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THE DANCE SCENE AND THE PROCESSES OF THE AESTHETIC TRANSGRESSION OF THE BODY

INTRODUCTION

The Greek concept of the "zoon politikon" man (see Aristotle, 384–322 BC) assumes a celebration of the body, understood as one of the gatherings of life energy in the cosmos (*energeia bios*), which can be found in rocks, plants, animals and man. This message has been strengthened and realised by the Greeks in the whole educational, military and religious system. This was true for at least 10 centuries. This was questioned with the appearance of the Christian ethics.

For the next 15 centuries bodily energy was reduced to exertion and hardship, life and work, which was used by man to redeem his visual sin, linked to the discovery of his bodily nudity. The human body is excluded from the positive perception of the world, from the erotic and aesthetic, for negative ethics and erotic of sin which takes its energy from the mind devoid of the body.

From a bodily man a substantially understood person is extracted (Anicius, M. S. Boecsus from Dacia, about 480–524), decorated with the mind, metaphysical non-body substance. Now the mind becomes the metaphysical form and the substitute body of man. Its mindfulness takes the functions of the body and reduces or annihilates it. The human as a "person" becomes a being which can cope without a physical body which is now substituted with the spiritual body.

Substantialisation and sacralisation of the mind and de-substantialisation and desacralization of the body has been alleviated by Descartes (1586–1650) who compared them with the mind (thinking) substance giving it back the equivalent position in the extended sphere, equal to the position of the mind located in the non-extended sphere (see *res cogitans* and *res extensa*).

This philosophical gesture of the rehabilitation of the body turned out to be partial, half-way. The desacralization of the body and sacralisation of the mind have been linked with the sacralisation of clothing. In the 19th century the critique of human bodily nature has been taken up again as well as the attempts to deconstruct the “original sin”, identified in Judeo-Christianity with the covetousness of the body.

On a literary level this critique has been joined by many prominent and creative thinkers, like Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) who said that nature is not “clean”: “it does not teach anything or almost anything, so it forces man to sleep, drink, to eat and protect oneself from the hardships of climate. She [nature, phyzis] pushes man to kill his neighbour, eat him, imprison and torture him; the moment we leave the order of necessities and needs to enter the order of luxury and pleasure, we see that nature can only advise crime. The infallible nature thought up fratricide, cannibalism and thousands of other atrocities which we will not name due to shame and delicacy”¹.

Ch. Baudelaire, when formulating his own opinions on the bodily nature of man, pointed out that the negativisation of the image of the body caused, by means of compensation, a development of the “theology of clothing”. The garb, costume, clothing have paradoxically become sacral substitutes of the deionised body, attributes of the its para-sexual image which can compensate the excluded bodily spheres thanks to clothing. The situation changed a bit more noticeably with the theory of evolution, especially at the end of the 19th century, when along with the theory of H. Bergson (1859–1941), appeared the psychoanalysis of Z. Freud (1856–1939). Thanks to their neuro- and psycho-biological “discoveries” they give new impulses when it comes to the perception (optics), biology and eroticism, opening new access to the body aesthetic.

With psychoanalysis the body, suppressed and masked thus far by clothing or religious rituals, appeared on the theatrical scene as a projection (sensual-urge-movement) reactivating its primal “wild” status in a changed context. Psychoanalysts’ studies show that energies which take the form of “scene dance” refer simply to the ecstatic form of being of a child in the pre-birth stage (spontaneous and physiological movements in mother’s womb). And next, after birth, they are formed during the crawling stage

¹ Ch. Baudelaire, *Rozmaitości estetyczne*, transl. J. Guze, Gdańsk, 2000, p. 338.

when the crossing of the brain-movement connections happens (right hemisphere – left side of the body, left hemisphere – right side of the body).

Earlier painters and sculptors and now dancers show the human body presenting its beauty and pain to the people who see them on “stage” identify with them not only mentally but also physically. On the stage and outside of it a visual, energetic, mental and sensual biofeedback is created, a physical-aesthetic and erotic-image perceptual-emotional loop which causes not only the dancer on the stage but also the viewer on the seat experience similar sensations and emotions.

1. BODY ON THE CLASSICAL MOVEMENT STAGE – A REDUCTIVE MODEL

As a result of the negative understanding of the body in Judeo-Christian culture, it has been put under strict control and pedagogical repression, as a part of religious, penitentiary, military and school education in Europe, which lasted until the second half of the 20th century. The philosophy of this process has been described and analysed by Michel Foucault (1926–1984)². His remarks regarding the repressive approach to the body can be referred to the “fine arts”. Especially to dance, known in a version of the exercise preparing candidates for ballet spectacles, where the moveable parts of the body are reduces to the movement of the articular skeletal system.

The role of the body in stage dance and its image has been subject to aesthetic procedures, which should make it “skinny”, free it from the weight of obesity and muscular overgrowth in order to achieve a type of visualisation of the exceptional states of the body. This could only happen on a special stage, in theatre, a sports field or ballet hall of a palace, and then in places meant for the visual presentations (exhibitions, catwalks, squares, salons, temples, theatres, etc.).

The candidates who want to take part in public, mass or private spectacles must undergo the procedure and discipline of the easthetisation of the body so it can be seen without breaking ethical and religious rules.

² M. Foucault, *Nadzorować i karać. Narodziny więzienia*, transl. T. Komendant, Warszawa 2009 (an there the fragments: “Ciało skazańców”, “Podatne ciała”, “Sposoby dobrego tresowania” or “Panoptyzm”). These descriptions can be compared to the bodily training in the army, cloister, sport or art.

Unless the spectacles were change into a type of comedy and parody of the models of behaviour, thinking and acting.

In all cases the “politics” of the body is linked with “physics”, “ethics”, “aesthetic” and is also realised by means of transgression procedures. In the system of art, the body and muscles are modelled, transformed and reduced. A man on stage must look different than in normal life occasions. The reduction of the body plays an important role in the transformation and transgression of the body, getting rid of too much muscle in order to arrive at an angelic body, slim, ethereal, girlish and virginal.

The clothing plays an important role in the transgression of the body. Outfits create an almost magical statues on the stage and outside of it (for example in the public or private sphere), they hide and substitute the body marked with demonic semantics. One can enumerate a number of bodily transgression procedures which can be observed during preparation of stage entry. Especially the ones related to dance stage.

In this article we will focus on three of those procedures: 1) transgression through the reduction of body in movement, poses and positions of classical dance (ballet) where the semantics and aesthetics of the body are correlated with the semantics of clothing which have advantage over body; 2) transgression through the psychophysical dissociation of the body and mind, taking away the linguistic, acoustic and verbal functions; 3) transgression through developed intersomatic functions created by a naked body, generative transgression.

The repressive, sado-masochistic model of treating the body using aesthetic rules can be seen in all classical dance (ballet) projects which dominated the court stages until expressionist dance appeared where not the body was reduced but the clothing. Stage clothing has been minimized to a tricot. Because of this, the body is hidden but not enough to exclude it from full view. Now the whole shape can be seen, the skeletal and muscular system, and in the case of men, the special genital spheres are also highlighted.

Interested in the aesthetic of the body of man, Ch. Baudelaire sarcastically convinced his readers that the absolute beauty is a dream, it is only an aesthetic package of the spiritual body which now substitutes the physical body. Its temple is the wardrobe with the godly costumes, “like a package of heavenly delicacy, funny, exciting and raising the appetite”³. Baudelaire

³ Ch. Baudelaire, *Rozmaitości estetyczne*, transl. J. Guze, Gdańsk 2000, p. 311.

spoke of the 19th century ideal of man, whose religion is fashion, the clothing covering his sinful body. His power is in the mirror, “the altar of the dandy, the holy place of the blessed, where man must spend many hours of each day. It (the wardrobe) is a witness of the internal struggles with body. Excluding the body from the God’s project resulted in the appearance of fetishistic compensation, visible for example in stage games, in theatrical and dance spectacles.

In the process of the visual reduction of the body in its physical structure various sets of compensatory additions and decorator-related fetishes overlap. They can enrich the semantics and aesthetic of the body dancing on the stage. Together with the physical and aesthetic compensation of deficits the fragments which could too intensively eroticise the viewers perception are also excluded from the field of view.

With time there appeared a need to use techniques of contrasting the perception of the body (black and white) or to colourise the bodies of the dancers, their clothes and stage by make up (powdering) and lighting. “Pink and black symbolise life, the supernatural and excessive life; a black frame adds depth and unusual to a look, makes the eye look even more like a window open to the endless; pink, by lighting up a cheek, makes the pupil lighter and a beautiful female face gains the sensual secretiveness of a priestess. [...] a smooth tricot immediately makes the human look like a sculpture, like a godly, superior figure”⁴.

The secrets of visualisation and seeing the body in a stage-dance-dancer-viewer system can be described using the mirror metaphor used by Jean Paul Sartre (1905–1980). A body connected with the system of mirror projections allows individual to see one’s own body only thanks to intersomatic relations. This ploy is described by J-P. Sartre in his “No Exit” drama, when one of the characters (Stella) looks at herself through the eyes of another. “The perception of my body is placed chronologically after the perception of another body”⁵. This discovery increases the value of seeing a body in motion and in discovering one’s identity.

In the 19th century stage dance was based on different constructions, formats, reductions and deconstructions of multidimensional forms and reactions of the body. In classical stage dance, like ballet, aesthetic and ethic

⁴ Ibidem, p. 340.

⁵ J-P. Sartre, *Przy drzwiach zamkniętych*, transl. J. Kott, Warszawa 2007, p. 450.

transgression of the body is about exposing the physically reduced but also artificially extended and lengthened skeletal system and reduced clothing of the dancer. On the transparency and virtuousness of the body, the torso of which is hidden with decorative clothing (package). There are physical and aesthetic substitute of the body – a costume from gauze, tulle, velvet, etc.

The reduction of the physical central image of the body fragment is compensated by the elongation of the leg – points, stretching of the neck, lifting arms up, etc. A artificial gait, jumps, spins, steps and splits, throwing arms and legs up, are used almost like automatic gestures and poses of the dancing body by a fragmentary exposition of partially shown or hidden parts. The body is partially hidden by long, sweeping clothes which hide the deficits or excesses of the physical structure with a benefit for the projection of movement, based on artificial positions and not on the physiology. This is true for every classical stage movement project based on the rules of classical dance, realized by ascetic transgression.

The spectators of classical stage dance have a chance to identify with the elongated, emaciated body of the stage characters, treat it and themselves as they see physically prepared characters, “toys”, aesthetic objects, decorative objects, fantasied, almost angelic or diabolic, unreal or super-real, identified with the matter that hides it. This model of seeing the body is substitutional, sublimatory, transgressive, it shows it in a phase of unfulfillment, dream, fantasy, in a state which gives the movement of the body a dramatic look.

The delineation of physical, semantic and aesthetic borders of the body on the stage is supposed to stimulate emotions, which are not set by dance itself but by the plot which does not have much to do with the real semantic of the body. The dance fits this plot by means of body movements, using movement and bodily code, imposed in a free way on the choreographic project /similar to an opera/.

Due to a reduction of the body, the stage message must be complemented by “additional” systems of narration – plot, music, movement, etc. A special example can be found in the modern adaptation of the “Tristan” ballet to Richard Wagner’s (1813–1883) music in which the director and choreographer (Krzysztof Pastor) added three narrations, the plot (story about Tristan and Isolde), stage (dance) and metastage (song). The choreographer realised that “half-classical” dance which is based on points, approaches and classical poses must be completed by simultaneous ac-

tions, group walks, group dances which contextualise the choreographic behaviour on the main characters⁶.

The excess of “beautiful” but ragged movement, repeated in a limited set by a group of almost identically dressed characters gives a monochrome, mono-syntonic effect, an effect of over-coherence, rigidity and perceptive boredom. Dance based on bodily deficiencies, happening almost without a body but also without a soul, must be complemented by stenography, light and even video-projections. All of this shows a type of spiritual world in the physical, frankly speaking mechanical or dead, world.

That is why apart from the choreographic narration vocal narration appears and it enlivens and complements spiritual deficiency, impossible to take out of a scathingly treated body. Its spirituality is shown in move tricks, turns, jumps, raises which expresses the quite ascetic, reduced physical sphere of the one’s dancing in a classical manner. Song is the voice of the soul but it is the voice of a soul separated of the body, coming from outside of the stage, on its boundaries in liminal situations. It is needed here but somehow alien. The dance itself supports the weak body which acts actively in the sphere of articular skeletal movement mechanisms, in a state of little bodily, emotional and spiritual vitality.

That is a reason for the triple movement narration systems, which create the reistic, somatic and magical “whole” of classical dance which we can see in ballet, according to choreography which values more the discipline of movement and freedom of expression which we expect from dance actions on the stage. This opinion is not changed by the great performances, including those by Maja Plisecka, Galina Ułanowa, Margot Fonteyn or different stars of the ballet scene. They are only transgressed by the “stars” and in a way changed, but they are “miraculous” exceptions.

2. BODY ON THE PERFORMATIVE MOVEMENT STAGE – A DISSOCIATIVE MODEL

Vinko Globokar which called one of his works *?Corporel?* (from the Latin corpus – body) used a body immobilised in one place as a source of sounds correlated with different states of consciousness/unconsciousness. The rest-

⁶ T. Kobierzycki, *Ja symbiotyczne w balecie. Krzysztof Pastor*, [in:] *Jaźń i twórczość. Studia z filozofii człowieka*, Warszawa 2012, p. 132–145.

ing positions of the bodies (sitting and moving hands) are completed by automatic contractions of the body, patting, scratching, rubbing, hitting, pinching, etc. can be treated like a phenomena of the movement mean of expression of psychophysical processes, which are a type of body language.

We get to know the body in automatic reactions and its vocalizations, for example screaming, squeals, cries, whispers, groaning, snoring, shrieks, moaning, etc. We also get to know it by means of the semantics of speech, in body-language vocalizations (phonetic triangle – <a-e-i-o-u>) and in communicative distortions, like: stuttering, obsessive grunting, purring, whistling, etc.

Bodily acoustics is linked with its physics (kinetics), semantics and aesthetics. Thanks to them a basis for non-verbal, acoustic-somatic, movement-somatic and movement-semantic communication is created. In this way one can communicate thoughts that cannot be expressed verbally. The work of Globokar uses the human body as an instrument, as source of sound and as a source of ifs objectivity, consciousness and unconsciousness. The dilemmas of the body and carnality, its analysis is achieved by a performer's reference to "body art" as well as "abject art".

?Corporel ? is a body-musical art based on the play with a body limited when it comes to movement and the body is immobilised in a sitting position, legs are excluded from the movement and the hands are active to compensate – they touch it in a way stimulating the imagination and somatic /half asleep, half conscious/ sphere of the body. It is in a state of waking to movement which is reduced to auto-perceptive gestures which finally are supposed to awake the perception of the body and activate it on the level of consciousness which does not happen in the work.

On Globokar's stage the body undergoes transgression, it acts like a body-weapon, body-instrument or body-machine⁷. But most of all as an aesthetic body. The body and psyche melt together and split in it and outside of it in different situations. These kind of splits and synthesis are functional, necessary, effective and explicit. They can be recognized by exploring "expression", approaches, poses, positions, gestures, action, way of walking, sitting, running, jumping, laying and other body activities which a person needs to keep up one's life.

⁷ M. Foucault, *Podatne ciało*, [in:] Ibidem, Nadzorować i karać, Warszawa 2009, p. 149.

Leszek Lorent, who realized the performative project of V. Globokar lent him his almost naked body for the realization of his physiological, psychological and aesthetic concept⁸. In the “Prologue” the performer sits on a platform, his head is lowered, he stoops. His fingers grind together, touch each other in nervous tics, spasms. The active body simulates little hiccups, gradually raising his hands over his head. Later he lowers them and hides his face in his hands.

In this project the body is treated as an object, as mechanical entity. This is not a silent body like in classical dance but it is a source of speech which escapes the alphabet and sense. Because of this it may be identified as a body in the process of primal communication or as a “mentally ill object” – the body is not too mobile (the body and mind stay disconnected just like with mental illness).

In the 14th fragment of the score the author points to the psychological variants and dimensions of the body – there the body stops sitting and purring and becomes phonological, “singing”. The melody is linked with physics, semantics and the aesthetics of childhood, reminding of the past years in the mind of the madman. It is ascetic, sung like a child with no pathos nor culmination, in full balance with the sitting and motion limited body. In this way the carnality /stable/ denies the childishness /unstable/.

In fragment 30 of the score, L. Lorent assumes that “hitting the body should be reduced to a minimum. Each hit is the effect of a suffering mind independent from the body. Each part of the body stays inert; the mind orders the hit and because of this it gets thrown back (the artist hit his arm with his hand – the shoulder gets thrown back as it was not a part of the body), only a part of the mind or body movement which comes from the psychotic activity of the mind and body, which is rigid, stays in a stupor, left by the mind which deals with oneself outside of the body”.

On *Youtube* you can find recordings of other performers, man and a woman. Both of them show the somatic-musical score of Globokar himself who requires the performer to sit on the floor, L. Lorent sits on a platform, like a sculpture made by Michelangelo. This naked body is lighted up with a bright light which reminds of statue made out of white marble.

⁸ L. Lorent, *Wybrane aspekty wykonawcze multiperskusyjnych traktatów dźwiękowych I. Xenakisa, V. Globokara i M. Błażewicza*, Warszawa 2011.

In Globokar's composition, we deal with an overlapping of two types of language – the bodily one and psychical one, with the cultural (spiritual) language which allows for interpretation on a naive, non-physical level. The score starts with a static scene in which the performer hides his face behind his hands. The mask is made out of hands, it hides the expression through which the human 'I' is manifested. It can be kept only when staying still in moments of overwhelming convulsions, stupor. The first sound interventions realized by means of the voice of the performer are based on the rustling, nasopharyngeal consonants: h, f, s which are accompanied by a sound created by rubbing the body with open hands.

The performer went in the direction of theatrical, symmetric, aesthetically harmonized somatic. He avoids extreme gestures which appear in real madness. In fragment 5 of the score, Globokar introduces a new sound quality which is linked with the gradual uncovering of the face. The performer issues sounds by hitting the lower jaw teeth with the upper jaw teeth with the simultaneous modulation of the tone and a gradual *ritardando*. So what we have here is gesticulating body, on a elementary level, which abandons the will to fully express oneself so in the dance movement which is denied here due to the movement of the communication into the alogical sphere.

Into the alogical bodily communication the author adds movement and tapping of the teeth, which denies the cultural forms of utilizing the teeth for biting, chewing, eating and only secondarily for vocalization or speech. This is not about the physiological function but about the psychological, or even psychotic one, when a psychologically tense person chatters or grinds their teeth.

When someone speaks only using consonants or vowels can be suspected of neuro-somatic or neuro-psychological disorders. The separate use of vowels and consonants without their function being integrated in speech and vocalization can suggest that Globokar really wants to distort the communication which can be better expressed by gestures than in a vocalisation system or phonetic system of speech.

The second layer is formed by sounds created by hitting the appropriate body parts and thus creating somatic (bodily) sound. Layer three is created by energetic rubbing of certain body parts of the performer with the simultaneous issuing of onomatopoeic sounds. The sound of the somatic action is enriched and complemented by the sound of the vocalised action up to its somatic, vocalization and movement break. The body is the frame

of the drama which changes movement into immobility and cognitive gestures into gesticulation devoid of visual (and visible) purpose.

The feeling of the aimlessness of the functioning of one's body and its non-source position in world causes the dancer-performer to fall onto the floor, go rigid and partially or temporarily loses consciousness. An attempt at regaining consciousness, which is expressed by movement, is present in the form of convulsions as signs of the turning off the neuro-transmitters in the human brain. They are supposed to look like a mild epilepsy seizure, the sickness of the saints, which haunted mystics and/or people suffering from life/and death. (see: S. Kierkegaard (1813–1855)).

The first layer of the intersomatic (inter-bodily) dance is made up of onomatopoeic sounds, the second of rhythmical movement interventions. The voice of the performer, along with his movements and gestures, is one of the main elements of this composition. It gives it vibration and a somatic-percussive phonic compels the imaginations of internal movement which happens outside of the boundaries of the visible body sitting in one place.

The exposed body of the performed with only the genital area hidden, sends the viewer outside of what is visible, into the internal sphere, into the distance where disappears beyond the horizon what is visible, into the sphere of movement and sound which leave the body to incorporate the empty space. In order to rouse the fantasies of the viewer or listener who hears the hum of the body of the performer and the viewer in the space. Maybe it allows one to see the invisible areas of the body which breathes in a place it should escape in order to live. But despite that it sits in the place of its misfortune. Its thoughts and emotions escape, the movements symbolise an escape along with the silent body.

Among the basic positions of the body – laying, standing, sitting, moving (walking, falling, jumping), etc – only laying means an initial and final state, in an absolute sense the moment of birth and death. In different conditions laying, just like the other body positions, has a double meaning, ambivalent or split, sleeping or not awake. In V. Globokar's work, the body movement ends in horizontal position. But this is not the final position, the performer after going through autistic regression and somatic psychosis, gets up, bows and leaves.

The body of the performer wakes up despite the gestures according to which the only possible rescue is to end one's life, it is manifested in the final hit to the stomach (sudden, sharp, unexpected connected with

an intensive and short voice emission). The last acoustic impulse which is produced by the performed and the lighting of the stage marks the beginning and end of the performance in a symbolic manner – just like the slowing body movement has a chance to change into the movement of life. At this point the viewer regains not only the voice without movement but movement without losing one's voice.

In this kind of game with the hidden issues of the body shown at the stage we deal with a psychological deincorporation which becomes a kind of a freeing and cleansing game with oneself. This kind of bodily game frees its psychological signs and correlates which – as part of the fantasising – embodies what is masked, intangible. They allow one to be free of suppression of emotions, in the process of aesthetization of what has been pushed into the non-ethical zone, blocking the movement of the body and mind, stopped with guilt, imposed and made permanent by a painful incorporation of cultural rules linked to the politics of the body.

3. BODY ON THE GENERATIVE MOVEMENT STAGE – AN AESTHETIC MODEL

The modern aesthetic goes beyond the idea based on the techniques of imitation and metaphorization (Greek: mimesis and poises) or the semantics (and loftiness) of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) in the direction of non-normative aesthetic systems. Trance, magical, hypnotic, sympathy and assimilation become more important according to Henri Bergson (1859–1941)⁹. The impressions (Greek: aisthesis) which suspend the normal way of our feelings become important, freeing the “extraordinary” feelings: extreme and unique, liminal and limitless, majority and minority, surface and deep, etc. Such states cause aesthetic perception, stimuli send from the outside of the adaptive code, creating individual codes, states and creative situations.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century the fine arts dealt with the problem of nudity as a physical, ethical and aesthetic image of world understanding in which the man is the last “clothed” being, hiding the body due to hygienic, ethical, aesthetic as well as climate

⁹ H. Bergson, *Ewolucja twórcza*, transl. F. Znaniecki, Kraków 2004; see F. Maj, *Zarys filozofii twórczości H. Bergsona*, Warszawa 2010.

reasons. Sculptors and painters have the largest merits when it comes to the testing of the aesthetic content of the naked body but merit also goes to sportsmen, doctors, child pedagogy and psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology and human philosophy. Aesthetics up to this point feels halted in its reflection upon the naked body in motion (or in dance, skipping the “classical” paintings of F. Goya and E. Degas) as an art object. And it more often takes the ethical or religious perspective and not an aesthetic one.

Currently the aesthetic of the naked body is researched by scientists and creators which can be seen by globally realised photographic sessions (via the internet) which show the body in biological, social and aesthetic roles. The dancing body in projects realized on dance stages can be seen very rarely. And yet on the 31st of July 2015 at 20:30 in Muffathalle (in Munich) Doris Uhlich, a dancer and choreographer from Vienna presented a spectacle called “More than Naked” which lasted over 60 minutes and in which 60 people took part (including the choreographer as DJ) as well as nine women and nine man of university level as dancers – all fully naked, a thing impossible (?) in Poland not only artistically but also mentally.

What could have been danced in full light, naked for over an hour and in such a large group? Possibly that Rudolf van Laban (1879–1958) called dance – a conscious and directional movement which takes place between tension and relaxation¹⁰. To this definition we should add the opinion of a modern researcher of art approaches, Arnold Berleant: “Dance explains and strengthens the experience of lively movement which is natural for all experiences. The direct sense which lies in the dance brings with a feeling of freedom”¹¹.

In “More than Naked” freedom becomes a psychological and aesthetic issue which neutralises the possible negative ethical contexts, giving them a positive character. The dance of naked bodies on a large stage and with a large audience was a kind of confrontation of multicultural notions of the body of the dancers and the viewers who came from different cultural part of Europe, assimilating culture and patters of the bodily codes of non-European cultures. And thus the nakedness became a key for the dance of the diversity of bodily models, of a different age, which in their

¹⁰ R. von Laban, *Die Welt der Tanzers*, Stuttgart 1920, p. 20.

¹¹ A. Berleant, *Prze-mysleć estetykę. Niepokorne eseje o estetyce i sztuce*, transl. M. Korusiewicz, T. Markiewka, Kraków 2007, p. 115.

nakedness become alike each other, achieve sanctions of unity, even on a level of sexual differences which became less significant as the aesthetic project unfolded.

One of the effects which come from the watching of the spectacle is a kind of perceptive transformation according to the poignant comment from Merce Cunningham which said that dance is such an intensive action that for a short time the body and the mind become one and the same¹². Political or religious freedom cannot be achieved without a freedom of the body. Stoic freedom, possible even in chains, is not enough what has been pointed out by G.W.F. Hegel in his "The Phenomenology of Spirit". But a freedom of the body is not possible without the freedom of the mind. Without a distortion of the imaginary borders set up by means of regular blackmail which uses fear and violence at the guard of the celebration of the old cultural patterns.

"More than Naked" is thus freedom but also love and fear which close the body in a religious manner in the intimate sphere even when only two people look at each other. This dyadic freedom of nudity is usually correlated with a dyadic love of nudity, in this spectacle there more dyads and the erotic correlation of the body has been substituted with aesthetic correlation in which the body in relation has been shown in a physio-technical manner from the point of view of the fitness of the body parts, cognized as by the students of Greek gymnasions (Greek, gymnos means naked), caring about physical fitness, treated on par with mental fitness.

In this spectacle one could see the intelligence of the body, its many abilities, hard to imagine for the viewer brought up in a phobic, repressive and not affirmative code. It seems that with time all of the findings of Z. Freud have fallen flat, as he based his understanding of the body on repression and guilt. Maybe they worked only at the beginning of the spectacle which was viewed according to the psychoanalytic cognitive code. The aesthetic perception prevailed and it neutralized the possible phobias and imaginations of the viewers who saw the public or even just stage viewing of the body as a danger to their own identity and loyalty to their own cultural, religious and ethical codes which regulated their bodily

¹² M. Cunningham, *The Impermanent Art*, [in:] R. Kostelanez (red.), *Esthetics Contemporary*, Bufalo, p. 150.

imaginations, feelings, thoughts and behaviours. In this case we see the real metaphysics or metasomatics, which appeared during the movement of the body the dance stage. A true rarity.

The body and the psyche are usually steered by culture: “race, class, gender and geography come alive thanks to bodily forms and structures. These structures, linked with cultural, social, gender or race differences are part of the living bodies”¹³. In this spectacle these differences disappeared, the gender differences were blurred on the level of perception and aesthetics, so one could have the impression that the dancing person is both single as well as double, made out of two genetic elements, the male and the female. These on the other hand could be revealed as a type of symmetry of form in male and female bodies in a balanced and complimentary way. And this, as we remember, has been pointed by Plato (427–347 BC) who saw the body and soul integratively.

Doris Uhlich taught the dancers to activate almost all of the fragments of their bodies with unrivalled precision and expression, just like with sporting exercises, the movement of the muscles proved a special mastery. Later the same movement exercises shown in a exaggerated manner usually caused stifled laughter and chanting from the audience. All of this happened very quickly, effectively, elegantly and symmetrically. Lifts and carries, dragging and body hits appeared with the dancer who created not only the solistic techno-aesthetic images of one’s own body but also created them in dyads, triads and groups, treating their task in a way which connected aesthetic and narcissistic potential being a part of the beautiful, colourful and diverse dimensions and temperaments of the body¹⁴.

¹³ G. Weiss, *Body Images: Embodiment as Incorporality*, London and New York 1999.

¹⁴ D. Uhlich, “More than Naked”, *Choreografie – Doris Uhlich, Kuenstleriche Beratung – Yoshie Maruoka, Dramaturgische Zusamenarbeit – Christine Standfest. Mit Uve Brauns, Hugo Le Brigand, Eyal Bromberg, Carla Morera Cruzate, Ewa Dziarnowska, Anna Friedrich, Lotta Halinen, Raul Marquez Gaitan, Christina Gazi, Andrea Gunnlaugsdottir, Andrius Mulokas, Mzamo Nondlwana, Yali Rivlin, Roni Sagi, Josipa Stulic, Maria Teresa Tanzarella, Mnuela Calleja Valderrama, Anna Virkkunen, Sebastian Zuber. Licht & Ton – Gerald Pappenberger. Produktion – Christine Sbaschnigg, Theresa Rauter. Koproduktion – Im PulsTanz/ Vienna International Dance Festival & insert (Theaterverein). Mit – Dauer ca.60 Minuten. Im Anschluss Gespräch mit Doris Uhlich und Walter Heun. Das Gastspiel findet mit freundliche Unterstuzung des Bundeskanzleramts Oesterreich – Sektion Kunst/ Kultur statt..).*

In this generative, contact dance the nudity disappeared due to the impression made by the movement patterns realised on stage, They could be compared to a danced performed like colourful ornaments, cut-outs, which recreated the harmonious, symmetrical bodily pattern of the planned figures in dance. This is how it has been seen by person who treats the bodies of men and women from the “cancer” incapacitating and hurtful for the body (and mind), dr Ewa Kilar from Wrocław. We have seen this spectacle with another medical professional, a nurse from Munich, Bożena Drozdek.

This is what has been noted by E. Kilar -”The bodies of the dancers were different – they showed a great potential for tangible-visible and spatial integration and disintegration, accentuated in moments of climax with the sounds of music. The bodies of the artists also became music. The crazy dynamic of the men and women filled the time of the spectacle so that there was nothing apart from it. And what happened? At beginning perfect knowledge of one another was shown – their bodily abilities by “convincing” different parts of the body to move – vibrate – oscillate. The muscles of the face, hands, legs, breasts, abdomens, buttocks, own muscles and the muscles of the co-creators, men and women”¹⁵.

Bożena Drozdek pointed to fact that “In a regular theatre made up can be used on bodies, they can be beautified or dramatized, here I have seen living anatomy and the physiology of bodies in motion, of man and women. Never before have I seen nudity exposed in such a way and in such a number. Especially vibrating muscles which show the internal movement of the muscles. This was amazing, surprising. Naked body in dance”¹⁶.

Scenic routines – one, two, three or four-person, both male/female and male-female, were showing a difference of the perception of the viewer, which were created. For example: intentional bumping into each other of women resulted in a sound alike “clapping”. A different sound was created for example when the movement was transferred when standing using the abdomen on the level of the buttocks. A different one appeared in the laying position – when one person “fell” onto another creating connected

¹⁵ E. Kilar, *Notes from the “More than Naked” spectacle*, dir. D. Uhlich, Monachium, 15.VIII.2015.

¹⁶ B. Drozdek, *A note from the “More than Naked” spectacle*, dir. D. Uhlich, Monachium, 15.VIII.2015.

sets”¹⁷. I would add that men also “bumped” into each other and their bodies also “clapped”. But the tone was different. All of the acoustic and musical parts were perfect.

As stated in the program: Licht/Światło & Ton/Dźwięk – Gerald Pappenberger. In this case the opinion of Władysław Witwicki (pseudonym of Józef Sas Wasylkowicz 1878–1948) is confirmed when he wrote: “From the movement and body postures one could create rhythmical wholes, constructed in the same way as acoustic wholes, called musical passages. They can have the same tempo and same rhythmical variety. The only thing that is missing in the movement is the natural equivalents of different qualities of sound. That is why the poetic expression about the “melody” of the body movements of the human body is just a metaphor. If the movement and body postures had a characteristic, equivalent to sounds of different height of sounds, it would probably be easier to deal with quiet dance nothing would be missing; however dance usually requires music as background and creates a whole only together with it”¹⁸.

Doris Uhlich, the director and producer, placed herself in this role as part of the DJ, which at end stands at the equipment, dressed only in half, in leather underwear. More or less 2/3 in the spectacle, other dancers went off the stage, she ran into the middle of the stage, took of her jacket and waving it she shown herself in full nudity, making a couple of perfect turns, after which she returned to her post, continuing the dance-music action from the mixing desk. She continued to control the rest of this musically magnificent spectacle of dance. Later the dancers returned to the stage but wearing shoes which they took of later, returning to the ideal of the naked, dancing body. In this way a deconstruction of the function of shoes happened which quickly turn human being into a military one.

In this dance the naked body is shown as a physical object but most of all as an aesthetic subject and object, thanks to a dance movement, which is an expression of bodily transcendence. The memory of the body in “paradise” is initialized here, which is identical to the human I, free of

¹⁷ E. Kilar, *Notes from the “More than Naked” spectacle*, dir. D. Uhlich, Monachium, 15.VIII.2015.

¹⁸ W. Witwicki, *Wstęp. O naturze tańca*, [in:] M. Gliński (red.), *Muzyka t.1*, 1930, p. 10 (7–14); see: M. Kania, *Taniec widowiskowy w ujęciu polskich teoretyków estetyki* (W. Witwicki, S. Szuman, J. Ostrowski-Naumoff), Warszawa 2015.

sin, beauty and redeemed. The performance also reminded that the nakedness was celebrated in Greek sculpture in the turn of the 7th century BC, in the person of the kouros – a naked young man, and kora – a clothed young woman. Until the 4th century BC it was forbidden to show female nudity. Now this nudity has been shown as a type of archetype thanks to which the differences in the status of men and women disappear in the world of physical, ethical and aesthetic freedom.

CONCLUSION

From the beginning the body and nudity were under a double power (a “yes” and “no” conjunction), so under the power of ambivalence. It can be found in the philosophical reflection of Plato who did not allow for disjunction (of the either “yes” or “no” type) – “There you are, curse you – a lovely sight! Have a real good look” (Plato, *The Republik*, book IV). Such ambivalence appeared on the pages of the Hebrew Book of Genesis – “I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself” (Gen 3,10). Thanks to Uhlich’s spectacle one could say “I have seen I am naked” and I was happy at heart, hidden in a dim auditorium illuminated by the stage lights.

However some viewers laughed, “oohed” and “aahed” and then screamed and clapped. This were signs of cognitive ambivalence, signs of cognition which have not found their expression in verbal comments but they stopped at the level of simple vocal and movement reactions (fidgeting in their seats, sighing, scratching, leaning, etc).

D. Uhlich achieved in this spectacle a deconstruction of bodily shame but also emotional and mental shame, turning the known biblical phrase which changes to positive erotic perspective into a negative ethical rule, for example in the sentence – “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked” (Gen. 3,7). The viewers of the spectacle called “More than Naked”, at least some of them, opened their eyes and realized they were clothed. So they are “sinless” (absolved) because they are clothed and because they have known nudity as a positive state of the body – aesthetic, not just erotic, just like Adam and Eve in Paradise (in the garden of Eden).

The relation between shame and sin generated by the biblical or evangelical formula used in Europe when you want to describe the clothed-

naked (or exposed) relation disappeared in this case. Maybe the changes to this paradigm stated in the “sinful body” idea are caused partially by the movement, stage movement, dance movement, dance as a transgression of sin and shame. This is the function of dance – an aesthetic therapy which neutralizes or even absorbs the feeling of shame, inscribed in the educational system by means of religious codes.

Maybe here we had seen a case of the ambivalence phenomenon, as described by Giorgio Agamben in his “Nudity” essay when analyzing the Vanessa Beecroft performance called VB55 (April 2005) as well as the reactions similar to those which were caused by the photographs of Helmut Newton, which can be found in a German gallery of modern art. The photographs of 100 naked women look “provocatively” at ashamed (clothed) viewers. Just like with similar actions of this type, images of nudity sometimes lead to questioning. The viewers are excited and curious at first but with time they start to feel stronger and stronger shame and confusion. In order to neutralize the tension in the naked-clothed relation, they seem not to notice the viewed nudity at all.

In classical dance (ballet) it is not humans who are dancing, but human dolls, dancers set in “kingly”, “fable” roles with the highest degree of impossibility and improbability which appear in psychotic fantasies. This is the basic dancer-role-person transgression which causes regression in the viewer, allows to go back imaginatively and emotionally to the land of childhood. There everything is physically smaller, more delicate but emotionally stronger and fabulously wonderful. What is little and unreal changes into what is big, although it is only connected with fantasy, in which the body copes with every deficit, repression and suppression. Then even a tired body and psyche of the spectator can achieve aesthetic salvation and/or damnation.

The human brain has a language code which is full of signifying elements, signals of sense, created by generations by means of evolution. What is signified, meaning sense, develops gradually from what is sensual. Noam Chomsky and Claude Levi–Strauss pointed to this. The latter’s lectures on consciousness/unconsciousness of the “wild” were attended by V. Globokar during university. Maybe this is lead which takes us not to culture experts and neurolinguists but to Pythagoreans or Jewish kabbalists.

Not everyone stayed for the discussion after the spectacle (maybe to the late hour). One can assume that at least for a part of the viewers,

the deconstruction of bodily shame was transformed into an affirmation of carnality. Dance is a way to affirm the body in a wider perspective in which it is an expression of healthy, pluralistic identity. Such affirmation which can cope without symbolic reduction and fetishistic compensation as it was true for classical dance.

As it seems Lech Witkowski's concept of "duality" gives a more realistic chance to analyse the transgression of the body on stage. It allows to clearly differentiate between bodily strategies based on symbiotic relations and projections which glue together the perceptions of the viewer into monoliths from the relations based on autonomous relations supporting dyad, triad or tetrad perceptions in a pluralistic, multi-sided manner. But this would require a different type of analysis and new semantics of the body, its physiological movement, physical dynamics but also artistic performance studies and stage dance.

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SUMMARY

The author of the “The dance scene and the processes of the aesthetic transgression of the body” article analyzes the question of ethical and aesthetic rehabilitation of the body in modern dance. His input is contextualized by references to old Greek culture and its ideal of the “good and beautiful body” (*kalos kai aghatos*). And he compares it with the “sinful and painful body” ideal in Jude-Christian culture. He shows how negative bodily identifications are transgressed on the dance scene. The shows of Krzysztof Pastor, Leszek Lorent and Doris Uhlich are used as illustrations of transgression technique of the renewal of the aesthetic of the body.

Key words: body, dance, aesthetic, nudity, transgression.