

Anoixist Dance: Naturalistic Pursuit Through the Body

Lei Liu

Anoixist School, Nanjing

ABSTRACT

Anoixist Dance is a form of dance that isn't limited by subject or restricted by time, space, or region. It advocates for free body expression, pursues the unification of nature with humanity, and strives to achieve oneness with nature, depersonalization (derealization), and attain a state of nirvana. The primary characteristic of Anoixist Dance is openness, stemming from the philosophical notions of Anoixism, pertaining to openness and acceptance of all possibilities, including the fullest respect toward nature, life, and freedom. Anoixist Dance transcends the specialized limitations, requirements, and aesthetics of traditional dance. It places the needs of life as its basis, considering the utmost respect for using one's body to freely express themselves through dance. In the body's most natural state, Anoixist Dance becomes the rhythm of life, where this state of dance reaches a pure form of spiritual activity. It is freeing, limbering, leading us back to nature and the oneness of body and mind.

KEYWORDS

Anoixism; Anoixist Philosophy; Anoixist Dance; Naturalism

1 Introduction

Anoixist Dance and its artistic contemplations are based on the openness and accepting principles of Anoixism; letting all living beings in the universe survive and grow naturally, and not discriminating against any possibility in life. Here, dance is not only viewed as a venue for cultural and artistic education developing intellect, creativity, and aesthetics, but also as a form of spiritual enlightenment, beginning with the body and its liberation, and the pleasure of releasing the body's energy. The concept of Anoixist Dance isn't for the medium of dance, but for bringing liberation to people and harmony between nature and humanity. It is a way of life.

Anoixism is a new contemporary philosophy proposed by Weilin Fang. Anoixism, also referred to as Phoenixism, is an open and innovative doctrine from the Anoixist School. It believes that a single unit that has opened in real-time has indeterminate parameters. They communicate and interact with each other through external Anoixist activities. It advocates that each individual or social unit can communicate and interact with each other through their openness, collaboration and innovation.^[1]

The French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty once said "I am not in front of my body, I am in it or rather I am it"^[2] The ancient philosophers of the East felt the same way. Ancient Chinese philosophers believed that the body is a small universe, striving for the unification of man and nature and the unity of body and mind. The medium of dance is the body, conveying limitless emotions through the tangible body. Dance is one's feeling of life, understanding of life, and the embodiment of inner peace and wisdom. The dancing motions after triggering emotions shouldn't be subject to any limitations of time, space, or status, and aren't constrained by any concept or form of dance, expressing the sincerest feelings of the soul through the body. Dance is profoundly

mysterious and moving, because the art of dance is so intrinsically related to the human life experience, both physically and spiritually. Expressing the consciousness of life through dance is the direct and indirect symbolic expression of life. Therefore, dance is the transmission of one's emotional meaning under the unconscious state of life, and is the penetrating transmission of an emotional atmosphere. Natural, real, and pure, dance is the most natural state of human life.

2 Anoixism and Anoixist Dance

The open-mindedness of Anoixist Dance stems from the principles of Anoixism toward nature, life, and the openness of human nature. Anoixism is a new contemporary philosophy that has recently spread from Asia to the rest of the world, which was brought forward by Weilin Fang. Anoixism takes openness as its core principle, accepting and acknowledging all other theories and philosophies as its starting point. Anoixist naturalism and Phoenixist liberalism are the two primary parts of Anoixist ethics. Starting from human nature, the rights of everyone are respected through Phoenixism Constitutionalism. Phoenixism maintains the utmost respect for freedom from its principle of openness, maximizes the state of freedom through "Free State Pareto Optimality," and supports "minimizing moral constraints" and "minimizing violence (control)." Phoenixism brought forward a non-violent type of liberalism, keeping reservations for violence, for the sake of respecting the value of nature, life, and humanity.^[3]

Anoixist Dance is a style of dance that developed from the notions of Anoixism. It conveys a limitless number of subjects, has no partiality to gender, race, or color, and can be practiced by anybody regardless of size, shape, or status. It's characterized by opening one's body to the nature of particular fields of space and time through dance, and the ultimate goal is to achieve a state of nirvana composed of oneness with nature, depersonalization, and the realization of nothingness.

Dance has been with mankind since its first movement; drawing breath, and its first expression; crying tears, and it will always remain with mankind because dance is the most fundamental and simple means that one can inherently communicate their feelings and ideas. Dance is an art form expressed through "the art of body movement." The movements of dance are rhythmic, expressive, and technical. It coordinates with music as well as the formation's arrangement, and can sometimes involve improvisation. Dance is an ancient art form, and has been cultivated in different cultures. It appears in many forms of social life, such as commercial exchanges and ritual sacrifices, and contains different cultural messages about aesthetics, literature, anthropology, sociality, and education.

Typically, the so-called dance education considers dance itself as the educational objective. Studying dance performance skills for the sake of one day performing them on the stage, is dance education specialized for the sake of dance. In other words, it is learning established dances or skills. However, aside from dance education for the sake of professional development, it can be extended to be "using dance as education" or "educating through dance," that is, the educational dance of providing quality education through dance, its purpose can also be said is the improvement of quality and the cultivation of personality.^[4] Teaching dance is not only for the performing arts but also for designing appropriate artistic dance activities, with the intention of growth. The American philosopher and educator John Dewey, in his educational ideological system, said that "education is growth," emphasizing that education ought to provide people with the conditions to ensure a full, healthy life. Aside from the healthy growth of the body, "growth" includes "intellectual" or "moral" growth. With that in mind, the former is a kind of vocational dance education, and the latter is a kind of artistic quality education. Dance education and educational dance are not a dependent relationship but belong to two entirely different concepts.

Art is the closest “human” subject, and has been called “humanities.” The Greeks used to think of “humanities” as “philanthropia”, or as “kind spirit” or “unbiased loved.” However, those fluent in Latin gave the power of the Greek term “paideia” to “humanities,” which is also what we call “higher art education and training.” Scholars that seriously pursue and yearn for this knowledge could be considered “the most complete person,” because, among all creatures, mankind alone seeks artistic knowledge and receives training, hence the “human” in “humanities.”^[5] The foundation of education is people, thoughtful people that have a sense of beauty and nobility. Education, as an activity to change people through culture, is to stimulate people’s ability to feel finer emotions. In other words, the foundation of a good education is to rouse a full sense of beauty and human emotion. This feeling begins in the body. The body is the foundation of all education, and activating the body’s senses is the foundation of all good education. It starts with the return to the individual self with the physical body and its senses. Starting from the individual body, release it to dance freely, enjoying the rhythm of harmony between people and nature. Anoixist Dance is based on the Anoixist principles of openness and acceptance, allowing every living being in the universe to naturally exist and grow, and accepting any possibilities in life. More importantly, Anoixist Dance can reconstruct the Anoixist “personality” of dance, combining east and west, as well as the past, present, and future. It not only explores the open movement, form, and style of dance, but also maintains open dance attitudes, dance pursuits, and dance phenomena. Without boundaries, this is a fascinating open integration of different ideas and traditions in the ideal world of dance. Freely expressing dance with the body, realizing the liberation and freedom of the mind.

3 Anoixist Dance: Liberating Life Through the Body

As an art with body movements being its main form of expression, dance has a positive physiological effect on the balanced development of the brain, as well as the coordinated development of the body and mind. This is dance’s development of human intelligence. As an art form that centers its expression on emotional expression, from the perspective of the performing arts, dance requires its dancers to convey meaning through body language. This is the second aspect of dance’s development toward human intelligence. Here, not only is dance regarded as an art, a discipline, or a technique, but it is also hopefully able to reconstruct the Anoixist “personality” of dance. Anoixist Dance is not just physical liberation, but also the coexisting “inclusion” of various dance “voices.” It opens the closed mentality of the dance world and changes from a restricted dialogue into one that is open and accepting. This is fundamental to the Anoixist notion of openness to nature, life, and human nature. In practicing Anoixist Dance, there lies the significance of “dance liberation”, “human liberation”, and “aesthetic liberation.”

The field of dance steps outside of professional limitations, requirements, and aesthetics. Dance is not only a performance art for the stage. Everyone can have a dancer’s passion and poetry, among many emotions in one’s life. Dance is not just art, but also the nature of life itself. The natural state of freedom contains the value of life. This is what dance always carries, this is its unwavering, ultimate mission. Within dance lies the power of religion, the tension of philosophy, the prowess of medicine, the objectivity of physics, the variation of chemistry, the broadness of humanities, the flexibility of youth, the unrestrained nature of animals, and the existence of nature.

The American dancer Isadora Duncan, the founder of modern dance, was the first artist in the world to perform on stage barefoot and with cut hair. Duncan’s dancing not only emphasized natural form but emphasized spiritual freedom as well. She believed that the courtly style of dance confined the artist’s mind and emotions, and she stipulated that “[her] ultimate goal is to break the chains on dance, open the doors, and set it free again,”^[6] to create “a new dance that isn’t bound to

a fixed form and can freely express the dancer's thoughts and emotions."^[7] Duncan believed that the art of dance stems from the motive power of natural body movement and the wave movements of nature: the movement of the sea, the wind, and the earth, which constantly rest in an enduring harmony. She believed that the intended task of dance is to find the most beautiful forms of nature and to discover the movements that can express the spirit of these forms. Her thoughts on aesthetics could be summarized into one sentence: beauty is nature. She drew inspiration from classical music, and pursued dances that "can divine the human spirit through body movements." She believed that technique would soil the natural beauty of the body, that movement comes from self-perception, and that dance should express life in its entirety. Therefore, Duncan's dancing is the expression of freedom, and the dance is read as cultural transcendence, which rejects constraints, dichotomizes the inner feelings and the external behaviors of the body, and advocates for the combination of art and nature. Beauty is nature, and free growth itself is a very beautiful state of life. Like a tree, growing, maturing, and flowering all its life, the result is only inevitable. The most important thing is to experience the ever-changing facets of life: spring, summer, autumn and winter, sunshine, rain, wind, frost, and snow, year after year, to naturally grow into a large tree. The concept of Anoxist dance is not dancing for the sake of dancing, but rather a need of life, respectfully using one's body to express their feelings, and getting enjoyment out of dancing. This is the greatest value of the concept of Anoxist dance.

4 Returning to Nature, Freeing the Body

Georg Hegel once said in his Lectures of Aesthetics: "The highest in sensuous form is, therefore, closer to natural phenomena, closer to feelings and emotions."^[8] Art and its shared common ground with religion and philosophy, are an important part of one's free sense of self. Artworks are "the first unifying medium, which uses sensibility and spirit, and utilizes the limitless freedom of nature and the mind's capacity."^[9] Dance is a special kind of physical activity that incorporates artistic body language to express one's emotions and show the body language of human spiritual life. Dance is truly one's sensibilities of life, apperception of life, and inner knowledge. It's difficult to unify a method and standard for the actions after emotional gestation because everyone's perceptions and comprehension all have personal styles, which show emotional body language through the subject's inner feelings. Feeling is the essence of all movement and dance. This kind of feeling begins with the physical body and its sensibilities. The body's ability to feel is the basis of all life, and the most closely related to the body is dance.

To treat the body correctly and healthily, respect your body, exert your body, and express your real emotional experiences, all require the complete liberation of the body and mind. In fact, the liberation of the body is the first step of dancing, because the body is the most direct carrier for humans, whereas text and language, which have been the second or third carrier, are means of expression. Dance needs literature first, yet this literature is not a novel or a story in the typical sense, but rather words such as a poem, an impression, or a place. Literature boils down to thought, in that it has a meaning, one that touches the heart. Therefore, dance may require a philosophical proposition, with a light-bearing of philosophical significance.

Considering the body as a unit, explore, search and discover the awakening of the body's "hidden" energy. In Anoxist dance, body and movement not only stand in the perspective of dance art for training one's ability to dance, but also stand in the perspective of dance as a "rhythm of life." For example, Western sculptors have created sculptures of the beauty of human movement. Those static body shapes capture the state of the body in motion, which goes beyond the movement itself. It is a spiritual moment of hope, persistence, progress, and excitement. When

moving, the body erupts into “a moment of beauty.” This perfect state of movement is natural and presents a vibrant, primal life force: the strings of muscles, the rhythm of breath, and even the firmness of the eyes. It is a transcendental spiritual activity, but more so is mankind’s search for oneself and their inner spiritual world.

Through the emotional and colorful art of dance, the life energy contained within the body is “awakened” and steadily “matures.” Here, “maturing” is a natural state of movement in which the body freely dances. Once dance has entered this realm, the body has already broken out of various forms of bondage, and the movement has already broken free of its stiff simulations. At this moment, dance has already entered into a free and open state in which one can fully express themselves. Without this liberation and freedom of the body, the harmony and rhythm of dance would be missing, and there would not be the inexhaustibly profound beauty of “the rhythm of life.” This shows that Anoxist dance is a path to spiritual freedom and depersonalization that transcends the secular world, all through dance.

It can be concluded that the concept of Anoxist dance is not a general concept of dance education or educational dance, but rather the spiritual concept of respecting nature, life, and the pursuit of beauty and harmony. The entirety of life’s movement and tremors that one feels through dance is the dynamic process of life itself. Through the “personality” of this Anoxist dance, the development and innovation of all dances in the world can be facilitated. In the future, when people live with less and less physical troubles, dance, akin to the state of *The Last Aristocrat*, will joyfully inhabit and dominate the world. In that time, we will need, depend on, and return to dance. Dance will become the best way for human beings to achieve oneness in body and mind.

References

- [1] Ye Shu, *The Song of Green Island*, Nanjing University Library, 2010.
- [2] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, , Translated by Zihui Jiang, The Commercial Press, 2001, p.198.
- [3] Weilin Fang, *Anoxism and Its Idealistic Pursuit*, *International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology* Vol. 12, No. 2 (2015).
- [4] Pin Wang, *A Preliminary Study on Laban's Thoughts of Dance Education*, Master's Degree Thesis of Shanghai Normal University, 2007.p.11.
- [5] The original Latin text: "Qui uerba Latina fecerunt quique his probe uti sunt, 'humanitatem' non id esse uoluerunt, quod udogus existimat quodque a Graecis φιανθρωπι? α dicitur et significat dexteritatem quandem beniuolentiamque erga omnis homines promiscam, sed 'humanitatem' appellauerunt id propemodum, quod Graeci παιδε? αv uocant, nos eruditionem institutionemque in bonas artis dicimus. Quas qui sinceritur cupiunt adpetuntque, hi sunt uel maxime humanissimi. Huius enim scientiae cura et disciplina ex uniueris animantibus uni homini datast idcircoque 'humanitas' appellata est." 见 Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, ed. with critical introduction, P. K. Marshall, *Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis* (Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1968), 2: 399-400. See R. S. Crane, *The Idea of the Humanities and Other Essays Critical and Historical* 2 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1: 23.
- [6] Alma Duncan, Aaron Rose McDougall, *Duncan's Last Years*, Translated by Yin Su, Qi Lujia, and Jin Hong, Tianjin Baihua Literature and Art Publishing House, 2006.P.181
- [7] Isadora Duncan, *Isadora Duncan's Lecture on Dancing*, Kyushu Publishing House, 2006.P.245
- [8] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die sthetik*, TWA Bd. 13,(Frankfurt a. M . 1969 ff) 89 — 91.
- [9] Ibid.