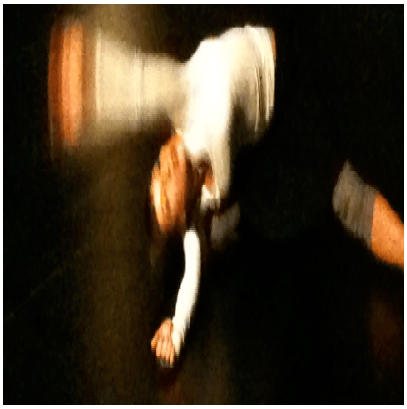


Mood and movement (and dance)

Description

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Search on the web for something about spontaneous dance, and you eventually alight on the saying: â??Youâ??ve gottaâ?? dance like thereâ??s nobody watching,â?• expanded, varied and attributed to several sources, but mostly the self-help author William W. Purkey. Then type â??dance like nobodyâ??s watchingâ?• into YouTube, which shows real or faked videos of people caught unawares, dancing and moving, usually alone, and sometimes plugged into their smartphones and MP3 players.

Untutored, private dancing is kind of odd, and itâ??s unfair and invasive to make it public, but the phenomenon does draw into relief something about the nature of space and the bodyâ??s complicity in its formation. In fact phenomenologist Otto Bollnow (1903-1991) saw dance as a primitive and challenging mode of human mobility that expresses *oneness* with environment.



On the one hand, dance changes our relationship with space: â??we experience a new space, which as such fundamentally differs from that of our everyday livesâ?• (236). As participant or observer, dance renders space as something other than what walking to work, hoovering the carpet, cooking a meal or other everyday experiences offer.

Of interest to a philosopher trying to get back to basics, the main difference (with the everyday) is that dance is without purpose, in the sense that it involves the expenditure of effort but does not get the mover anywhere. This theorising about dance is a further development on the idea of aimless wandering, approved as a phenomenological model for being-in-the-world.

Dance is movement in itself, â??rests in itself and, without indicating an external aim beyond itself, fulfils its meaning in itselfâ?• (237). Apparently the urge to dance is deeply metaphysical: â??In dancing, we experience a breakthrough from the everyday practical world of purposeful action and structureâ?• (237). Dancing is not a means to an end.

Subject object

Bollnow translates some of Martin Heideggerâ??s themes into simple language. Bollnow argues that dance is another means of erasing the tension between subject and object.

He says something similar about mood: â??Mood is itself not something subjectively â??inâ?? an individual and not something objective that could be found â??outsideâ?? in his surroundings, but it concerns the individual in his still undivided unity with his surroundingsâ?• (217).

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â??One speaks of a mood of the human temperament as well as of the mood of a landscape or a closed interior space, and both are, strictly speaking, only two aspects of the same phenomenonâ?• (217).

Bollnow also draws on the psychologist Erwin Straus, and both were probably thinking of folk and ballroom dancing and perhaps 50s rock-n-roll, or natural expressive movement in the manner of the legendary Isadora Duncan (1877-1927).

Search YouTube for crazy dance moves. We are now in a dancing age, much of it highly skilled. But even just moving in front of a computer screen or gyrating to the stimulus of a music track on an iPod at a bus stop propagates the mood of the dance. See blog post on empathy.

Note

- The images on this page are from a conference on digital performance art at Brunel University in 2005.

References

- Bollnow, O.F. 2011. *Human Space*. Trans. C. Shuttleworth. London: Hyphen Press
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Category

1. Body

Tags

1. dance
2. mood
3. movement

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