



Psychology and Ballet: A Historical-Philosophical Reflection

Becerra JD*

Honorary Member, Scuola Romana Rorschach, Italy

***Corresponding author:** Jesus Duenas Becerra, Honorary Member, Scuola Romana Rorschach, Italy, Email: cagliostroduenas@gmail.com

Editorial

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Editorial

Putting science [and art] into everyday language; there is a great good that few do». With support from that Martian aphorism, I will develop this topic, whose fundamental objective is none other than to caress the intellect and aesthetic sensitivity of lovers of science and art.

A happy circumstance placed the prima ballerina and today maître Svetlana Ballester on my professional path, whose exquisite interpretation of the «Willis Queen», in the context of the classic ballet *Giselle*, immortalized by the *prima ballerina assoluta* Alicia Alonso, It shook the most intimate fibers of my inner self, and a posteriori, allowed me to establish—in the spiritual component of the Freudian unconscious—the objective-subjective associations and connections on which I have structured this article.

Is ballet a legitimate expression of the body-mind-spirit unity, supported by contemporary psychological science? Let us see, in brief summary, the historical-philosophical response to this scientific-artistic questioning. The historical background of the topic at hand goes back—in time—to the very moment in which Medicine («science and art of healing»), became independent from Philosophy («mother science»), and became—by own right—in a natural-scientific and, of course, social discipline.

The body-mind separation did not go unnoticed, in any way, by a philosopher of the exceptional stature of Platon (428-348 BC). The most illustrious representative of philosophical idealism stated, with crystal clarity, that «the biggest mistake a doctor can make is to attempt to cure the body without attempting to cure the soul» Aristotle (384-

322 BC), that genius of universal philosophical thought, conceived the soul as «the first entelechy of a natural organic body: it is to it what sight is to the eye. The body, like the eye, is the instrument; the soul, like sight, is the function, the end», while Hippocrates (460-377 BC), identified the brain as the only one responsible for our positive and negative emotions, that is, the «Father of Medicine» and he intuited the brain-psyche relationship. In accordance with the sterile division established between body and soul, doctors subscribed to the organic, somatic, biological or medical school (whatever it may be called), or to the psychological or animist school, and consequently, they integrated two large groups: the doctors of the body and doctors of the soul.

The predominance of one or another approach has been closely related to the socio-historical era in which scientific-medical work takes place. The mind-body dichotomy was considerably accentuated with the appearance, on the European medical scene, of the unique and unrepeatably genius of Sigmund Freud, who, influenced by the wise teachings of the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, distinguished teacher of the Salpêtrière, rediscovers the unconscious, which he perceives as a psychological mechanism, and therefore, gives Psychiatry a dynamic orientation, characterized by body-mind antagonism; antagonism that, by a curious free association, reminds me of a passage from the Gospel of Saint Matthew: «every kingdom divided into two sides is lost, and every city or family divided falls apart» (Mt. 12:25).

In response to this artificial division created by the founder of psychoanalytic doctrine, the psychobiological Adolfo Meyer and psychosomatic [1] schools made strenuous efforts to reconcile these two controversial aspects. However, neither psychobiological nor psychosomatic orientation can offer a satisfactory solution to the apparent body-mind contradiction, for the simple reason that they do not admit that man is an unfinished and unfinished being, imperfect but

perfectible, who integrates into a unity living all its human dimensions: corporal, psychic, sociocultural and spiritual [2-5].

In contrast to body-mind dualism, the basic principle of the orthodox psychoanalytic school, Psychology with a materialist approach adopts a more consistent position, and proclaims the soma-psyche unity as an expression of one of the fundamental laws of Marxist dialectics: the unity and struggle of opposites, driving force of the socio-historical and spiritual development of humanity [5-6].

With support in this line of scientific-philosophical thought, Doctor of Science Ricardo González Menéndez [7], consulting professor and head of the University of Medical Sciences of Havana, maintained that «the psyche is nothing other than the function more specialized of soma, that both are expressions of matter, and that they are closely related in their natural, cultural, and above all, social aspects». Despite this criterion, defended—in past socio-historical times—by the illustrious psychiatrist, until the moment of his of his unfortunate death supported the firm opinion that man constitutes an indivisible bio-psycho-socio-cultural and spiritual unit [8,9].

Although it is true that Psychology with a Marxist approach postulates the body-mind unity, it makes a regrettable methodological error, since in its theoretical-conceptual formulations it ignores the human spirit, which is—in my humble opinion—the central axis around which revolves around the integral development of *homo sapiens*. In this regard, José Martí [10] reminds us that «really, the body is nothing more than a servant of the spirit», while Dr. Armando Hart Dávalos, Director of the National Office until his death of Martí's Program, warns us that «there is not-nor can there be-civilization or humanity, in the modern sense of the expression, without spiritual life».

With support from these statements, Psychology with a humanistic approach establishes that «the body is a substantial part of the self; It is a source of information, it is a source of harmony; and it is the path to the spirit». Therefore, the function performed by the body with respect to the mind is to «provide consciousness with the range of primary and vital tendencies, as well as the vibration of the emotions that give color and vigor to life. The function of the mind is to illuminate that life that springs from the dark depths of corporeality, to organize it according to human will, and to assume one's own rational and volitional demands in accordance with the project that the self decides to carry out within the alternatives that existence offers. offers».

In summary, the humanist conception perceives the body, mind and spirit in intimate communion; essential

requirement to penetrate our inner world, and consequently, to be able to establish contact with the other or not the self (in the words of Lacanian psychoanalysis) [11]. That is, this conception is perfectly consistent with the guiding principles of contemporary psychological science, as far as the body-mind-spirit symbiosis is concerned.

Based on these historical-philosophical and theoretical-methodological premises, there is no doubt that ballet, as an artistic manifestation that unites dance, technical virtuosity and the expressive capacity of the self in a warm embrace, is a faithful exponent of the indivisible unity of the body, mind and spirit.

I am convinced that ballet is a magnificent physical, psychological and spiritual nutrient, and consequently, it gives the dancer the ineffable opportunity to grow and fulfill himself from every point of view. And to the same extent that the artist grows and fulfills himself as a professional and as a human being, he feeds the intellect and caresses the inner world of the public, who -in reciprocity- applauds him to the point of exhaustion.

I conclude with an anthological quote from Dr. José Orlando Suárez Tajonera [12], professor emeritus of the University of the Arts (ISA), and National Prize for Artistic Education [12]: «art not only reflects reality, but also creates another reality» in the mind and soul of the artist, the critic and the viewer.

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