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SOME REMARKS ON CONCEPTUAL DANCE FROM RICHARD SHUSTERMAN'S PRAGMATIST PERSPECTIVE

My whole life dance has been an inspiration for me. Ever since I was a child I loved dancing and singing. My everyday life was passing in the rhythm of music. It was that experience that got me into the philosophy of dance and that is when I first encountered Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics. It was interesting to me because Shusterman kept on saying it was his own experience with actual dancers that inspired its development. I started to wonder if performances such as Xavier Le Roy's *Untitled* fall within the assumptions of somaesthetics.

The shows of artists such as Le Roy, Jan Ritsema and Jonathan Burrows cannot be classified as art in the traditional sense, but neither can they be labeled as everyday life or as theory—because they are situated on the borderline of these fields. In fact, their aim is to dismantle the determinants of dance as art, to critique accepted conventions, including those based on the division of the audience and the stage, and of the roles of the spectator and the artist.¹

The main purpose of this article is to consider how performances that are called conceptual dance can be included in Richard Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics². In Shusterman's pragmatism, following John Dewey, the emphasis is placed on the continuity between theory and practice, thinking and acting. This focus is also problematized in some of the performances of Le Roy's *Untitled* and

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¹ Thus, in order to fully consider such performances, the adoption of a transdisciplinary approach is necessary. I use the term transdisciplinarity in the sense in which it is used by the German researcher Doris Bachman-Medick. See Doris Bachman-Medick, *Cultural turns. Nowe kierunki w naukach o kulturze*, trans. Krystyna Krzemieniowa (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2012).

² Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Ritsema and Burrows's *Weak Dance Strong Questions*, which I would like to consider in this article. Their performances address the problem of bodily interaction based on dismantling the hidden perceptual habits of the spectator in the space of dance. The issue of the performative agency of the artists' bodies that critically questions the internalized conventions of the artworld is also tackled. What ought to be stressed is that dancers engage in critical practice. They don't see the need to define dance as art.

Using their example, I want to emphasise that the destabilization of the perceptual process, and the challenging of habits and expectations are treated as aesthetically and cognitively important components of the experience of art. In that sense, this activity falls within the assumptions of Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics which is based on somatic naturalism of Dewey's conception. Shusterman builds his conception on dominance of experience in a wider sense. He traces and develops somatic and sensual aspects of aesthetic experience present in Dewey's writings. He criticises analytical aesthetics for focusing on dividing art and non-art. He is not interested in defining art. He prefers looking at it from the perspective of feelings, sensations and bodily experience.

In this text I would like to draw attention to the critical potential³ of bodily experience thus understood. Firstly, placing special emphasis on the subliminal message from the side of the artist/choreographer, through how the artist acts with their body, which performatively⁴ affects the viewer. Secondly, from the side of the spectator, how their bodies react to what the artist has planned, how they sense the choreographic message, and how they react to a performance that involves their body.

What are the basic theses? Shusterman creates somaesthetics as an interdisciplinary project which goes beyond the lines currently dividing various fields.⁵ He explains, "somaesthetics can be provisionally defined as the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning"⁶. He criticizes traditional

³ Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁴ In terms of understanding performativity in relation to dance, I refer to Josette Féral's proposal and the distinctive features of performative theatre she mentions. For a more detailed treatment of this issue, see Josette Féral, *Théorie et Pratique du théâtre. Au-delà des limites* (Montpellier: L'Entretemps, 2011).

⁵ In the second edition of *Pragmatist Aesthetics* Shusterman added the chapter entitled "Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal". Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics. Living Beauty, Rethinking Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

⁶ Richard Shusterman, "Somaestetyka [Somaesthetics]," *Biuletyn Polskiego Towarzystwa Estetycznego* no. 7 (1) (Autumn-Winter, 2005): 1.

aesthetics for separating art from the practice of everyday life, referring to Alexander Baumgarten, among others.⁷ Shusterman went back to the roots of Baumgarten's aesthetic thought, demonstrating that the author of *Aesthetica* stood for the cognitive value of sensory perception and established this particular direction of the study not only to achieve "better thinking", but also a better life. In doing so, he reintroduces a long-forgotten ancient conception of philosophy as an embodied practice of life. Somaesthetics could be considered a subdiscipline of philosophy, but only in a very specific sense, that is, as a kind of embodied way of life, related to the ideals of ancient Confucianism or Asian thought. The most valuable aspects of Shusterman's project are undoubtedly meliorative approach to the study as well as practical and pragmatic conclusions regarding the methods of self-perfection of the body's experience

Shusterman uses Dewey's term "body-mind", so he treats the body non-dualistically, and conceives of experience in a similar way to Dewey – as an interaction, an active, bodily action.⁸ Following him, he adopted a broad conception of experience, and did not limit it to the sphere of art⁹. He aims as Dewey at "recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living."¹⁰ He only perceives the aesthetic experience as a part of the human life. Shusterman doesn't see a work of art as an independent objective entity, but as a special, experiential meaning that comes to life in the process of experience (which is not discursive). Shusterman criticises Dewey's "experiential definition of art and essentialist theory of aesthetic experience."¹¹ He questions Dewey's "half-hearted approach to popular art," and contests his "excessive reliance on immediate experience as the foundation for all thought and the criterion for justifying aesthetic value."¹² He

⁷ Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57, no. 3 (Summer, 1999): 20; Shusterman, "Somaestetyka [Somaesthetics]", 1; Shusterman, Richard. 2006. "Thinking Through the Body, Education for the Humanities: A Plea for Somaesthetics." *Journal of Aesthetics Education* 40, no 1 (Spring, 2006): 1–21.

⁸ About interaction in Dewey's conception see: Krystyna Wilkoszewska, *Sztuka jako rytm życia. Rekonstrukcja filozofii sztuki Johna Deweya* [Art as the rhythm of life: Reconstructing John Dewey's philosophy of art] (Kraków: Universitas, 2001); Stankiewicz 2012, 15–16; John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley, *Knowing and the Known* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949).

⁹ Richard Shusterman, "The End of Aesthetic Experience," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, no. 1 (Winter, 1997): 22; idem, „Estetyka pragmatyczna – od przeszłości do przyszłości,” in Krystyna Wilkoszewska. *Sztuka jako rytm życia. Rekonstrukcja filozofii sztuki Johna Deweya* [Art as the rhythm of life: Reconstructing John Dewey's philosophy of art]. Kraków: Universitas, 2001, 179.

¹⁰ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 16.

¹¹ SHUSTERMAN, 2000, ix.

¹² Ibid.

emphasises the artwork's relational mode of being.¹³ The common features of his approach are antifundationalism, panrelationism and antiessentialism.

Shusterman criticises dance aesthetics and the philosophy of dance for concentrating on how we can distinguish, identify, or know the work of dance in abstraction from the dancer who performs and embodies it. He accuses them of the "focus on objective dance-works (and their performances) as abstracted from the experience of the humans who perform them."¹⁴ According to him attention is devoted to what could be called theatre dance-works, that is, works of dance that are explicitly designed and performed for audiences in theatre or concert venues. One of the values of dance is "its performative practice as an experiential process that contributes to the performer's art of living."¹⁵

He stresses that "one of the values of dance is the educational training it gives its real practitioners, those dancing somaesthetic subjectivities. It is an education in disciplined, skilled movement, expressive gesture, and elegant bearing whose experience in performance can afford the dancer the joys and healing harmony of somaesthetic pleasure and whose mastery also has beneficial uses in real life off stage"¹⁶. I want to put a special emphasis on the connection between the practical and the aesthetic in his approach. He states: "This educational perspective further suggests how the value of dance spectatorship can extend beyond the voyeuristic hedonism of watching beautiful, scantily clothed bodies displaying themselves in alluring motions. Carefully and empathetically observing the dancers' skillful elegance and grace can inspire and teach us to become more graceful, skilled, versatile, and expressive in our own real-life movements."¹⁷

According to Pieter't Jonck, conceptual art is a hybrid, a "rival definition of contemporary dance" that is at odds with what dance practice has hitherto been identified with. For these artists undertake actions on the borderline between

¹³ According to Wilkoszewska: "The demarcation between high-brow art and popular art loses its justification when faced with practice (and for pragmatist aesthetics this is essential). In practice both the work of art and the work that aspires to be art don't just belong to the category of fine art or the category of popular art. They are located somewhere in between these two (...); "The fact of pragmatist aesthetics preferring the sphere of "between," as being closest to real-life praxis, over polar oppositions, deserves constant stress. To put it in Deweyan terms, nouns are all too often hipostases of adjectives, and these can be graded. If we were to grasp art in an adjectival way, the dilemma of whether something is or isn't a work of art gives way to the dilemma *to what extent* it is a work of art." Krystyna Wilkoszewska, "Remarks on Richard Shusterman's Pragmatist Aesthetics." *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (2012): 12–13.

¹⁴ Richard Shusterman, "Dance as Art, Theatre and Practice. Somaesthetics Perspectives," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 44, no. 1 (2019): 144.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 158.

¹⁷ Ibid.

dance and performance, exploring the spaces “between” dance and non-dance, but also between practice and theory – hence they are therefore performative actions.¹⁸ The performance maker and theorist Bojana Cvejič explains that the term conceptual dance causes unnecessary confusion.¹⁹ In the discussion panel called “Not conceptual” (led by Burrows with Jérôme Bel and Le Roy), it was argued that conceptualism tends to be associated with excessive theorizing, and therefore with a strong separation between what is thought and what is felt, between what is dance and what is not; with prioritizing the mind and reducing the dancers’ actions to a passive reproduction of the choreographer’s ideas—this is one of the reasons why artists request that this term not be used.²⁰ Yet the works of such artists are “highly performative”, they constitute a conceptualization of the criteria of dance.²¹ In an attempt to describe the relationship between conceptualism in the visual arts and conceptualism in dance, Cvejič lists some similarities between them, such as: self-reflection, criticism of institutions and the art market, and rejection of the monopoly of art-dealers and intellectuals who claim the right to determine what is dance and what is not.

If we consider their specificity and diversity, the activities of the aforementioned artists, they can be described as open, denying the boundaries between art forms, engaging in critical practice, self-conscious, and manipulating the process of perception. Hence the concept of intermediality (which was introduced by Dick Higgins), combined with performance art, also seems to be relevant here. It rather suggests exploring the space of raw, undefined works, which cannot be easily located within the world of art, or cannot be pigeonholed in a particular genre that matches precisely to conceptual dance. Perhaps Marco De Marinis is right to use the term performative dance instead of conceptual dance when dealing with Jérôme Bel’s works, which are also referred to with terms such as ‘non-dance,’ ‘a-dance’ etc.²²

¹⁸ Here I have in mind the German researcher Fischer Lichte, who refers to Austin’s performative as interpreted by Judith Butler, and uses the example of the performative to explain how performance works when the boundary between private and public, between subject and object, is removed. Ericka Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Powers of Performance. A New Aesthetics*, trans. Jain I. Saska (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), 46.

¹⁹ There is a lack of consensus and conflicting opinions among the theorists with regard to how the work of such artists should be described, given the artists themselves reject the term ‘conceptual’

²⁰ Jeroen Fabius, “Zaginiona historia tańca (nie)konceptualnego,” in *Świadomość ruchu. Teksty o tańcu współczesnym* [Movement awareness. Texts about contemporary dance], ed. Jadwiga Majewska (Kraków: Korporacja HA!ART, 2013), 308, 309.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Marco de Marinis, „Performans i teatr. Od aktora do performerera i z powrotem [Performance and theater: From actor to performer and back],” trans. Ewa Bal, in *Performans, performatywność*,

André Lepecki describes artistic performances which are based on stillness, an interruption of “a flow and continuum movement.”²³ Artists such as Bel, Le Roy, Juan Domingez, etc. negate an essential connection of dance with movement. According to Lepecki any choreographic questioning of dance’s identity as *being-in-flow* is “a critical act of deep ontological impact.”²⁴ Lepecki quotes words of one of the critics of the performance titled *Jérôme Bell* (published in the *Irish Times*): “There was nothing in the performance {he} would describe as dance, which he defined as ‘people moving rhythmically, jumping up and down, usually to music but not always.’”²⁵ Lepecki concludes that the critic “articulated a clear ontology of dance”. In his opinion artists like Bel free dance from ontological criteria and aesthetical ideology that shaped the critical standards for evaluating dance’s aesthetic value. He calls these activities a symptom of a “down-town” of dance or a “down-town” in dance’s critical discourse. According to him modern dance “is situated in contested space, between the choreographic and theoretical, the corporeal and the ideological.”²⁶ Lepecki proposes his own project of “dance’s political ontology” instead and suggests that “dance ontological questions retain open” in the artists’ performative activity.²⁷ That way artists free dance from the ideology of modern aesthetics and “an ideological program of defining, fixing, and reproducing what should be valued as dance and what should be excluded from its realm as futureless, insignificant or obscene.”²⁸ In his opinion this dance activities have “a theoretical potential.”

Conceptual dance, like performance, due to its evident critical strategies, aims to overturn conceptual boundaries. It is often politically determined. As Cvejič and Le Roy write, it falls into the paradox that, although it has its origins in the criticism of institutions, it also functions within them by exposing or dismantling ideologies.²⁹ It is supposed to be “in-between,” to perform and to break down genre or media distinctions, resisting attempts to name. This is how RoseLee

performer. Próby definicji i analizy krytyczne [Performance, performativity, performer: Attempts at definitions and critical analyses], ed. Ewa Bal and Wanda Świątkowska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2013), 145.

²³ André Lepecki, “Concept and Presence. The Contemporary European Dance Scene,” in *Re-thinking Dance History: A Reader*, ed. Alexander Carter (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), 6 f.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1–18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁹ Bojana Cvejič, Xavier Le Roy, and Gerald Siegmund, “The End With Judgment by Way of Clarification”, in *It Takes Place When it Doesn’t: On Dance and Performance*, ed. Martina Hochmuth, Krassimira Kruschkova, and Georg Schollhammer (Frankfurt: Revolver-Archiv für Aktuelle Kunst, 2006), 49–58.

Goldberg conceives it.³⁰ Lepecki also thinks that a distinguishing feature of such artists is their lack of interest in the dance label.³¹ When Goldberg refers to dance, he draws attention to those works of artists from various fields who cooperate with each other; dancers, artists and musicians, and thus works that are difficult to class as dance or a happening, dance or non-dance, that blur the boundaries between life and art.³²

It is precisely this aspect, that it is “difficult to tell the difference”, that has become a conscious strategy of criticism and resistance on the part of dancers, but also an expression of their becoming involved in politics. In Jonathan Burrows' interpretation, the instability, the constant changeability of works, the fact that it is impossible to determine what kind of spectacle it was constitutes an element of artists' opposition.³³ According to Burrows, the “performative confrontation of the dancers” (from performing alone, through to collective performance) is the practice of resistance, “to disturb the comfortable”, and is the evasion of “arrangements” concerning both the relationship between art and institutions, but is also allowing oneself to be subject to politically conditioned aesthetic evaluations. This raises the issue of politicality and criticality which are important in contemporary dance.³⁴

Below are some selected examples. The representative works in this respect include Xavier Le Roy's *Untitled*, in which viewers are confronted with the refutation of all the determinants of the institutional framework of their interpretation. It is here that the theatrical conventions of traditional aesthetics regarding the division of the roles of viewer-artist, auditorium-stage are denied. At the outset, the viewer is deprived of the naming framework, i.e., the title, which allows for the interpretation of the work within the framework of the conventions adopted by the artworld.³⁵ This leads to the creation of a space of “sensory deprivation”, where the viewer, seated as if in a conventional setting before a black abyss, where nothing can be seen, gets a flashlight, seemingly for fun. Yet it is this flashlight that allows the viewer to partially expose some dummies that barely move (it is not clear whether they are disguised people or

³⁰ RosaLee Goldberg, *Performance Art. From Futurism to Present*, 3rd ed. (New York Thames & Hudson, 2011), 141 f.

³¹ Artists deliberately unite, often creating collectives.

³² Goldberg, *Performance Art*, 141.

³³ Jonathan Burrows, “Polityka,” in *Choreografia: polityczność* [Choreography: Politicality], ed. Marta Keil (Warszawa, Poznań, Lublin: Instytut Teatralny im. Raszewskiego, 2018), 69.

³⁴ See: Marta Keil (ed.), *Choreografia: polityczność* [Choreography: Politicality] (Warszawa, Poznań, Lublin: Instytut Teatralny im. Raszewskiego, 2018).

³⁵ Cvejič, Le Roy, Siegmund, “The End With Judgment,” 123.

just impersonal puppets). This undermining of the border between the human and non-human is significant, but it does not seem to be the most important aspect of this work. In its entirety, the performance is characterized by the uncertainty of its message. It is not possible to discern exactly what is happening on stage; the stillness or partial movement of the puppets only reinforces the audience's consternation. There are no signs of dance here. The lack of a clearly defined message regarding the artist's expectations towards the audience causes impatience and dissatisfaction after around fifteen minutes. The viewers are in a state of doubt—are they supposed to become involved in the work and enter the darkened space, as is expected with performative strategies? They receive no answers to their doubts from the silent stage, where still nothing is happening, thus reversing the usually one-way direction of the stage's relation 'to' the audience. Here, it is not the choreographer, but rather the audience that makes claims on the stage/artist. The main problem for the viewers is therefore that they do not know how to behave. The residual and fragmentary nature of their perception, through the light of the flashlight and the fog which appears later on, the blurred border between the stage and the audience, the dummy crossing this border and coming into the auditorium—all this contributes to confusion and leads to a negative evaluation and dissatisfaction. The artistic work confronts the audience with their own expectations as to what tools they should use to recognize and categorize the performance. Even when, at the end, the puppet enters the auditorium, posing questions and thus indicating its own limited perception, this does not direct the interpretation of the work.

What is important here is that the aim of performative action is to shake the viewer out of their perceptual matrices. This, in effect, allows the viewer to become aware of cultural conditioning, to realize that they are guided by what is promoted by the art world, the institution. So here criticality appears as an exposure of consolidated, unconscious perceptual habits that guide our aesthetic judgements. But the notion of the political nature of dance also becomes relevant here, because the actions of the performers are based on hidden mechanisms of manipulating the emotions and actions of the audience.

This is not the only thread that Le Roy has problematized in his artistic performative works. Apart from dismantling the dualistic division between the stage and the audience, and the one-directional message in the relation between the viewer and the artist. *Untitled* is therefore an example of the "discursive intervention"—to use Ramsey Burt's phrase—of an active, dancing body.³⁶

³⁶ Ramsey Burt, *Judson Dance Theatre. Performative Traces* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2006), 18-20.

We can now examine a few examples which employ similar mechanisms and problematize the dichotomies of thinking-action, theory-practice, mind-body. An example of Ritsema's and Burrows's re-performative re-thinking is provided by the performance *Weak Dance Strong Questions*, which aims to question itself. According to the declarations of its creators, it is a dance that constantly asks questions, but which does not expect answers. As the dancers claim, it undermines the basic principles associated with improvisation, such as bodily contact, but also puts it in a position "between what has hitherto been the domain of dance practice" and theory. According to Ritsema, the artists danced "questioning everything they did", thereby dismantling the previous determinants of improvisation as synonymous with the essentialist need to express oneself, and thus the hidden universal truth. Ritsema explained the assumptions behind the performance by drawing on Gilles Deleuze's thought (invoking his concept of the body without organs, the body as affect, movement and intensities), using philosophical discourse to define the role of their bodies in the performance as disciplined, drilled thinking.³⁷ At the same time, he stripped the dance performance of the widely shared belief that the domain of the (dancing) body is action and not thinking. And although these artists declared that they wanted to reject the theatrical determinants of the performance, the established canonical rules of their evaluation/classification, they also implicitly referred to the politics of the theory accompanying them, its inadequacy and incommensurability.

On the other hand, from the notes written by Ritsema to accompany the preparation of the performance *TODAYulysse* it is clear that the main goal was to blur and destabilize all the existing determinants of a performance, starting with the techniques of creation and decoration, as well as the necessity of expressing aesthetic values, such as beauty or emotion-feeling. According to Ritsema, the spectacle should be a plane open to destabilization, displacement, and decentralization, in order to shake the viewer out of all attitudes, expectations and habits, including aesthetic ones. In this way, the artists create a place, delineating an area "in-between" that allows, as they write: "to rethink and reconsider everything."³⁸ It is significant that they thereby also broaden the space of the terms customarily associated with dance performance. In both works, Ritsema states that he is subjecting the determinants of the theatricality of performances to critique and improvisation, but in reality they do much more. They

³⁷ Jeroen Ritsema, "Improwizacja jako performans [Improvisation as performance]," in *Świadomość ruchu. Teksty o tańcu współczesnym* [Movement awareness. Texts about contemporary dance], ed. Jadwiga Majewska (Kraków: Korporacja HA!ART, 2013), 281–284.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 288.

create a kind of a new theoretical-methodological approach, a new language of movement, delineating new areas between the matter of the body and language (as Jeroen Fabius writes for whom the analysis of concepts in dance leads to the study of the embodiment of thought³⁹).

Apart from similar themes I mentioned in the context of the previous performance, it is also important that the distinction between the intellectual and the corporeal is performatively dismantled in this performance. This is an issue that is often problematized in the context of dance: that dancers are judged as those who do not think but act with their bodies. However, other issues are also addressed.

A crucial aspect of these performances is that, on the one hand, the artist communicates something performatively through bodily actions and, on the other hand, the viewer, thrown off balance, reacting affectively, as in *Untitled*, can critically dismantle their negative attitudes by becoming aware of bodily internalized norms and conventions. The viewer realizes that it is these habits that trigger their negative reaction and dissatisfaction. Hence, the possibility of shaping and developing experience emerges here, but also of sensitizing audiences to this kind of critical message (because the notion of criticality appears here too).

Shusterman focuses on a similar problem of developing experience outside the sphere of art, too. He writes that in general human relations we can feel antipathy, or other non-verbalized negative reactions to someone's actions, but, by becoming aware of this mechanism, we can shape and direct it, improving our relations in the public space. That is why I would like to emphasise the direction in which his somaesthetics can be developed. I am interested in considering two threads in particular in context of conceptual dance: the possibility of improving or deepening the viewer's bodily self-awareness, understanding one's own bodily reactions and internalized (embodied) aesthetic and artistic norms of the artworld, and, on the other hand, the practical aspect that shapes, directs or controls them.

Among the features typical for conceptual dance, Cvejič lists the self-conscious strategies of artists who destroy borders and disrupt perceptual strategies. Especially experimentation with the framework of perception is particularly noteworthy, being based, among other things, on destabilization, dislodging the viewer's habits from the matrices. According to Cvejič, these activities are characterized by "perceptual self-reflection", directed towards performative tools, towards their display conditions, the division of the roles of the spectator-artist and the procedures for their evaluation. I will pay particular attention to this issue, because the similar problem of perceptual reflection is also crucial in Shuster-

³⁹ Fabius, "Zaginiona historia tańca (nie)konceptualnego", 317.

man's perspective. He uses the terms "thinking through the body"⁴⁰ and „body consciousness,”⁴¹ which makes the old distinction between rationalism and sensualism loses its meaning. This is the continuation of Dewey's conviction that in experience there is no distinct difference between sensual feelings and intellectual thinking. I would like to focus on the epistemological level which is strictly connected with the aesthetic one. Shusterman's categories „thinking through the body” and „body consciousness” are within epistemological-aesthetic enterprise and go beyond the traditional oppositions.

Shusterman considers the somatic turn as an appreciation of the corporeal element of experience, a bodily, affective response, without interpretation.⁴² It is particularly important that this applies not only to the realm of art, but also to everyday life. He defends the continuity between understanding and experience. “Our qualitative, nondiscursive experience (...) (especially through its accumulated form) can sometimes take in acquiring beliefs or knowledge – as an affective motive and motor or as an implicit background that shapes our perceptions, interests, intuitions, and aims of inquiry.”⁴³

In essence, I sought to demonstrate that somaesthetics has the potential to capture these issues which are currently important in contemporary dance, such as criticality and politicality,⁴⁴ in connection with performativity. I also attempted to convey the new ways in which these concepts are understood. Because the politicality of art is not linked to political engagement, as was the case with the early avant-garde, which still promoted an ideology, but is rather associated with criticality. This brings to mind the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, especially Theodor W. Adorno's theory. The real issue at stake here is the constant transgression of the status quo, the lack of an unambiguous message, the eluding of determinations.

⁴⁰ Richard Shusterman, “Thinking Through the Body, Education for the Humanities: A Plea for Somaesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetics Education* 40, no 1 (Spring, 2006): 7.

⁴¹ Idem, *Body Consciousness. A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴² About somatic turn see Richard Shusterman, *O sztuce i życiu. Od poetyki hip-hopu do filozofii somatycznej* [On Art and Life: From Hip-Hop Poetics to Somatic Philosophy], trans. Wojciech Małecki (Wrocław: Atla 2, 2007), 123.

⁴³ Idem. “Transactional Experiential Inquiry: From pragmatism to Somaesthetics,” *Contemporary Pragmatism* 12, no. 1, (2015): 195.

⁴⁴ With regard to the conception of criticality intended here, I refer to Irid Rogoff, “Smuggling: An Embodied Criticality,” *Transversal* 8 (2006): 11. On the issue of politicality in dance, see Ana Vujanović, “Notes on Politicality of Contemporary Dances”, in *Dance, Politics and Co-immunity. Thinking Resistances. Current Perspectives on Politics and Communities in the Arts*, ed. Gerald Siegmund and Stefan Hölscher (Zurich, Berlin: Diaphanes AG, 2013).

Shusterman is inspired by the theory of Frankfurt School. He is also interested in contemporary art and actively takes part in performances. In 2012, he curates the exhibition titled *Aesthetic Transactions. Pragmatist Philosophy through Art and Life* in Paris.⁴⁵ He calls the exhibition a transdisciplinary project, creating the term „transactions.” He explains that “such provocative transactions will advance both theory and practice through the experiences and lessons that such experiments induce.”⁴⁶

I think Shusterman’s somaesthetics has a transdisciplinary potential.⁴⁷ In his later works he develops his methodology further and calls his approach “transactional and experiential”. He explains that his principles are both theoretical and practical, stating: “(...) clearer to describe the distinction of stages as that between my analytic pragmatism and my experiential pragmatism, the latter being more explicitly activist and transactional.” He calls the three crucial elements of his approach „enhancement experience,” meliorism and the aesthetic. According to him the aesthetic “gives the crucial dimension of appealing quality to the notion of enhanced experience, showing that the perfectionism in my pragmatist project is not merely moral but concerned with improving our capacities for perception (*aesthesis*) and for the enjoyment of those perceptual experiences, not merely for ourselves but also for others by shaping our lives and actions to enrich the aesthetic quality of the societies and environments we inhabit.”⁴⁸ Shusterman creates a new method “the transactional experiential inquiry.” According to him “that inquiry can develop new directions, aims, methods, and standards through the dynamic experiences acquired in the course of the inquiry’s pursuit and that to these new directions, aims, methods, and standards ongoing inquiry then submits its energies for future guidance while also submitting its results for validation.”⁴⁹ He states: “Transactional experiential inquiry also implies experiments in transactions between different fields, thus transcending disciplinary boundaries, transcending entrenched dichotomies or limits, and transforming established concepts or topics.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Shusterman, “Transactional Experiential Inquiry.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁴⁷ Shusterman says: “there is no impossible to reconcile dancing and thinking.” Richard Shusterman, *Performing Life. Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 43. See also: Krystyna Wilkoszewska, „Estetyka pragmatyczna w perspektywie bio [Pragmatist Aesthetics in bio-perspective].” *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria* 25, no 1 (97) (2016): 220.

⁴⁸ Shusterman, “Transactional Experiential Inquiry,” 194.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

According to Shusterman there is pluralism and compatibility between the methods used in somaesthetics. Because of meliorism these methods are constantly changing and evolving. What is especially important is that he improves notion of experience, which can't be demarcational but transformational.⁵¹ In *Pragmatists Aesthetics* Shusterman explains: „Deweyan aesthetics is interested not in truth for through's sake but in achieving richer and more satisfying experience, in experiencing that value without which art would have no meaning.”⁵² “(...) experience rather than the through is a final standard” of art. So definition, theory of art “need to be challenged and revised when they fail to provide the best experience.”⁵³ Somaesthetics should take into consideration performances like conceptual dance.

Finally, inspired by Dewey and American pragmatism, one can ask whether the term conceptual dance should be used for describing these artists' actions. The answer was partly given by Cvjić, who stressed that it is not useful because it places too great an emphasis on the separation of thought and action. On the other hand, we can say that the term is functional, because it is still used in linguistic practice. As can be observed, I do not hesitate to use the term.

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⁵¹ See more about: Shusterman, “The End of Aesthetic Experience,” 32.

⁵² Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 18.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

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