

Careful Thinking Episode 7 Transcript

[00:05] **Martin Robb:** Hello and welcome to this episode of *Careful Thinking*, a new podcast exploring ideas about care. I'm Martin Robb, and I'm the host of the podcast. *Careful Thinking* is inspired by a belief that thinking critically about care can both deepen our understanding and help to improve the day to day practice and experience of care. In each episode of the podcast, you'll hear an in-depth conversation with a writer, researcher, or practitioner at the cutting edge of current thinking about care. My guest for this episode is Christine Leroy. Christine is a researcher at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, working at the intersection of philosophy, dance, and care ethics. She also directs a dance theatre company and leads contact dance improvisation workshops in clinical settings. Christine is the author of the ground-breaking book *Phénoménologie de la Danse: De la chair à l'éthique*, published in 2021, which develops original and intriguing connections between the experience of dance and the practice of care. She's also the author of *La Phénoménologie*, published in 2018, a very useful introduction to some key phenomenological thinkers, and of *Le Corps* from 2022. With Chiara Palermo, Christine edited the collection *Pesanteur et Portance: Une éthique de la gravité*, also published in 2022. Although most of Christine's writings have yet to be translated from French, she's the author of a forthcoming article in English, 'Performance and bodily anchoring of care: dance's power to care', which will be published later this year. I was first alerted to Christine's work by Maurice Hamington, another recent guest on the podcast, who has collaborated with Christine, and it was Maurice who facilitated an introduction and also sent me a copy of Christine's forthcoming English language article. I then got hold of copies of some of Christine's writings in French, which I've read with great interest despite my very rusty schoolboy French. And although no expert on dance, I have a growing interest in the subject, and I was particularly intrigued to see that the preface to Christine's *Phénoménologie de la Danse* was written by the choreographer Angelin Preljocaj, whose ballet *Le Parc* I saw performed last year in Munich, and also to see that Christine discussed that particular work in the book. So I'm really pleased to have this opportunity to talk with Christine about her work and to explore some of the fascinating connections she proposes between dance and care. So, Christine, a very warm welcome to the podcast.

[03:00] **Christine Leroy:** Thank you very much.

[03:02] **Martin Robb:** So, can I maybe begin by asking you to tell us something about your background? Did you study dance first and then philosophy, or was it the other way around? And how did you decide to bring dance and philosophy together in your work?

[03:16] **Christine Leroy:** Well, I may say it's a long story. I started out as a dancer. Of course, I always wanted to dance. And actually, there was no doubt in my mind as a child that I would become a dancer. It wasn't that easy, because my father didn't want me to dance, but he was a sailor, and my mother finally agreed to enrol me in a dance class when he was away. So I had to fight against my parents in order to dance, mainly the ballet at the beginning, because I loved that. And I insist on the fact that it was not my mother's desire. It was my desire. When I was a teenager, I entered the *conservatoire*, and while it was too late to become a professional dancer in ballet, but I acquired a pre-professional level in classical dance, and I then trained in contemporary dance somatic practices. And also I studied

theatre in different professional schools. And actually, it was in order to, well, to be able to go on to continue dancing and theatre that I studied philosophy. And actually in France, you get the *baccalauréat* at 18, but I got it a bit earlier. So at 16, I decided to study medicine because I was passionate, I was keen on the body. I wanted to study the body, but actually I didn't want to study illnesses. So then I was fascinated by bioethics. And that's the reason why I then went to philosophy. And I don't regret having gone into philosophy, but in a way, philosophy takes you away from your body. And I suffered a lot from having to put my body on hold to become a good philosopher. And it's a bit of this suffering that my work reflects. To a certain extent, my work is a form of militancy for the rehabilitation of motor skills in the exercise of thought. I really think that the body is the root for thought as well as for ethics. That's my claim.

[05:40] **Martin Robb:** Now, when you went into philosophy, it's clear that your orientation is very much towards phenomenology. I mentioned you've written an introductory book about some key phenomenological thinkers, and obviously your 2021 book is about the phenomenology of dance. So can I ask which phenomenologists have been the biggest influence on your own thinking?

[06:01] **Christine Leroy:** My reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work was decisive. Actually, I didn't know much about phenomenology before reading him. But all I knew, all I studied, took well, made sense when I read his book *The Eye and the Mind*, because I had the sensation, the impression or the sensation that Maurice Merleau-Ponty was talking about dance. It's something that happens, that often happens when dancers read Maurice Merleau-Ponty. They feel as if he's talking about dance, whereas he doesn't. Yes, it seemed to me that what he said about paintings described adequately the sensation of the person dancing and of the person watching the dance performance. So it was on the basis of this reading that I opened the door to phenomenology and through the prism of this decisive reading experience that I considered the concept of intentionality, which is central to phenomenology. And yes, intentionality is what links a subject to the object he perceives in motor terms. And the book *La Phénoménologie* is a history of the genesis of the concept of intentionality in phenomenology. And so it's not about the phenomenology, but about the intentionality in phenomenology. My book, *Phenomenology of Dance*, well, *La Phénoménologie de la Danse*, was supposed to be entitled 'Kinaesthetic Empathy'. And my publisher said, well, let's propose something more easy to understand. So the title is *The Phenomenology of Dance*, whereas my method is phenomenological, but it's not about the phenomenology. So this book is about kinaesthetic experience and the anchoring of care in the lived body, the flesh, if I use Merleau-Ponty's word. So I can add other decisive influences. Renaud Barbaras is professor of philosophy in Paris 1 University. And when I was a student, I was introduced to Rousseau through his classes. Then I read Jan Patočka's phenomenology of movement through Renaud Barbaras' lecture. Actually, Emmanuel de Saint Aubert, who is a world expert on Merleau-Ponty, has given me enormous support, scientific support. His work on the anthropology of *portance* has so encouraged me along the path of my singularity. And, well, I may talk about him a bit later. I was also influenced by Edith Stein's work on empathy, and I'm still influenced by Maurice Hamington's work, who is not a phenomenologist, but his view on Merleau-Ponty's work enlightened me also.

[09:05] **Martin Robb:** Interesting. Now, I may ask you more about some of those thinkers later, but you've mentioned your book *Phénoménologie de la Danse*. Obviously, it brings together your interest in dance and you're interested in philosophy and phenomenology. What were you hoping to achieve in writing that book?

[09:21] **Christine Leroy:** At the beginning, before this book, I wanted to do my thesis on kinaesthetic empathy, because I saw what decided me to work on kinaesthetic empathy was that I saw the film, the movie *Blush*, a dance movie made by Wim Vanderkeybus, who is a very well-known Belgian choreographer. And this dance film really moved me in my own body. I wanted to understand how it was possible that the spectator's body be moved by performance. I was interested in focusing on this phenomenon out of any narrative. I didn't want to - yes, I knew the concept of catharsis by Aristotle, but I didn't want to observe this phenomenon psychologically. Yes, I wanted to study the kinaesthetic physical experience during kinaesthetic empathy. So at the end of my thesis, I was not satisfied with what I did during my thesis. So I rewrote my thesis a certain amount of times, many times. And also, yes, I think I needed more time to get to study the concepts well. And then I proposed the results in 2019 to the Editions Hermann, a French publisher in philosophy, and they agreed to publish it. Arthur Cohen is my publisher. And yes, and then, because between the moment when I finished my thesis and the moment when I finished this book, there has been a long time, I studied care ethics during this time. And that's actually, I think my book could be made just because there was a time during which I studied care ethics a little bit. And the stakes of my work on kinaesthetic empathy appear to me later.

[11:16] **Martin Robb:** That's interesting. And we'll come back to that connection with care ethics later. But just to say that film *Blush*, you do discuss that in the book as well, so that finds its way in there. Now, in the introduction to the book, you say that there's a certain suspicion that attaches itself to dance because of a fear of its contagious character. And you say that there's a fear that it might result in the spectator losing control of his or her rational self. Now, you don't deny that contagious aspect, but you propose to subvert it, and you argue, and forgive me, this is my translation, it may be inaccurate, but you say 'dance draws its ethical dimension from its very contagiousness by promoting a disposition anchored in kinaesthesia'. So is that the purpose of the book? To persuade the reader that dance is actually an ethical activity? Would that be your thesis, to convince us that dance has an ethical aspect to it?

[12:09] **Christine Leroy:** Well, I could simplify the answer and say yes, but I can also explain a bit. I think that more than just the reader, I want to convince philosophical readers that disembodied ethics, for instance, normative or utilitarian ethics, they have the merits of being reassuring because they provide invariant points of reference. But to my mind, I observed that they do not conform to human reality, because human reality is contingent, and above all, it is lived. We are living people, and we are not just minds. And we live in material conditions, which means our existence is embodied. Everyone has to drink, to sleep, to eat, even the persons who only think. So, yes, the body may seem like an obstacle to absolute freedom, just as Kant says in the Introduction of the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. If you remove the resistance of the air, a dove will no longer fly, it will freefall. And in a similar way, my aim is to argue that the negation of the body in the increasingly virtual world is an illusion, because without a body, the thought falls into a void.

And similarly, this is precisely my thesis. Without the body, morality loses all foundation. We have no moral feeling unless we experience adversity, the precariousness of our lives, our vulnerability. And this is where my work can be considered part of an ethic of care, in a much more marked way than the ethicists of care that I know in France. I insist on the kinaesthetic anchoring of care, on the fact that care presupposes an intentionality, that is kinaesthetic, that is embodied. So care seems to me to be a kinaesthetic impulse, an empathic reaction, precisely due to the kinaesthetic dimension of empathy. And my idea is that motor practices, such as dance and somatic practices, sharpen and refine this ability, on the one hand, to perceive intimate motor impulses, and on the other hand, to listen and to hear the experiences of others with the body. So this is where the ethical stakes of dance come into play. I think that by encouraging kinaesthetic listening in a way, we can help people, to be able to help people. This doesn't mean that I reject reason, but I think that we just have to remind that reason is bodily anchored. I think that reason without a body wouldn't be reason.

[15:14] **Martin Robb:** You've anticipated my next question. I was going to mention the fact that in the book, and also in your forthcoming English language article, you trace the history of the concept of empathy, and you draw a number of different writers ending up with phenomenology and the work of Edith Stein. And I was going to say that traditionally, empathy has been seen as a process that's grounded in the intellect or in the imagination. But you argue that empathy is, as you say, anchored in. In the body. But also you introduce the concept that you've already mentioned a few times, which is kinaesthetic empathy. Now, that concept will be new to many people listening. I wonder if you could just describe what you mean by kinaesthetic empathy as it works between performer and spectator in the experience of dance.

[16:05] **Christine Leroy:** Yes, I also think that it is necessary to get back to the history of the concept in order to. To specify it and to precise the reason why I use it differently from psychological use. So maybe I have to make a little history. The concept of empathy results from the English translation of the German word *Einfühlung*. It was used in Germany by phenomenologists in the beginning of the 20th century. And this neologism was coined in English by Titchener in 1909, because the word sympathy already existed in English, and it was used by Adam Smith and David Hume. But from the beginning, sympathy referred to a moral disposition, to be affected by others and to feel affected by what others suffered from. But in German, the word *Einfühlung* does not designate a moral aptitude, it's a physical ability. And yes, and from there it can become cognitive. So it's really physical. And that's the reason why Titchener coined this new word empathy, which at the beginning then, was very different from care or kindness. Empathy, and *Einfühlung*, refers to the fact that physically feeling what someone else feels, regardless of whether we like them or not, whether we are a moral person or not. And maybe it can be said that this ability is what enabled humans to survive, but the fact remains that it is very physical. And Edith Stein, the first phenomenologist to take an interest on the aesthetics of *Einfühlung*, emphasized the cognitive dimension of empathy. She didn't invent the word *Einfühlung*, neither the concept. It was invented by Theodor Fischer and Theodor Lipps. Fischer and Lipps. And firstly, they were not phenomenologists, they focused on aesthetics. And *Einfühlung* is very physical. It's a corporeal experience, a gravitational experience. The art lover or the person who - *l'amateur d'art*, the person who loves art, who wants to watch paintings, projects her

centre of gravity into the work of art, into the piece of art. And it is from this projection that the aesthetic emotion and the *Einfühlung* derive, in other words, the impression of being the work of art itself. This gravitational intentionality is then found in *Einfühlung*, experienced towards others. And that's the reason why, well, actually Lipps worked on aesthetics, and then he thought that this could also explain relationships and what happened between people. So after having worked on aesthetics, he worked on psychology, and that's what Edith Stein brought to Theodor Lipps in maybe a more, yes, in a way, a more phenomenological way. And she was interested in cognition. So she observed that *Einfühlung* is characterized in two ways. On the one hand, it is a knowledge of the experience of others, but on the other hand, it is also the knowledge that we are not experiencing exactly what the other one knows. So it's a two-part knowledge. You know what happens to the other one and you know that you are not the other one. This is very important. And today, very recently, neuroscience, and particularly Vittorio Gallese, an Italian, has shown, based on studies of neurological reaction, that people with schizophrenia have perfect access to the experience of others, but that they lack the knowledge that others are different from themselves. So, paradoxically, this empathy, this kinaesthetic empathy, is mainly characterized by a neuromuscular response differential between the times when I feel something by myself and the times when I feel something for others. And I think that this is very interesting. So we are able to experience *Einfühlung* physically, *Einfühlung* is very physical. So we could say that kinaesthetic empathy is also the same. It's like if empathy was kinaesthetic. But I had to precise that because of the fact that later, after Susan Lanzoni worked on the history of empathy, and she made a brilliant work on the history of empathy, and she said that - she underlined the fact that during the 1950s, empathy became understood as if it was mimicry. So it lost the concept, lost its physical roots. And that's the reason why we have to talk about kinaesthetic empathy. Whereas at the beginning, empathy was kinaesthetic, it was a word that was supposed to underline the kinaesthetic, that was supposed to be understood as being kinaesthetic.

[21:41] **Martin Robb:** That's an interesting alternative history of empathy. Before we leave dance, though, I did mention that you analyse that moment in the final scene of *Le Parc*, and I just wondered if you could say a bit about what happens in that moment between the two dances and how it illustrates elements of your argument in the book, the final *pas de deux*, which, if anyone's seen that is quite amazing, where, well, you can explain what happens and why it's important.

[22:09] **Christine Leroy:** There is a kissing scene in *Le Parc* in which a male and a female dancer play two lovers. The dancer grabs the man, grabs the woman by the armpits, leans back, turns on himself, and gradually the woman flies away due to the centrifugal force. This is symbolically very beautiful because it allows us to experience both the grace of flight and symbolically, the impression of miraculous grace and lightness when we are in love. And this scene seems to me to be particularly interesting in terms of kinaesthetic empathy, because everyone wants to fly. And this scene has been used in an advert for the airline Air France. It's been used by other choreographers. Angelin Preljocaj is very - because we discussed together - he's very interested in gravity. And he also created a piece called *Gravity*, in which, incidentally, for the first performances, one of the dancers was pregnant. It wasn't deliberate, but this choice for a choreographer to allow a pregnant dancer to dance seemed to me to have moral significance. In a way. Angelin Preljocaj seems to establish a continuity

between kinaesthetic empathy, the kinaesthetic empathy of a choreographer, because a choreographer experiences kinaesthetic empathy, well, he works from his own body, and here I think he must be a caring choreographer. And this echoes my preoccupation with gravity, among other things.

[23:58] **Martin Robb:** And that comes back in the other book we'll discuss later. Now, when you were talking about kinaesthetic empathy before, and about feeling the feelings of the other, but recognizing that you weren't the other, it just made me think of Donald Winnicott and his ideas about children and play, and how play has that role in children's development. So that brings me nicely onto Winnicott, because I noticed that his name, the British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, his name occurs a lot in your writing. You draw on his notions of transitional space and the space of play, and his ideas about holding and handling. Can you say a bit about how Winnicott's thinking has influenced your own thinking?

[24:44] **Christine Leroy:** It's like an evidence. His work is fascinating. And during my thesis, I wondered whether the spectator's kinaesthetic empathy for the dancers and the performers on stage was related to the fact that everyone is playing a game in the performance space with the audience. I think so. To experience a community with the others, it's easier to be in a setting that fosters this community, which is the auditorium or the stage and so on. There is a French *maître de théâtre*, a French actor, a very important actor, who said that going to the theatre was making a dream together. And I think that we could say, yes, that concept of play and the concept of the transitional space of Winnicott seemed to be very useful. To think of kinaesthetic empathy, but also the concept of holding, seemed to me very interesting. And then the Winnicottian meaning of care. So holding, first of all. Emmanuel de Saint Aubert's work on *portance* was very enlightening for me in the context of my interest in care. And I was interested in care ethics. And so he talked about *portance*. And I thought, well, this is very interesting. I think *portance* is about care. This word is very difficult to translate. I'll get back to that later. But, well, it refers to the fact that the experience of being supported enables us to stand up, whereas the experience of falling without a bottom is tragic. It seems to me that there is an important echo between the concept of *portance* and the concept of holding. So holding seemed to me very interesting due to my interest in Emmanuel de Saint Aubert's concept of *portance*. And then the distinction made by Winnicott, the distinction between care and cure, was also extremely enlightening for me. I needed this distinction to clarify how my own understanding of care and an ethic of care differed from more political understandings of this concept of care. Those political understandings are very interesting, but Winnicott gave me tools to think about care in a certain way, in a way where the body is part of the thought and care.

[27:18] **Martin Robb:** I was just going to say that in that discussion you have in the book of Winnicott's ideas of holding and handling, and you talk about the interaction between the performer and the spectator. And you say it provides reciprocal and reversible care. I mean, that's sort of Merleau-Ponty language as well. And you seem to be saying that, in a way, dance *is* care, which is surprising and interesting. Is that a fair interpretation? Is that what you're saying?

[27:46] **Christine Leroy:** Yes. I would add many times, yes, I think dance can be a reciprocal care and yes, but also a reciprocal care, because there are dancers, if dance is made with different people, all of them support the others. But also I think that there is also something that could be considered as self-care in dancing. And this is what I'm interested in. I don't know if I would say that dance is care, but I think that we could say that dance takes care.

[28:27] **Martin Robb:** I was really interested in the discussion in the book of the film of the dance work, *Cost of Living*, by the British choreographer Lloyd Newson and the company DV8, because that features a disabled dancer, David Toole. And you interestingly analyse the impact of the performance on the spectator. And you write, and again, this is my translation, that 'kinaesthetic empathy, if it's still permissible to call that what the spectator feels for the dancer, is not compassion for suffering. If we observe a certain empathy of the spectator for the performer, it's not thinkable as a sharing of pathos, but only in the sense of kinaesthetic adhesion for what manifests itself as freedom.' So you make that distinction between kinaesthetic empathy and compassion for the suffering of a disabled dancer. So I just wonder if a sceptical reader might wonder whether that's real empathy, because presumably that only lasts as long as the performance, whereas you could argue that a more emotional or intellectual empathy might result in a change of your attitudes to disability. So are you arguing that that sort of bodily empathy can have a life beyond the performance, can change people's minds, people's thinking about, say, disability, for example?

[29:50] **Christine Leroy:** I think so, but maybe in a different way from compassion. I think since I wrote the book, I myself had to think about different counter arguments to what I wrote myself. And I also read Rousseau recently in *Emile*, who said, well, we only experience pity towards people who are more suffering than us, but not towards people who are really happy. And I thought, well, this is disturbing. I think that the advantage - well, this is disturbing because it maintains a hierarchy between valid people and handicapped people, you know, and I not sure it is right. The advantage of the concept of kinaesthetic empathy is that it presupposes an ability to place oneself in the physicality of others, whoever they may be. And indeed, kinaesthetic empathy does not take account of disability as a deficiency, but as a singular type of physicality. So you're right, kinaesthetic empathy are the way I, well, what I focus on, the phenomenon I focus on, it doesn't make us more sensitive to disability in the sense that it makes physical disability not a deficiency. I thought recently the same applies to a baby. A baby, although not being disabled, is nevertheless unable to stand up. And if you see a baby lying on the floor, you are going to take him or her in your arms, just because it's unbearable to see a person trying to see ahead and unable to stand up straight. So my premise is that there is no reason to consider a disabled person as in need, but simply as a different able bodied person with a physicality that echoes our own physicality and that calls our bodies to react if action is required, not to have pity. And I got this conviction during an exchange with a different motored dancer called Magali Saby. She refuses to be described as an invalid person, and she insists on the fact that she moves differently from people in general. And I think, well, it was extremely interesting for me, and since then, I think it is important to keep in mind, to keep that in mind, otherwise we run the risk of discrimination. I also think that it's easy to contest any positive discrimination, and if you live in a very careful country. So I'm not - I don't know exactly what to reply to you, but I think that kinaesthetic empathy, because it is not, because it permits us to put us in the

shoes of the other, will not result in having pity. That will result in knowing what another one needs us to do. And this is different, but I think it's also a condition to good care, because, you know, Maurice Hamington talks about bad care, and we know that in some institutions, because people are disabled, they are treated as if they were inferior people. But it was also, it was really the discussion with Magali Saby that opened my eyes.

[33:23] **Martin Robb:** That's really interesting. And in one way, you've sort of argued that in some ways, kinaesthetic empathy is superior to that sort of sense of pathos, because it does away with that hierarchy, or looking down on the person because they're disabled. It's kind of seeing somebody on the same level, as you say, just differently abled or moving in a different way, and makes you aware of their singularity. So that was really interesting. Thank you.

[33:50] **Martin Robb:** Because time is short, maybe we should move on to your other book, the edited collection, *Pesanteur et Portance*, and maybe we could just come back to the words again, because I know you're fascinated by language, and you play around with language a lot in your books, and I think it's going to be really interesting for a potential translator of your work to try to find English equivalents for some of these things. Because, because, I mean, when I look for a translation of that book title, there are three words that translate as gravity in the book title. So I wonder if you could come back to what you were saying earlier about the concept of *portance*, which I think you take mainly from Emmanuel de Saint Aubert. And you try to find English equivalents, don't you? You talk about lift, holding upholding. Just say something about this concept and why it's such an important concept for your own thinking.

[34:39] **Christine Leroy:** The term *portance* is used in aerodynamics to describe the phenomenon whereby an aircraft is uplift in the air, the air which does not resist the aircraft, but carries it nonetheless. *Portance* has been translated by Canadian people as uplift, but Emmanuel de Saint Aubert knows that it's untranslatable. Well, anyway, Emmanuel de Saint Aubert uses this term to designate the phenomenon during which two people interact without contact, and where one of the two, supported by his or her history and by what Emmanuel de Saint Aubert calls a third element, being, transmits to the other person who needs an uplift. And actually, I asked myself to translate, *portance* is not exactly carrying someone, it is not translatable by holding, it's passing on support or sharing together the third party support of the earth when you're hiking, or the sea or the ocean when you're swimming and so on. And it's something invisible between two people. So it can seem a bit theological in a way, but it's also, I think also what is interesting in *portance* is that it's supposed to be a support coming from below and not from above. And it's interesting because, yes, if we consider Emmanuel de Saint Aubert realised this new way of understanding care, I think we could say care, he realized that to the opposite of omnipotence. I don't know if you use this Latin word in English, the God *omnipotens* is the God that is over and through all the world, and he is all powerful. And Emmanuel Saint Aubert says, we could say *omnitenens*. So, all supportive or all caring, something like that. So in a way, it's already a bit difficult to explain in French, so my translation of the ideas must be terrifying. But this is very interesting also, because I practice contact improvisation dance. And this practice, this somatic practice, relies on the fact that you carry people and you're carried by them. But I think it's a play of *portance*, too. So that's also the reason why,

because things happen when you do contact improvisation, you don't know what, but things happen and then you're more able to stand up and. And this is the phenomenon of *portance* to my mind.

[37:24] **Martin Robb:** So I should have said, it's an edited collection and you bring together a wide range of thinkers, including Emmanuel de Saint Aubert and Maurice Hamington. It's a very international collection. You contributed the Introduction in which you have that discussion of the meanings of *portance*, but you also have a discussion there of whether the word 'care' is translatable. And maybe just say a bit about that for English speaking listeners, that you talk about the way that some French feminist writers have actually decided not to use the French word *soin* or any other French word, but to use the English word 'care'. You write about Sandra Laugier and other French feminist writers, although sometimes you hyphenate it, or they hyphenate it as *soin-care*, put the two together there. Why do you think French writers have decided to use the English word 'care'? What's different? What are the issues involved in choosing which word to use there, do you think?

[38:21] **Christine Leroy:** In French we have at least three words to translate the English word 'care'. Those three words are *soin*, *attention* and *souci*. So, at the same time, in French, the word *soin* also means cure, not only care, but also cure. So it is very difficult to translate the word care, because if we use the word *soin*, we are confusing cure with care. If we use the word attention, *attention*, which is attention, it doesn't convey the care dimension. And if we talk about *sourci*, it means a concern that isn't the word care. And in fact, in French, we use the words *soin*, *attention* and *souci*, depending on the circumstances. And we know which one to use depending on the circumstances. This is also why it is very difficult to translate the expression 'care ethics'. Some people have spoken of *éthique du soin*, but more in the context of medicine, others *éthique de l'attention* or *éthique de la sollicitude*. But in all cases, we lose the idea that care ethics designates the ethics involved in actions, particularly medical and nursing actions. This is why Sandra Laugier and Patricia Papernan and maybe some other French persons, have chosen to translate care ethics as *éthique du care*. But Sandra Laugier is a specialist in the philosophy of justice in particular. And this is why the *éthique du care* has taken a more political connotation in France than in Anglophone countries, because her aim was to steer thinking in a feminist, political and militant direction. And there is no real solution. And this is why I've chosen to use the expression 'care ethics' in French. I talk about *je parle de care ethics*, because I worked with a lot of Anglo Saxons in recent years. In French, actually, I observed also that when you use 'care' to talk about care in French, people still don't understand correctly what you are talking about. And it's really more meaningful for many people, for most of the people, to talk about *soin*, well, to use French words. So I talk about care ethics, and I use the words *soin*, *attention*, *sollicitude*, *sourci*, depending on the circumstances.

[41:04] **Martin Robb:** So, in addition to writing the Introduction, you've also got a chapter in the book, co-written with the members of the group - and in French, you'd say *Clown Up*, we would say *Clown Up*. Can you tell us something about their work and your connection, what was your connection with them?

[41:17] **Christine Leroy:** I met Cecile De Verneuil, who is a - *Clownup*, a member of this association, association of this company, shortly before the lockdown. And she was

extremely caring to me. She gave me the keys of her apartment. After that, we discussed her work as a clown in this association, and the association, well, it seemed to me the involvement of those clowns in hospitals with elderly people, I thought that this was talking about reality, about care in real life and not in theory. So I went with them, I observed their work, and I wanted to write something about this work because I thought this was about life and about true care and about vulnerability. I think sometimes we have to be humble with our ideas.

[42:14] **Martin Robb:** But it does connect with a lot of your thinking. I think it's a lovely chapter. And I found the examples of their work with older people quite moving. And I'd encourage people to look them up online because there are some lovely videos of their work. And you talk about *le clown du soin*, the caring clown. And just to give a quote from that, you say, I can't remember if it's you or one of the other authors says that 'the clown places the dependent person at the centre of a unique event to elevate them to their own dignity as a subject, and that clowns go to meet a person in all the human aspects. They do not take care of them to heal them, but rather to enter into their mode.' And then you talk about the way they use music and dance. So there is a connection with your interest in dance. But also they use touch, don't they? And you say 'touch, even kinaesthesia constitutes a privileged mode of entry into contact compared to speech'. Obviously, they're working with people who don't necessarily have speech or have lost the power of speech or hearing. Can you say something about how that work with the clowns, or how that aspect of the clowns work illustrates your theory of kinaesthetic empathy?

[43:24] **Christine Leroy:** Well, they often, because elderly people in nursing homes, many times they no longer have full use of their minds, even though it is still the case for a lot of them, too. Their senses are very - and often the only sense left is touch. So the clowns, they enter the room and they don't focus. They want to play. I think also we could use Winnicott. I didn't in the chapter, but we could use Winnicott. They play with the person, the elderly person, and in order to play with her, they try to attune themselves to the person and to hear. They are very good listeners, to hear what happens and to build a moment of play with the person. Or sometimes the person is very reluctant and says, no, I hate you. And so the clowns play with that. They say, 'Oh, you hate us. Oh, that's terrible. We are horrible'. And that's very funny. And sometimes it results in a very funny scene where everyone is laughing, even the person who doesn't want them to be in her room and they get out, and it's magic. And yes, and sometimes they just use touch because most of the elderly people are tired and they use touch and they are very gentle touch. And in order to get in touch too - in French we would say *être en contact*, but I'm not sure it would be translated correctly if I said 'to be in contact'. And sometimes they dance. So, yes, it's a specific and dedicated moment to the elderly person who is at that moment at the centre of the show. Yes, and also what is interesting to me is that they are feeling with their body because they cannot - it's not an intellectual moment, but also they are moved, and I saw them after the afternoon, they are moved by what happened. And that's the reason why they go on doing that. They like doing that because something human happens. Cecile said one day, when everything is not finished, everything is not finished. It means in French, it - she said it was about the fact that life has to go on till the end. This was really moving too.

[46:03] **Martin Robb:** I found it a very moving chapter. You talk about that as an example of you moving from theory to practice to real life. And another example of that is your clinical work. And in that article that's coming out in English later this year, you talk about the work -about the clinical experiment that you developed for adolescent girls who were hospitalized for anorexia nervosa. And that brings together, you know, your interest in dance movement, the body, self-care. Can you say something about what these girls' experience of their bodies was before your workshops and how the experience of the workshop changed their attitudes to their bodies?

[46:46] **Christine Leroy:** I just have to be very cautious. Their attitude to their bodies changed also because they are in - well, they discussed with psychologists and so on. I'm not the one who changed them radically. But from - we could observe that at the beginning of the workshop, of the one-and -a-half-hour workshop, and at the end things changed. And this was due to the workshop. And also we observed well, each time, because there was a questionnaire and a test and they had to mention things, we observed that each time they said they felt freer, more free in their body and more able to enter in relationship with others. And this was very significant for me. It was not - what I did with them was not dance together, we play together. No, it was not about that. It was about entering in contact with the others, which is very difficult for such persons, entering in contact and also using gravity in feeling gravity in your body. Actually, I focused their attention on their feeling of gravity more than contact. It's difficult. And so their experience of gravity through movement and through movement in contact with others, seemed to make them freer in their body and more able to enter in relationships. So I - well, we can say that something happened, and this is an ongoing project, actually, yes, I want to study that maybe with more people and maybe also more scientifically, I don't know, for the moment, but I'm building something.

[48:44] **Martin Robb:** Well, that's a nice link to my kind of final question. I was going to ask you, what's next for you? What are you working on at the moment? And obviously you've got still more work to do around that clinical - around your workshop. So what else are you working on? Are you writing other things at the moment, or are there more publications and more research to come?

[49:03] **Christine Leroy:** Well, I'm obsessed with the concept of gravity now, it's a transdisciplinary obsession. Well, it's just - I'm laughing at myself, I don't know why, but to be more serious, I'm trying to think about the concept of gravity and its ethical implications. It just follows what I did previously, but it's more precise now. And I would like to, yes, I open myself to disciplines more concerned with - yes, or the study of the body. And also you mentioned the fact that I manipulate different languages. I observed that cross fertilisation is not only a word, but sometimes discussing with people not doing philosophy, discussing with people not using the same language as yours, makes you observe things that you wouldn't have observed if you had stayed in your own field. Yes, now I'm working on the concept of gravity with maybe - with experimental scientific. I'm willing to work on the experience of gravity and how this experience participates in self-care and in care for others. So this is the philosophical ideas, and I want to test them by doing maybe clinical and scientific experiments. This is very ambitious.

[50:37] **Martin Robb:** Well, it seems to kind of bring you full circle. You said you started off wanting to study medicine, so you're kind of bringing together that original clinical impulse with your interest in dance and the kinaesthetic and with philosophy - and with care. So thank you for providing us with such fascinating insights into your work. And as I say, I think your work represents a really original and exciting contribution to care theory, and I hope this podcast helps to make it more widely known. So thank you.

[51:07] **Christine Leroy:** Thank you very much. I'm so glad that you opened the door.

[51:12] **Martin Robb:** It's been a pleasure. So that's all we have time for on this episode of *Careful Thinking*. If you've enjoyed this episode, I hope you'll subscribe wherever you get your podcasts and spread the word to other people who you think might be interested. If you'd like to comment or provide feedback on this or any other episode, or if you want to suggest a guest or a topic for a future episode, you can email me at carefulthinkingpodcast@gmail.com, or you can leave a comment on my Substack, which you can find at carefulthinking.substack.com. All of these details are on the podcast website, together with the show notes for this episode. Thank you for listening and see you next time.