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Philosophical Context of Contemporary Choreographic Space

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Summary

The modern choreography, which has emerged at the crossroads of cultures, takes shape under the influence of this or that strongly pronounced philosophy. It embraces the period from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century's to this day and unites different artistic phenomena. Their common founding feature is opposing the canonized artistic experience and giving the dancer's body a new function. It is impossible to theoretically comprehend all this by means of the terminological systems and the traditional trans-cultural Meta language that existed before. Taking into consideration the philosophical context of the artistic processes facilitates the expression of identity in modern choreography. The paper touches upon the free dance, different branches of dance- modern (choreographic expressionism, neoclassicism, and constructivism), and contemporary dance. When discussing the free dance attention is concentrated on the activities associated with the a priori forms of the subject, the artist's intuition, the liberated idea of the body and soul. Bearing in mind the traditional ideas of psychoanalyses and Oriental philosophy the dance – modern is interpreted. The contemporary dance is represented in the light of the multiplicity of possibilities.

Key words: choreography, philosophy, body, contemporary, intuition.

Interest in the philosophical context of contemporary choreographic space is not accidental. Philosophy more and more distances from traditional philosophical categories and strives to approximate cultural, namely, art universals. What is more important, contemporary choreography originated at the crossroad of cultures is formed under the influence of this or that distinctly revealed philosophy. It encompasses the period from the turn of the 19th-20th centuries until this day and unites different artistic occurrences/phenomena. Their common basic feature is contradistinction of classical dance to canonized artistic experience and attribution of a new function to dancer's body.

It is difficult to theoretically interpret all this by means of terminological systems and traditional transcultural metalanguage existing before. This is why contemporary choreography has become a research topic of different science branches, philosophy among them.

We aim to shed light on the philosophical datum, which greatly influenced this branch of art and determined basic directions of its development, on the example of two basic fragments of choreographical space – Dance modern (first half of the 20th century) and Contemporary dance (from the second half of the 20th century to this day). The starting point of the discussion is non-classical culture oriented towards empiric reality, with its characteristic changeability of human anthropological parameters. The centre of attention is the functional perception of body, its interpretation as of the source of artistic expression.

The idea of "Body liberation" becomes urgent at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, as reaction to the society's technical and economical development, liberalization. It is reflected in all branches of culture, and acquires particular meaning in choreography. Its outlines were revealed first in the

Immanuel Kant's and later in the first half of the 19th century in Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy and were related to the activity of the a priori forms of subject's feelings, artist's intuition. Particularly important is Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the peace of body and soul and the birth of a new man. The word 'dance', encountered in almost all of his works, is the metaphor of life transformation. Also noteworthy is Henri Bergson's philosophy of "life excitation", with the new understanding of time and space and new flow of the conscious.

In this philosophical context the early variety of dance-modern – free dance is born. Its leaders idolized Nietzsche. Isadora Duncan's dance aimed to merge physical and spiritual initials, to model harmonious personality – the embodiment of physical and spiritual freedom. It is not surprising, that "free dance" turned into the means of social and political struggle. Duncan was the first dancer who in public speeches spoke about "woman of future". "Supreme mind in free body" – she quotes Nietzsche, thus indicating to the new vector in the development of choreography.

Dancer's body acquires new function in "free dance". This and not preliminarily determined forms of movement become the source of various meanings and ideas. The movement is related to the transmission of sensuous experience of artistic idea, its intuitional understanding. This determines its spontaneous, improvisational character, analogous stream of conscious flow. Theoretically this is substantiated by the choreographer and Doctor of philosophy Valeria Dienes –Henri Bergson's student at Sorbonne University, the founder of "free dance".

Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) psychoanalytical philosophy genetically related to Nietzsche's philosophy, irrational ideas of Eastern philosophy are reflected in dance modern – originated on the basis of "free dance". Let us focus on its stylistic features such as choreographic expression, neoclassicism and constructivism.

Expressionist dance originated in Germany from the synthesis of theoretical fundamentals of dramatic art and philosophical principles. It renders inner human conflict; seek for the truth, harsh emotional state. One of the first representatives of expressionist dance was Hungarian Rudolf Laban (1879-1958). He considered dance as a means for entering mystical world and sought for its evidence in the irrational ideas of Indian philosophy. Laban's choreography is steadily connected with his research in plastic art. He believes, that contemporary industrial society is under the press of restrictions devoid of any meaning, and dance is capable to liberate it from these restrictions. Laban elaborated the classification system of movements – kinetography, which considers movement according to four basic parameters: time, space, dynamics and stream. At the time Laban's viewpoints about art were considered doubtful, however they were adopted in the methodology of athletic exercises. From today's standpoint it is clear, that Laban made a serious step against the classical mind-body dualism. He was the first to regard dance as the form of corporal thinking and thus opened wide perspective to choreography.

Another aspect of expressionist dance is introduced in the works of Mary Wigman – German choreographer and dancer. Terrible deformity, hopelessness and fear dominate here. Wigman dances barefooted. Rough polylines, uncomely jumps show subconscious motives of human behavior, fixed composition is rejected. Existential anxiety is not overcome, evoking associations with Kafka's works, early examples of horror films. During her first performance in Zurich in 1916 Wigman danced not to music, but to the paraphrase from Nietzsche's book "Thus Spoke Zarathustra": 'I have always had two irreconcilable aspirations – towards ordinary-human, feminine and loneliness and dance'.

Specific manifestation of expressionist dance is the dominance of Dionysian initial and sinking of the subject into sensuous-stupefying parallel reality. This is impressionably reflected in the art of choreography thanks to its language rich in the specific, sensual dynamics possibilities. Wonderful examples of such expressionist dance are encountered in Russian choreography. In 1909 Michel

Fokine's (1880-1942) staged "Polovtsian Dances" on Borodin's music in Diaghilev's company. Dynamic, swift, purposeful development of symphony form contributes to the irrational self-oblivion of Dionysian images. Another example – Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring" also staged in Diaghilev's company by Vaslav Nijinsky, in which the revival of primeval instincts and accumulation of vital energetic develops into Bacchant dance-carousing.

Non-classical philosophy of solid key-points is also encountered in choreographic neoclassicism. In the classical Bergson and his followers did not see the space closed in itself, but the possibility for the origin and development of new forms. This is exactly what determines its connection with neoclassical categories at certain stage of development. Does this mean, that neoclassical dance neglects the cult of "new movement" characteristic of Dance Modern? Certainly not. Even modified it is the unconditional element of dance. The best example of this is George Balanchine's (1904-1983) creative work. The choreographer raised on the solid traditions of St. Petersburg school does not betray classical dance. At the same time he changes its usual way. Dance is presented as a visual analog of music. Balanchine's inspiration is the intonational scale, rhythmic pattern, timbre of music. This is not the only way to enrich the vocabulary of ballet, this is also performed by the application of "new movement" elements (lower limbs, as independent elements of body, unusual positions, etc).

According to non-classical philosophy in some cases the classical initial changes its image and approximates new rationality related to mathematical and geometrical calculations as a result of characteristic bifurcation. This is the case of choreographic constructivism. The examples of this are the dance experiments of Russian theatrical producer Kasyan Goleizovsky and German choreographer Oscar Schlemmer. The best example of choreographic constructivism is Sergei Prokofiev's ballet "The Leap of Steel" staged by Leonid Myasin in Diaghilev's company in 1927. The dance resembles accurately calculated construction. Two platforms are placed on the three-dimension stage, movable plungers, monitoring toggles, rotating wheels. In "Cars' Dance" the dancer's body movement is based on kinetic formulas. These formulas are subordinated to the same numerical regulations as the movement of mechanisms. Let us specify, that in Soviet Russia, choreographic constructivism acquires the image of proletkult.

Contemporary Dance is the continuation and development of Dance modern traditions. Spiritual and corporal initials, the past and present, natural and artificial movements – all this is presented in polyhedral synthesis and echoes the principal idea of postmodernist philosophy – multiplicity of cognitive possibilities. The foundation to the philosophical direction related to pluralism was laid by the British philosopher Bertrand Russell's idea on the application of pluralism in the cognitive theory. According to this philosophical direction the universe consists of the endless number of independent atoms connected only by external relations. Developing the idea of pluralism, Russell formulates the so-called 'Logical atomism' - the teaching on the logically connected sensual data that constitute the universe.

Here some examples on the intersection of philosophical idea and contemporary choreography. Similar to the philosophical idea of pluralism American dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham expands the concept of choreography and manipulates with different possibilities in time and space. He interprets the function of backbone in a new manner and according to ballet critics converts it into another limb. Cunningham applies the means for decentralization of musical-choreographic space, expands it by means of technological possibilities, choreographic aleatorics.

One of the central elements of post-Freudian philosophy – image-metaphor of labyrinth is frequently encountered in the performances of German dancer and choreographer Pina Bausch, which indicates that people have lost orientation in contemporary space.

The term “collective unconscious” introduced by Swiss philosopher Carl Jung is connected with primary psycho-philosophical structures, which provide the archaic experience of mankind and a priori readiness to perceive the universe. Linked to this philosophical idea are the creative principles of French choreographer Maurice Bejart. Bejart aims to return original, ritual character and meaning to dance. He believes that with his choreographic experiments it is possible to reveal the original, universal source of all nations’ dance art. This explains Bejart’s interest in African and Oriental dances.

Noteworthy is Japanese philosopher’s Kitaro Nishida’s interpretation of Martin Heidegger’s fundamental notion of existentialism “absence”, which establishes connection between Western philosophy and Buddhism. Nishida considers “absence” as the equivalent of “absolute emptiness”, and one of the means for understanding its absolute truth. Dance Butoh originated in Japan of the 1950s as a result of the creative tandem of the philosopher Tatsumi Hijikata and choreographer Min Tanaka. Its performers perceive their bodies as empty vessels, which should be filled with the signs of others’ lives – shadows, recollections, things, imaginary objects.

In conclusion it can be said that today the assimilation process of choreography and philosophy is strengthening. The choreographers are trying to establish creative contacts with philosophers (the French: choreographer Mathilde Monnier, and philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, Americans: choreographer William Forsythe and philosopher Alva Noe, etc. On their part a certain group of philosophers becomes interested in dance, as a model of thinking (German philosophers Monica Alarcon, Wolfgang Iser). They attribute the skill to generate and demonstrate thought to a dancing body. In already-existing “philosophy of dance” revealed is the multiplicity of perception possibilities and means.

It is not accidental that many international symposia and conferences have lately been dedicated to dance and thinking. They strengthen the positions of dance in social consciousness; explain the emergence of hybrid forms of art under globalization conditions, and on the other hand contribute to the development of thinking methods, vital philosophy and world perception.

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