo, and their students in Japan, beginning in 1959.[2] Butoh emerged as a reaction to the cruelties of the second world war and the rapid westernization of Japan.[3] Its style is hard to characterize since its founders refused to define the dance, which nonetheless grew into a global movement, evolving different styles and ways of teaching.[4] Despite this, there are commonalities that occur in almost all strands of butoh. Visually, butoh can be recognized by its meticulously controlled, slow movements that are often very expressive, and by its use of absurd imagery. In addition, butoh dancers can often be recognized by white body paint.[5] Another commonality can be found in butoh's methods, which focus on transformation. The key idea is that the dancer undergoes a process of ego-dissolution, letting go of their experience of self, and using visual imagery to transform into something else.[6] The dancer can transform into anything: an ant, a cloud, another person, an emotion, or a whole city. This transformation is not a cognitive grasp of what being the visualized thing or person would feel like. Instead, the dancer lets their movements flow from the lived reality of having become the object of transformation. As scholar Bruce Baird puts it: the aim is to *become* someone or something, rather than to *act like* that person or thing.[7] This transformation can be seen as an "embodied transformation" in which the dance is influenced by an alteration of the dancer's inner reality.[8]

Butoh's focus on transformation and ego-dissolution aligns well with Buddhist philosophy, as has been argued by scholars such as Sondra Fraleigh, Tanya Calamoneri and Juliette Crump. These scholars have focused their research on the links between butoh and Zen Buddhism, presumably because Zen Buddhism is the most popular form of Buddhism in Japan. Scholars such as Susan Klein, Pao-Yi Liao, Tanya Calamoneri, and Juliet Crump have explicitly

[2] Vangeline, *Butoh*, 8-9, 20, 199.
[3] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 57.
[4] Fraleigh, "We Are Not," 467.
[5] Liljefors, "Butoh and Embodied Transformation," 99.
[6] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 173.
[7] Baird, *Hijikata*, 159.
[8] Liljefors, "Butoh and Embodied Transformation," 91.

addressed this link, by arguing that butoh has been indirectly influenced by Zen Buddhism.[9] Butoh emerged in mid-20th-century Japan, a time in which Zen Buddhism still played a major role in Japanese day-to-day life. This influence of Zen on Japanese everyday reality arguably also influenced butoh. The similarities between butoh and Buddhism that are explored in this article are, however, not limited to Zen Buddhism are also applicable to other strands of Buddhism.

A striking similarity between Buddhism and butoh is their shared emphasis on emptiness. In Buddhism, this emphasis is grounded in the metaphysical view that all phenomena are dependently originated and ultimately empty.[10] This means that although concepts such as the self are real on a conventional level, they are nonetheless empty on an ultimate level. Butoh shares this metaphysical conception of emptiness. This link is especially drawn by Fraleigh in her two books exploring the similarities between butoh and Zen Buddhism.[11] An example of her reflection is that she regards the exercise of the butoh walk (*hokotai*) as the embodiment of Zen Buddhist emptiness. In this exercise, the dancer first lowers their center of gravity by bending their knees while keeping their head up as if it were held by a string. Consequently, the dancer moves forward by taking slow gliding steps that barely leave the ground.[12] According to Fraleigh, this exercise enables the dancer to empty the self by getting rid of their ego and being moved by something, rather than moving themselves.[13] This emptiness in butoh should not be understood as something negative (an absence) but rather as the source of creativity. Fraleigh quotes butoh dancer Mikami, who says that "the moment the body becomes nothing, it begins to revive itself as everything universal."[14] This conception of

[9] Klein, *Ankoku Butō*, 67; Liao, "An Inquiry," 6; Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 86; Crump ""One Who Hears," 68.
[10] Lele, "Śāntideva."
[11] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*; Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness*.
[12] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*, 28.
[13] Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness*, 177-8.
[14] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*, 46.

emptiness as the gate to the "inexhaustible world of abundance" is, according to Fraleigh, similar to Buddhism.[15]

Another link between butoh and Buddhism is drawn by Calamoneri, who argues that Hijikata, one of the founders of butoh, is influenced by Zen Buddhism in his position that our "domesticated body" is blocked from perceiving true reality.[16] Calamoneri's comparison can be understood in the context of the Buddhist distinction between conventional and ultimate reality. Hijikata's standpoint seems to reflect that our conventional experience of the body as domesticated prevents us from seeing "true" or ultimate reality.

A potential argument against linking butoh and Buddhism, is that it risks lapsing into orientalist views by oversimplifying the complexity of butoh. This criticism is voiced by Nanako Kurihara, who writes that butoh and particularly Hijikata's work has been "essentialized and stereotyped" by western critics who are quick to emphasize butoh's 'Japanese' elements, including its connection to (Zen) Buddhism.[17] This risk of orientalism is also addressed by Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario. They give the example of Ishii Mitsutaka, a butoh dancer who only started advertising his butoh as containing Buddhist, and therefore 'Eastern' elements when he moved his dance practice from Japan to France. This suggests that in catering to a European audience Ishii made his dance seem more Japanese, feeding into stereotypes about Asian dance.[18] This risk of orientalism for emphasizing the connection of butoh to Zen Buddhism is especially prevalent since neither of butoh's founders openly endorsed Buddhist influences on butoh. Hijikata even explicitly distanced butoh from religious practices: "my butoh started . . . with what I learned from the mud in early spring, not from anything to do with the performing arts of shrines or temples."[19]

Because of this risk of oversimplifying butoh by essentializing its Eastern influences, I take a cautious approach to linking it with

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[15] *Ibid.*
[16] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 91.
[17] Barbe, "The Difference," 6-7.
[18] Bruce and Candelario, "Introduction," 7.
[19] Hijikata, "Wind Daruma," 73-4.

Buddhism. The aim of this article is therefore explicitly not to argue that butoh is a Buddhist practice, or that practicing butoh can be seen as an expression of Buddhism. Instead, I aim to further the dialogue between Buddhism and butoh, by exploring how butoh's methods can practically be used to enrich Buddhist practices of enlarging compassion. To that end, I will zoom in on one example of such a Buddhist practice: Śāntideva's 'exchanging self and other' meditation (hereafter: the exchanging-meditation). In this meditation, the meditator imaginatively takes the perspective of another being, feeling their suffering as if it were their own, dissolving the boundary between self and other.[20] Comparable to butoh, this meditation practice uses visualization techniques to shift perspectives. In this article, I argue that butoh's methods of embodied transformation can enrich Buddhist meditation practice and can so be used to enhance compassion. I start off by comparing Śāntideva's exchanging meditation to butoh's techniques of embodied transformation, in order to show how butoh's approach can be an enrichment of the exchanging-meditation. Consequently, I argue that this enrichment is warranted by showing that butoh's methods align well with the existing corpus of Buddhist embodied meditation practices and that both approaches are rooted in compassion.

Comparison between exchanging-meditation and butoh's methods

Śāntideva (late 7th to early 8thcentury CE) was a monk, poet, and philosopher in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, more specifically of the Madhyamaka school. He is best known for the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, or "*Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life.*"[21] This text is not only a philosophical work but also contains a practical guide to attain the Mahāyāna Buddhist ethical goal of becoming a *bodhisattva*. A *bodhisattva* is someone who is committed to reaching the state of awakening of a buddha (nirvāṇa) to bring as much possible benefit to sentient beings.[22] This requires the *boddhisattva* to be compassionate, which in Buddhism entails that one is attentive

[20] McRae, "Empathy," 126.
[21] Goodman, "Śāntideva."
[22] Harris, "Śāntideva," p. 512-3.

to and feels with the suffering of other beings and tries to alleviate that suffering.[23]

One of the practical tools provided by Śāntideva to enlarge compassion that is the exchanging-meditation, found in verses 8:140–8:154 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. The first verse of this meditation can be translated as follows: "Creating a sense of self in respect of inferiors and others, and a sense of other in oneself, imagine envy and pride with a mind free from false notions!"[24] The exchanging-meditation thus calls upon the meditator to visualize themselves as another being by making use of the visualization method of imaginative projection.[25] The later verses teach us that the exchanging-meditation consists of three such visualizations. The meditator first identifies with an inferior, then with an equal, and then with a superior. In scholarly literature, it is debated whether the meditator should identify with three different people of different social positions, or that he should identify with one person to whom he is in some respects superior, in some respects equal and in some respects inferior. In this article, I will follow the latter interpretation. The meditator then thus identifies with one other person. 'Identifying' here means that the meditator creates a sense of 'I' (*ahaṃkāra*) regarding this person in these different positions: the meditator feels as if they *are* the other person. After this, the meditator looks at themselves from the perspective of the other person, creating in them a sense of jealousy from the perspective of the inferior, a sense of competitiveness from the perspective of the equal and a sense of disdain from the perspective of the superior.[26]

A practical example could clarify this. Suppose Robin would want to enlarge compassion for Jules. Robin would sit down in a meditative posture, close his eyes, and visualize Jules. Robin would try to visualize Jules's face, her hair, how she's standing, the look in her eyes. Then, Robin would let go of the identification with himself and instead identify with Jules (create a sense of *ahaṃkāra* regarding Jules). Robin would then look at himself from Jules's perspective, shifting his sense of self. Robin would no longer identify with

[23] McRae, "Empathy," 125.
[24] Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 100.
[25] McRae, "Empathy," 125.
[26] Lele, "Śāntideva."

himself, because he feels that he is Jules and would look at Robin through Jules's eyes. At the first part of the meditation, Robin would consider himself to be a superior to Jules, from whose perspective he's looking. This would create jealousy: "[Robin is] honored, not I. . . . [Robin is] praised. I am criticized."[27] After this, Robin would consider themselves to be an equal from Jules' perspective, creating a sense of competitiveness: "[H]owever good [Robin is] in terms of reputation and wealth, [I] will do better."[28] Then, Robin, who is looking from the perspective of Jules, would realize Robin also has shortcomings and that Jules is in some sense superior to him. This would create a sense of disdain: "Delighted we shall watch while at last [Robin] is crushed."[29]

The ultimate aim of this meditation is that the meditator no longer identifies with their sense of self and starts living completely for other people.[30] This requires compassion, which in Buddhism is means being attentive to and feeling with the suffering of other beings, and trying to alleviate that suffering. Compassion makes a direct moral appeal to the person experiencing it, and is therefore not a calm, but rather an active and intense emotion. The exchanging-meditation enlarges compassion in two ways. First, it aims to free the meditator of acting upon the egocentric mental afflictions of jealousy, disdain and competitiveness, by letting the meditator experience these afflictions regarding herself. Secondly, the practice enhances compassion by creating empathy regarding the person that the meditator identifies with. The meditation therefore makes the meditator feel with the person he is identifying with, which creates the affective response of compassion.[31]

Now we can turn to butoh's techniques of embodied transformation. One of the most influential ones is the method developed by Hijikata, one of butoh's founders. This method can be summarized with Hijikata's statement that butoh requires the dancer to be "kidnapped, killed, and reincarnated."[32] Tanya

[27] Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 100.
[28] Śāntideva, *The Way*, 155.
[29] Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 100.
[30] McRae, "Empathy," 126; Lele, "Śāntideva."
[31] McRae, "Empathy," 125.
[32] Cited in Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 172.

Calamoneri, a butoh scholar, has reframed this statement into three steps of transformation: disorientation, saturation, and re/deconstruction.[33] I will use this framework to provide some insight in butoh's methods. Although this characterization is useful to get insight into butoh methodology, it must be noted that these steps are not always followed or cannot always be discerned in practice.

The first step is *disorientation*: shifting perception into ego-dissolution.[34] This process is described as the body becoming an empty vessel to create space to become something else. This means that the body becomes a moldable case that can be filled with any material to transform.[35] To this end, the dancer must first recognize that they usually experience the body as belonging to an "I", to consequently stop identifying with this self by use of visualization techniques.[36] Transformation therefore requires that the dancer must rid themselves from their egocentric way of experiencing the world and expand their awareness beyond this egocentric perspective.[37]

The second step is *saturation*, which means that the dancer fully embodies the transformed being, again through visualization. The dancer is instructed to visualize a certain image and allow that image to enter their consciousness without thinking about it. This requires that the dancer has full concentration on the object of transformation, and that they are open to accept anything that will happen.[38] In butoh, the dancer is not moving in a planned, cognitive manner, but is instead fully absorbed, or saturated, in the thing they have become.[39]

The last step is *re/deconstruction*. In the butoh practice, the experience of ego-dissolution and transformation gives the dancers access to a de-centered perspective, which can alter their conception of reality by making the dancer experience "multiplicity" in their

[33] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 172.
[34] *Id.*, 139.
[35] *Id.*, 99.
[36] *Id.*, 186.
[37] *Id.*, 173.
[38] *Id.*, 181-2.
[39] *Id.*, 140.

everyday life. The transformations the butoh dancer has gone through cause the dancer to experience themselves beyond their physical boundaries. The dancer has accessed an extended notion of self, which is not left in the practice, but which can be accessed in everyday life and so alter the everyday experience.[40]

To understand how this method of embodied transformation could be used to enlarge compassion we can get back to the example of Robin and Jules. First, Robin would need an instructor, because providing his own exercises could cause him to think about his movement, instead of fully saturating himself with the visualized images. The instructor starts with an exercise to alter Robin's experience of reality into ego-dissolution (Hijikata's first step: disorientation). This could be an instruction to dance in the third person, altering Robin's experience of self. After this, the instruction could be to fully focus on a visualization of Jules in order to transform into her (Hijikata's second step: saturation). The instructor could instruct Robin to open his mouth and let the visualization of Jules slowly enter his body, until Robin's body is all filled up with Jules. However, Robin should not identify with the image of Jules. Robin's experience, including the transformation, is constantly changing. Robin might even be instructed to visualize other (contrasting) images and to transform into them, to ensure that he won't identify with the image of Jules. From this transformation, emotions might arise, and Robin's body might start moving, walking, dancing. The instruction could be to visualize Robin from Jules' perspective. In this stage of saturation, it is important Robin accepts all images that are given without cognitively reflecting on them. Otherwise, Robin might start moving from a cognitive grasp of how Jules would act, instead of embodying Jules. After the butoh session, Robin's identification with himself will return, but his experience of the world will be altered (Hijikata's third step: re/deconstruction). This change in Robin's everyday perspective on reality could include a bigger sense of compassion for Jules.

After this introduction to Śāntideva's exchanging-meditation and the methods of Butoh, they can be compared to each other. The exchanging-meditation and butoh are similar in their use of

[40] *Ibid.*

visualization. Both approaches ask Robin to visualize Jules and shift Robin's perspective by trying to look at the world, and himself, through Jules' eyes. In addition, both are aimed at ego-dissolution, by diminishing Robin's experience of the world through his own eyes and shifting to Jules' perspective.

Besides these similarities, there are also differences between the two approaches which make that butoh could enrich Śāntideva's exchanging meditation. Here, I will focus on one of these differences: the meditation asks the practitioner to sit still whereas butoh asks the practitioner to move. To understand how this could be an enrichment we can turn to the distinction between top-down and bottom-up meditation practice as described by Reginald Ray. Ray describes that a meditation practice is top-down when it takes place under the "watchful and judgmental eye of executive function of the cerebral cortex."[41] Ray states that this type of meditation uses the left side of the brain to manage our meditation practice. We are thinking about what we should be doing in the meditation, and what should be coming out of it. The practitioner does have benefits of this top-down approach, such as better sleep and focus, but practicing it does not, according to Ray, usually lead to the fundamental change that the Buddhist tradition describes.[42] Bottom-up meditation practice, on the other hand, focuses on the soma. The soma can here be understood as our physical body and the neurological network in which it is embedded, which includes the right side of the brain and the neural pathways that are spread throughout the body. From Ray's experience as a meditation teacher, he finds that these kinds of meditation, which includes movement and dance meditation, can transform us and can enable us to "experience the innate goodness, clarity, and compassion that meditation is all about."[43]

This distinction between top-down and bottom-up meditation reveals how the movement that butoh adds can be an enrichment of the exchanging-meditation. The risk of the meditation is that it can be used as a top-down practice, when the meditator is too focused on the way in which the meditation should be performed and which

[41] Ray, "Somatic Meditation," 187.
[42] *Id.*, 187-8.
[43] *Id.*, 188.

outcomes it should yield. It is this top-down aspect of the meditation that risks failing to bring about the transformation of enlarging compassion that the meditation is aimed at. This risk is especially prevalent since the exchanging-meditation provides instructions (visualizations), a predicted course (experiencing the mental afflictions) and desired outcome (enhancing compassion and letting go of the experience of self), which can stimulate the meditator to think in an instrumental manner. Applying butoh's methods is less prone to this risk, since its embodied transformation requires the dancer to pay close attention to the body as experienced from within, which is typical for the bottom-up approach. The movement that butoh introduces, which is not the result of cognitive reflection but springs from full awareness of the body, could therefore reduce this risk of the exchanging-meditation becoming a top-down practice.

With pointing towards this distinction, I am not arguing that top-down meditation is undesirable by definition. The terms "top-down" and "bottom-up" are oversimplifications since practice is usually a combination of these two. In addition, research also suggests that practitioners might need some practice to regulate meditation top-down and become independent from the setting of meditation. [44] This could mean that especially experienced meditators benefit from top-down meditation. Less advanced meditation practitioners could therefore particularly benefit from butoh's addition of movement to the meditation practice. Secondly, I am also not arguing that every practice of Śāntideva's exchanging-meditation is necessarily top-down. In Śāntideva's work, the language of the mind is always intertwined with the language of the body.[45] Śāntideva's explicit attention to the meditator's experience of their body, turns the meditation itself into an embodied practice. Despite this, butoh's addition of movement is still an enrichment, because butoh encourages the practitioner to pay even closer attention to the body, promoting a bottom-up approach.

[44] Lymeus, Lindberg, and Hartig "Building mindfulness," 53.
[45] Ohnuma "Bodies," 114.

Compatibility of Śāntideva's meditation and butoh

A counterargument could be that be butoh is too different from Buddhism, so that this enrichment is not justified. In this section, I argue that this is not the case, by showing that butoh's methods align well with the existing corpus of Buddhist embodied meditation practices and that both approaches are rooted in compassion.

First of all, butoh's methods fit in well with other ways of meditating that are already part of the Buddhist tradition. Broadly speaking, meditation means taking something as the object of your consciousness and focusing on that object for the duration of the mediational practice. The aim of meditation is to change your consciousness by altering the everyday experience of a rapidly changing consciousness to a more focused consciousness.[46] Although most forms of Buddhist meditation ask the meditator to sit still, there are also forms of meditation in which the meditator moves. One such meditation is walking meditation, which Fraleigh argues to be similar to an exercise in butoh called *hokotai* (the butoh walk).[47] In this section, I compare Buddhist walking meditation to the methods of butoh, specifically *hokotai*, to argue that butoh fits in with the already existing corpus of Buddhist meditation. To that end, I will make use of Mike Ball's research on walking meditation and Juliette Crump, Sondra Fraleigh's and Tanya Calomoneri's butoh research.

Walking meditation takes as its object both the walking movement of the body and the breath.[48] The meditator is asked to go to a preferably quiet and secluded area and walk meditatively back and forth for twenty paces or more.[49] Just like Buddhist walking meditation, butoh's *hokotai* is a walking exercise. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, with hokotai the practitioner makes gliding steps that barely leave the ground, and they lower their center of gravity by bending their knees while keeping their head up as if it were held by a string.[50]

There are multiple ways in which Buddhist walking meditation practice is similar to butoh, or more specifically to

[46] Ball, "A case study," 394.
[47] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*, 28.
[48] Ball, "A case study," 395.
[49] *Id.*, 397.
[50] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic dance*, 28.

hokotai. The first has to do with their concentration on movement. According to Ball, walking meditation aims to empirically examine and deconstruct the act of walking, an action that is usually taken for granted in our day-to-day life.[51] This is comparable to butoh, which according to Crump also aims to pay close attention to movement that we would normally take for granted. Both walking meditation and butoh do this by slowing down the activity and paying close attention to every detail of physical experience.[52] Secondly, Ball notes that walking meditation requires the meditator to be fully immersed in the moment.[53] This is comparable to Fraleigh's assertion that butoh also requires the dancer to be fully immersed in the here and now.[54] The third similarity is that both methods use the body to alter awareness. For walking meditation, Ball describes that it is through the experience of the body and its surroundings in the here and now that the meditator accesses the "ways of the mind," or that the meditator can experience how their mind creates the sense of self.[55] This relates to Calamoneri's description of butoh as also relying upon the senses and bodily experience to attain ego-dissolution and transformation, and to ultimately re/deconstruct reality.[56]

Apart from these similarities, there are also differences between walking meditation and butoh. The biggest difference might be their objective. As Calomoneri points out Buddhist meditation is ultimately aimed at reaching enlightenment, whereas butoh is a performance practice that does not share this aim.[57] Buddhist meditation is therefore aimed at the liberated body-mind, whereas butoh is aimed at the performing body-mind.[58] However, this difference in aim does not preclude butoh's methods from enriching the exchanging-meditation. Butoh does not have to be seen as an expression of Buddhism to use butoh's methods to enrich

[51] Ball, "A case study," 396.
[52] Ball, "A case study," 404; Crump ""One Who Hears," 71.
[53] Ball, "A case study," 396.
[54] Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness*, 140.
[55] Ball, "A case study," 398.
[56] Calamoneri, "Becoming Nothing," 173.
[57] *Id.*, 162.
[58] *Id.*, 165.

Buddhist practice. The fact that practicing butoh is not, by itself, aimed at reaching enlightenment is therefore not a problem.

The second reason why this enrichment is justified is that the exchanging-meditation and butoh share the objective of enlarging compassion towards all beings. In the exchanging-meditation, this objective is clear. As discussed before, the practice is aimed at the dissolution of the meditator's sense of self in order to start living completely for other people. This shift requires compassion, since it involves recognizing and responding to the suffering of others as if it were one's own. This objective aligns closely with the ethical framework of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in which compassion is regarded as an active call to alleviate suffering of all beings.

Scholars argue that butoh shares this aim of enlarging compassion. Juliette Crump, for example, argues that the Buddhist concept of compassion forms the core of butoh. She writes: "The [butoh] dancer in a sense becomes a modern *Bodhisattva*, ridding himself or herself of ego and compassionately embracing . . . other beings."[59] In Crump's view, the process of embodied transformation teaches the butoh dancer to see different perspectives, which enhances compassion. This aligns well with Hijikata's statement that butoh "plays with perspective" and that seeing things from the perspective of animal, insects or inanimate objects should lead us to "value everything." [60] Crump further emphasizes that both the *bodhisattva* and the butoh dancer experience compassion in a physical, embodied way rather than an intellectual way. The butoh dancer transforms into the other being, experiencing their emotions, just like a *bodhisattva* feels the emotions of the being they feel compassion for. This link between butoh and the Buddhist concept of compassion is also drawn by Fraleigh.[61] Just like (Zen) Buddhism acknowledges the suffering of all beings in nature, not limited to humans, Fraleigh emphasizes how butoh, too, asks the dancer to transform into and acknowledge suffering of all beings. [62] This connection between butoh and compassion is also reflected in the statements of butoh dancers, such as Akira Kasai, a second-

[59] Crump "One Who Hears," 63.
[60] Cited in Crump "One Who Hears," 71.
[61] Fraleigh, "Performing Everyday Things," 24; Fraleigh, "We Are Not," 484.
[62] Fraleigh, "We Are Not," 484; Fraleigh, "Butoh Translations," 70-1.

generation butoh dancer who trained with Hijikata and Ohno. In an interview with Fraleigh, he says that butoh can only be danced with the "community body:" the body should be conscious of the community in which it grew, including all things in nature, or else the dance loses its meaning.[63] I interpret this to mean that a purely individual oriented butoh is not possible, since butoh requires the dancer to acknowledge the community. This community body requires the butoh dancer to feel compassion for all living beings. This link between butoh and compassion is also drawn by third generation butoh dancers. The Motimaru collective for instance writes that the experience of selflessness in butoh leads to a "compassionate attitude towards others and the whole world."[64] In an interview with Goldberg, Vangeline says that the confrontation of butoh dancers with suffering inevitably leads to the development of compassion.[65]

Compassion as a shared root of butoh and Buddhism makes butoh a good candidate for enriching the exchanging-meditation. Just as the meditation practice trains ego-dissolution with the aim of teaching the practitioner to live for others, butoh, too, uses ego-dissolution to attain embodied transformation, which is inevitably linked with compassion.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that butoh's methods of embodied transformation can enrich Śāntideva's exchanging-meditation. This enrichment notably lies in butoh's introduction of movement which promotes the practice to be bottom-up, instead of top-down. The enrichment is warranted because butoh's methods fit well within the already existent corpus of Buddhist embodied meditation practice. Both approaches also share the objective of enlarging compassion towards all beings. The article aims to offer an introduction to the intersections between Buddhist compassion practices and butoh, and it must be noted that both approaches are part of a larger philosophical and practical whole. Practicing (one of) these methods with the aim of enlarging compassion, without an eye for this bigger

[63] Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness*, 236.
[64] Motimaru, "Universal Jewel."
[65] Goldberg, "How Butoh."

picture, might therefore not always lead to the desired effect of becoming a more compassionate person. The journey towards compassion is not linear, and performing certain methods to lead to the goal of compassion does not always yield the desired results.

Training compassion, whether by use of Buddhist practice, butoh or other means, is of crucial importance. Compassion involves feeling with the suffering of other beings and trying to alleviate that suffering. Training compassion therefore has the potential to restore and strengthen the relationships between people and other sentient beings. Especially in the current times of ecological crisis, the world calls upon us to feel with other beings and reach out our hand, to a dance partner, to a horse, to all that lives.

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