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Doctor of Arts in Dance

Dissertation: *Olemisen poeettinen liike. Tanssin uuden paradigman taidefilosofisia tulkintoja Martin Heideggerin ajattelun valossa sekä taiteellinen työ vuosia 1996-1999.*

Appendix: *Alexander-tekniikka ja autenttinen liike. Kaksi kehontietoisuuden harjoittamisen metodia. (Alexander-technique and the Authentic Movement -work. Two methods for practising bodily knowledge.)*

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The Poetic Movement of Being: philosophical interpretations of the new paradigm of dance in the light of Martin Heidegger's thinking and the artistic work in years 1996-1999

My artistic doctorate in dance became involved in exploring dance art, the skills of a dancer and a dance work's manner of being, in other words, in contemplating the ontology of dance. In this written thesis (*The Poetic Movement of Being: philosophical interpretations of the new paradigm of dance in the light of Martin Heidegger's thinking and the artistic work in years 1996-1999*) I reflect upon the ontology of a new paradigm of dance through examining dance history and my own dance experiences with the aid of Martin Heidegger's thinking. My intention is to illuminate the manner in which the tradition of aesthetics has historically formed the preconceptions of dance art and to create a divergent interpretation of the ontology of dance.

The first part of this thesis deals with Martin Heidegger's thinking.¹ In it I present his interpretation of the intertwining of metaphysics and aesthetics and discuss his proposal for an un-aesthetic mode of viewing art. Heidegger attempts to bring forth a new way of thinking about art in which it is not only considered to be a matter of aesthetic experience but also understood in relation

¹ Of Heidegger's works the most important for this investigation have been the following: *Kuusi ratkaisevaa tosiseikkaa estetiikan historiasta* (Sechs Grundtatsachen aus der Geschichte der Ästhetik, Nietzsche I – II, 1989), *Taideteoksen alkuperä* (Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes, 1935/1936) and *Oleminen ja aika* (Sein und Zeit, 1927).

to a disclosure of truth. In Heidegger's analysis this notion is closely affiliated with the conception of the nature of truth in western thought. Heidegger asks how metaphysics has pushed us to encounter reality, and he answers that it has done so in such a way that our involvement in the mutual ground of Being has been forgotten.

Heidegger argues that the tradition of aesthetics relies upon a platonic metaphysics in which reality is revealed to us through the distinction of the supra-sensible (ideal) and sensible (material) realms. According to this view, truth is about conceiving the right idea which veils or makes us forget beings' own Being. This is the metaphysical ground which continued to inform the conceptual model of artworks throughout western history: an artwork is formed matter which allows the supra-sensible to shine through itself; an artwork imitates reality, which is revealed through conception of the right idea; it is a symbol, an allegory, a metaphor, a representation.

Heidegger unravels this aesthetic way of understanding art while he simultaneously rethinks the history of western metaphysics. Heidegger does not approach art as a vehicle for representing the contents of the supra-sensible but considers it an opening-up of a world or a disclosure of reality. With this stand the Greek term *techne* becomes important to him. *Techne* denotes a human mode of knowing through which human beings draw *phusis* (being, the prevalent) to disclose a world – a significant and meaningful circuit of openness.

Heidegger believes art to be this kind of an erecting of a world and a field of disclosure of a new reality which does not concern the truth of beings but the unconcealedness of being's "beingness". The unconcealedness of being can never be the mere conceiving of the right idea, never sheer disclosedness. It involves the fathomless concealment, the secretive withdrawal of the not-yet-uncovered. What metaphysics has forgotten, according to Heidegger, is the opening of reality as a disclosure, which contains that from which it occurs – the undisclosed.

Since Heidegger thinks of art as this kind of a place for the happening of unconcealedness, he also emphasizes that an artwork is not a representation of something previously disclosed. It is only in the artwork itself that what at the moment comes-to-present springs forth. An artwork does not imitate reality. Instead, the figure, the *Gestalt*, of the artwork with its earth-world structure wrests and brings forth the happening of the disclosedness of being set-into-work in the work itself. It is in this way that an artwork is not an aesthetic object nor an initiator of aesthetic experience. Rather, it offers a possibility to participate in the unconcealedness of being which is taking place in the artwork.

According to my interpretation, what interlinks Heidegger's philosophy and the new paradigm of dance art is exactly his conception of art as the disclosedness of existence. The difference between the aesthetic understanding of dance and the new orientation of dance becomes

evident after “uncoiling” from the aesthetic tradition and presenting a new way of conceiving art in the first section of this book, and when I move into making interpretations of dance in the second part of the thesis

First, I examine and analyze the kinds of preconceptions aesthetics has offered dance art as well as the kinds of preconceptions “the metaphysics of subjectivity” (which objectifies being and is derived from platonic metaphysics culminating in Descartes’ thinking) has offered for the understanding of bodily being. I illuminate how within the aesthetic tradition and during the so-called era of the foundational Cartesian attitude it has been “natural” to conceive of the human body as aesthetically mouldable matter and a dance work as a scenic and symbolic performance. Within this perspective, the skills of an artist have been considered to be in close affiliation with the techniques of production. Accordingly, the choreographer’s skills can be viewed as the ability to organize moving bodies in space and time and to create an aesthetically constructed form, a movement composition, utilising the motional body as a material.

After addressing the above issues, I present the new paradigmatic orientation of dance, which has been influential during the last decades and has deviated from the aesthetic tradition. In it the body is not considered first and foremost to be mouldable matter but a manner of the happening of existence. I combine this new way of conceiving the body and dance, on the one hand, with Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics, the philosophy of existence and phenomenology, and on the other hand, with the Asian bodily traditions of wisdom. I believe the latter to have strongly influenced the evolvement of the new paradigm of dance and the new way of understanding a dancer's skills.

According to my interpretation, in the new paradigm the foundation for the meaningfulness of dance art is not in aesthetically formed movements but in the manner in which dance sets up the disclosedness of existence as bodily consciousness, conscious motion. Rather than the dancer attempting to construct a performance that is about the world, she or he receives and reveals being. The dancer draws from the kinetics of *phusis*, that is, the *happening* of being, which he or she is *unveiling*, shining forth. Dance does not utilize space, time, and form like some objectified material but discloses being’s temporal and spatial happening, a kinetic *logos*, the bodily involvement in being, interpreted through a historically situated world. In this instance, a dancer’s skill cannot be understood as a technique of production, but as bodily knowledge, which is about generating disclosedness.

A dancer’s bodily knowledge is the ability to stay within the immediate and instantaneous "here" moment, in the integrity of the body-mind, in which the instrumental and habitual everyday way of conceiving the body is released into revealing the non-concealed, a poetic manner of being.

This makes the *remembering of* and *opening upon* our existential situatedness possible, which is thrown in-the-midst-of being-towards-death and being-with-others in the historical world. This kind of dance *lays out a world* in its involvement with being. It is '*ekstasis*': stepping out of attachment to the prevalent and already signified contemporaneousness into the openness and potentiality of the self and being. It breaks chronological time and radically opens the *situation* in a "chairotic", instantaneous moment where the signifying of the world happens as bodily poetry, poetic motion.

In this way practising dance can be understood as a place for exploring bodily consciousness. In turn, a choreographic process can be understood as a place where kinetic being and the remembrance of our existential situatedness are interpreted through a setting-up of an art work as a *Gestalt*.

In the third part of this report I address five dance works affiliated with this doctoral investigation. Here I present the process of creating these pieces as well as their structure, *Gestalt* and mode of being. On the one hand, I construct a creative interpretation that is mindful of the dance. On the other hand, I discuss the difficulties which I encountered while creating and studying these works. The preconceptions of creating choreography are still rooted in the aesthetic tradition, and this historical perspective cannot directly be applied to the new orientation of dance. The following question remained, partially. In what way does the dancer's new *techne* meet the challenges of a choreographic work?

In my investigation I interpreted the dancer's *techne* as the practice of bodily consciousness, which can be related to both exploring the functional intelligence of the body and exploring the world-opening force of motion. However, I consider a certain *techne* of reflective non-reaction even more fundamental to these aspects. Non-reaction releases a dancer from the habitual and instrumental patterns of moving and brings her or him into the "here" moment of body-mind integrity. In the appendix to this book I introduce two approaches to practising bodily consciousness by which these different aspects of embodied awareness can be rehearsed. They are the Alexander Technique and Authentic Movement, which draws on Jung's method of active imagination.

This investigation was an attempt to take the interlinking of Heidegger's thinking and the conceptions of dance worked upon in earlier dance research further. Despite the fact that the contradiction between philosophy and art still remains, I feel that with this doctoral thesis I took a preliminary step towards the direction in which philosophy is not only a tool for explaining dance. I hope that my dialogue with philosophy has helped the new paradigm of dance art become visible in its own way of being and that through the poetics of bodily existence some new topics can be opened for philosophy.

