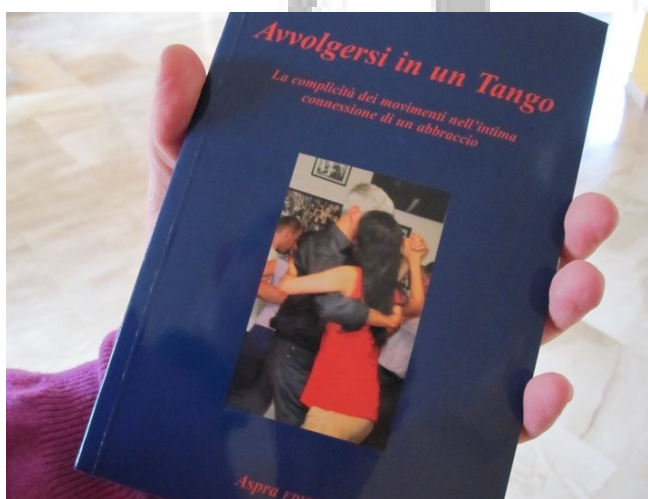


Wrap Yourself in a Tango di **Pietro Galioto**
(cap.1 – *Intimate complicity*)

Pietro Galioto

Wrap Yourself in a Tango

***The complicity of movements within the intimate
connection of an embrace***



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Prologue

Perhaps it is necessary to let yourself be swept away by the melody besides the charm of the partner without asking yourself too many questions, in this way letting yourself be ravished even for a few moments, living them detached from everything, in the dimension of an embrace that is ultimately simple, sincere, comforting and above all not engaging.

It is an encounter and a challenge between a Man and a Woman, who with complicity, sensitivity and responsibility welcome each other and stimulate each other in a journey of togetherness, in a continual ‘wrapping’ of two bodies in dialogue with each other accompanied by the melody.

Each person has their own experiences and reasons for approaching tango, being captured and feeling the need to continue living it and transmitting it.

In this way I will try to tell you about myself, attempting to investigate the reason it becomes the pleasure of ‘the corresponding of movements’ in an embrace.

Actually I would like to present a little of that intimate tango which, insofar as it continues to be defined with ease as one of the most passionate and involved dances, often tends to be reduced, equally easily to an aseptic extremely fast merry-go-round of moves to be displayed.

These pages also become an outlet for the regret I have been harbouring for many male friends who I think end up losing the intimate and sensual part of tango, or even more for those female friends who, even if they moved me a lot at the beginning, let themselves instead be influenced by excessive technicality and automatism to the point of no longer giving me the feeling of being in the arms of the sensitive and elegant woman I remembered. Almost as if the ‘too’ technical woman closed themselves in more and more in a search of formality, which does not allow the expression with spontaneity of their femininity any longer.

When talking about tango we always find ourselves facing both a philosophical-psychological aspect, linked to the way we perceive it and feel, and a more technical one, based on the style and type of tango which is expressed dancing in

harmony with our own personality.

One cannot not be the consequence of the other: you cannot speak of philosophies and experiences of tango without expressing and distinguishing the ways in which you embrace and or perceive the body of the other; neither would there be much sense in concentrating only on the technical elements with the risk of reducing it only to an abstract form of competitive sport, which would transform it into the denial itself of a free expression of feeling, insofar as very personalised art.

Moving amongst this dualism, I will try to offer my points of view, perhaps too radical and conservatory, both in philosophical and technical terms, but which want to stimulate a comparison between the postures of who already dances, and the pauses and the curiosity of those who haven't already tried to dance it, but who are fascinated by it.

I can only express my point of view, really because of the respect I have for tango in so far as a very personalised dance.

I will try to pause also on the spunti and technical elements matured in a decade, that I consider reflect my personality and will to continue living composure and intimacy in the relationship above all with the partner with intensity.

It is always about spunti, often also accompanied by terms and verbs not by chance in comas because entire debates and discussions could develop on these.

Many terms would then claim a glossary in order to help the novice best interpret some movements, but it is not my intention, for the moment to offer an umpteenth different edition. Rather, I would like that above all the basic concepts be understood, also giving rise to the desire of further elaboration.

I conclude this essay with my brief tale Emotions of Milonga, which I am very attached to due particularly to the special relationship I experience and have experienced with the women of the milongo; there follow my four emails from Argentina, which I had addressed in particular to my female friends from Palermo, and which, with their permission, I propose to you as characteristic "pictures" which stimulate to go beyond Tango. Thank you, Pietro.

Intimate complicity

I remember that I approached tango more than ten years ago, when in the first year of my research doctorate I found a flyer at the exit of an English course.

I arrived at the first lesson in Palermo of my first teachers, Pablo Pouchot and Silvina Larrea, who I recognize as precious for having helped me to live and feel an original style.

In the past I had already done some ballroom dancing, and it was not difficult for me to take in the logic of the steps and the movement of the couple, even if, like all those who come from other dances, I also came with previous **poses** the posture was very difficult to correct, even if that sense-desire of wrapping yourself and elegance of the waltz which I felt was already mine remained.

Female friends of the school pampered me as a rare dancer of tango, and encouraged me helping me to overcome my excessive shyness which made me feel embarrassed to embrace new more or less young and charming women.

It was a slow and progressive growth which, at various times, coincided also with a personal need to unburden, caused by family situations that forced me to look for space and situations of my own elsewhere.

I am sure that each of us male tango dancers remembers when, in the first months, we let a few steps escape in corridors at work, at the supermarket and in waiting rooms.

Tango of the first milonghe then led me to a new dimension, made up of a calm atmosphere, that betrayed a slight melancholic halo, made even more intimate by the composition of demeanours and of the involving and delicate melodies.

As in all pair dances, it is the continuous presence of the partner that surely flatters and moves, and in tango this is perceived in an even stronger way, really in virtue of the continuous under standing-connection that is established through the embrace, almost living the impression of being in a new unit.

The verbal silence, accompanied by a brief glance, makes listening and interaction with the partner very intense and intimate.

Only at the end of each dance or of the tanda, often a smile or a glance of thanks is

let out for the reciprocal serenity exchanged and the shared understanding.

That which really makes tango is the complicity between partners. The understanding could, in fact, be limited only to the pleasure of sharing proximity and wanting to look for the form of the steps together and as a consequence complicity between partners.

But even if the search for form-figure of external personal expression and/or of the couple is an important and ever present aspect, as will be emphasised later. That on its own could tend to lead the tango to unfold only a scene of moves and planned sequences, which would end up limiting or even negating the continuous dialogue between two bodies.

In this way the most intimate complicity, to which I previously intended to refer, is the most profound that one wants to live in perceiving every variation, moment by moment, of the internal tension (also emotional) of the body of the other.

That would require an ever greater capacity to perceive to be chiefly developed and to humbly listen to the stimuli of the other, eventually choosing also to comply with them and make them unique with gallantry and respect, but also with decisiveness and sense of play and challenge, which is typical of each person, leaving aside tango.

The different technical devices become more and more precious to allow to search for the maximum understanding in mutual freedom of expression-improvisation in every movement or also in every sign of it.

Maximum and continued “freedom” guaranteed by the movement before even the choice of step, makes each tango unique for the specific psycho- personality of each one and the capacity to listen to himself or the other in every moment and with continuity.

Willingness to listen to different sounds also based on reciprocal states of mind of the time and day, to the extent of the emotion and the charm undergone by the partner, and of the same reciprocal willingness to want to welcome and or challenge measuring every movement closely on the other.

The profound ability of each tango dancer emerges, therefore, from the capacity he has to readapt himself and propose again with subtlety, sensitivity and decisiveness

constant variations regarding the response and stimuli of the partner.

More generally, it is preferable to often talk of a “Tanguidad” of each one, really to go beyond only the technical ability, and refers to the sensitivity, passion and involvement and feeling the body and emotions of the other, stimulating them and respecting them to want to live the tango as an intimate relationship accompanied by the melodies.

Also in the listening and interpretation of the music each one develops their own sensitivity of interpretation. And it is thanks to the music that the embrace of the tango becomes more intense and complicit, exactly because it proposes again with continuity a connection in becoming which is searched for and renewed moment by moment.

The variety within the piece of music stimulates the different interpretations of the couple, between changes in intensity and “colour”, and with the freedom to follow the rhythm or melody alternatively.

I don’t know how it is for the musicians, but for the tango dancers the music is that transport that makes the complicity of interpretation more united by every musical sign and that requires the sharing of every movement as a continuous game-challenge-acceptance of the choice of the other.

It is lovely to perceive the sensation of having in one’s arms a partner with their own personality and sensitivity (not only musical) which leads them to respect and look for a constant complicity proposing own variations of scale and speed.

That requires and imposes knowing to wait and doing in a way that the interpretation of each becomes a stimulus for the other, such that the man finds his Man being, in relation to the Woman (and not a common “doll”, even if talented) and vice versa, the woman rediscovers her Woman being in relation to the Man (and not to a merry-go-round support for her own exhibition), therefore going beyond the sole search of premeditated sequences and steps.

It was during the practice at Estudio Dinzel, removed from the formality of the steps of lessons of a European aim, that I began to appreciate and become aware of the pleasure of improvising measuring oneself on the partner.

It was lovely to feel and perceive, even in the very slow movements, what the

partner wanted, and up to what point managing to follow with one's own spontaneity and presenting own proposals. Even if the more you tried to experiment new movements, the more you ended up tasting the completeness of traditional ones.

In debates it occurred to distinguish between at least 3 levels of improvisation. Paraphrasing the composition itself with a verbal sentence, the search of steps and sequences was equivalent to the search of words or set phrases, whilst a more subtle freedom of improvisation, based on the sensitivity of single movements, was compared to the alternating of single syllables and or consonants.

The freedom that was wanted to retrieve in the dance corresponded to the attempt to free oneself from the linguistic idea that to the syllable "ca" had to always be followed by "ne" to write "cane" (dog). The partner and the other contingencies, including dancing in limited space with other couples, could, on the other hand have encouraged towards the syllable "val" and then "lo" to compose "cavallo" (horse).

And all this, naturally, searching to respect as much as possible the technical warnings necessary to obtain maximum sensitivity towards the body of the partner and avoid losing the connection.

It became more and more an intimate *juego* and complicity.

However, I remember the term *juego*, in the conclusive debate of the seminar of "improvisation" at the Estudio. For us Europeans it seemed to keep the meaning recreational to which we didn't want to reduce the emotions and the profoundness of the Tango.

Only after we realized that this acquired more meaning of a research-discovery of growth conducted on essence, simplicity, and curiosity, a little like that of children who manage to live it with carefreeness but also seriousness and respect.

But as far as we can hope to conserve or recuperate an attitude of *juego*, we are not children; and in my opinion such a definition is not yet sufficient until you recognize also a minimum mystery due to "sad thought (and intimate) that is danced" and is shared wrapping yourself in an embrace.

We are not talking about a sadness deriving from pessimism, discouragement and dissatisfaction, but another thing completely. It becomes the necessary element for

retrieving a sense of realism and solidness of real life in relation to a “limit” or awareness of an “end”.

It regards a sadness-melancholy that helps to redefine and metabolise our life, without creating and giving back false illusions. A little, perhaps, as the original sentiment of the first emigrant tango dancers must have been.

The embrace of the tango becomes in this way an embrace of the people who offer themselves with their own thoughts and silences, trying to savour even their own intimate solitude between the arms of a friend or even better of a stranger, not at all intrusive, who does not expect, but who offers only a comfort-serenity.

And such should be able to be an embrace that is not rigid, not set, and that does not offer or impose more than the partner is prepared to accept and or receive.

In this way if the emotions of tango seem always to go removed from the preoccupations of real daily life, it is in this comfort that I imagine is the becoming serene of each in the tango, that cannot because of this be reduced to a need of “intoxicating escape”.

Perhaps the only real subtle pride, of which a tango dancer can flatter himself, would become really that of managing to make the woman between his own arms feel at the most ease possible, and such as to lead her to relax in her own thoughts, without making them escape at all, but only offering the opportunity to redefine them.

I like thinking that this must be a reciprocal sensation and, personally, the more I recognize and show the woman a solid character, sensitivity and a personality, the more I have the sensation of having exchanged something intimate, strong and intense.

During the dance you do not perceive such a sensation, precisely because you live it. But it accompanies us already in the return journey, in which we experience a little the satisfaction of having shown, in the even minimal conditions of creativity, our Man/Woman being, and of having metabolised our “high thoughts” with the complicity-presence of one or more partners of the opposite sex.

To these “other thoughts” of whatever nature they may be, I like to think, I refer in part to Rodolfo Dinzel, in the third charter of *Tango, una Danza, Esa ansiosa busqueda de la Libertad*, come to respect not only physical, but also symbolic of the “third

volume” within the embrace.

Tango lived with this sentiment and involvement, for me, expects to become an integral part of life, as in all other occasions of personal reflexion and intimate or almost “prayer” in complicity.

But if it’s about profound dialogue and the interaction of bodies, it means that we are already talking about the pure sense of sexuality between two unique and different people.

I don’t want to be misunderstood, the sexuality of which I am speaking is not the mechanical and individualistic one of only hormonal arousal-release, but rather that which tends to an awareness and more intimate confrontation and fullness of the other, until a “taking in”.

That, which on other occasions is expressed by successive steps of curiosity and involvement in a dialogue between with their own characters, sensibilities and different affinities, in the tango a level of innocence and lightness remains, which does not expect neither exclusivity, nor projection.

In reality, nothing removes what can however be lived and danced as a moment-meeting of a more profound journey of two people in a strong relationship with each other.

Tango, remaining far from hormonal arousal, offers the possibility of living and manifesting sexuality exactly like a step from a more delicate dialogue-encounter between bodies, which to express themselves try to play amongst themselves, in a “determined time”, keeping the eroticism of touching, brushing against, astonishing, challenging, waiting, feeling reciprocally the presence and absence of the other, becoming curious, challenging, welcoming with the desire to wrap yourself in the other, intruding and provoking contact-caresses already of any real sexual dialogue.

I don’t think you can postpone on this aspect I believe it should be put as the basis of every ulterior reflex also of a technical nature, really to encourage the development and in every small movement, even more if slower.

The search of this continual dialogue-presence leads me to recognize as the most intimate movements really those that express a continued natural sense of “wrapping

yourself” of one around the other; while the steps and impulses in line, or even more the acrobatics or the other exuberances, I fear betray more the desire of distance, or forcing, and make you lose that erotic tension and that involvement which would maintain conserving at best the embrace and or retaining the composition and slowness of the movements.

I don't want to hazard at developing particular other connections between the dialogue of tango and sexual dialogue real and proper, also to respect who wishes to conduct tango only as enjoyment-distraction different from an act of sexual worth, and always that it is not also that the sexuality is not reduced to a form of “becoming inebriated” continuously closing itself in individual pleasures.

From the viewpoint of respect-acceptance of the other it is necessary to emphasise that we are always, however, talking about a reciprocal dialogue, and not of a monologue where the man had the responsibility of guiding and imposing the steps and the woman of accepting them and suffering them.

For me it is not like that! In fact as in the life of a couple there are often more undefined and unconscious codes to “induce” a different action of the partner, also not displaying yourself in the first person to take the responsibility of a choice, also in tango, it is often a subtle task, above all for the woman, that of proposing tempos, space, inertia and fluidity of the movements.

Already in wrapping yourself in every *molinete*, alternating *entrade* and *salide* of *ochos*, the woman succeeds in managing and influencing the unfolding itself of the step for tempo and fluidity transmitting own stimuli for eventual variations.

In as far as she can have the sensation or pleasure of believing that finally, above all after a day of stress and daily professional responsibility, she can go back to accepting passively the will of her partner. I don't think it is like that, or at least it shouldn't be like this, even if I imagine every woman would have a lot to tell or say again as to that.

I believe that you must speak of a rebalance and of a respect of the diversity of roles and of how the signal or the desire of the other is often perceived and eventually followed, if not also playfully challenged by the other.

In this way I return to repeating myself: I find more ‘pleasure’ when I feel I have in

my arms a woman with her own personality, own character, sensitivity and a capacity to measure herself, demonstrate knowing how to accept the other really because she is not passively consented to.

For this reason it is difficult for me to like dancing with the young “pretty” and “able”, really because it is not a search for a perfect form of choreography.

Rather, it is easier for me to be attracted to women who are more reserved, mysterious and in part immersed in their own thoughts, who I am curious about for their presumed depth, in a peaceful atmosphere, which corresponds with difficulty to the mega-party and or training and extremely crowded and chaotic evenings.

And it is not the number that matters, on the contrary, the more the environment is gathered more it helps; also because basically you cannot have the pleasure of dancing intensely and intimately in the same evening with more than five or six couples.

And so the tango dancer (or maybe the man) who is more mature and sure of his personality retains that which manages to search for maximum complicity also in simplicity and in the essence of movements, expressing them and making them his own with delicacy and decisiveness which lends authority to the movement and step without making it weigh, measuring it against the partner and managing to make her feel at ease, if not even complicit and as much protagonist as possible.

And I imagine it can also be a little the same for the woman, who, probably more mature, would appreciate more light movements, of class and refined, rather the exuberance of some more or less brusque constrictions to carry out obligatory steps and sequences.

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