

THE DANCE OF "ONLIFE" BODIES: PSYCHOMOTOR AND DIDACTICS ASPECTS

LA DANZA DEI CORPI "ONLIFE": ASPETTI PSICOMOTORI E DIDATTICI

Luigi Aruta

Università degli Studi di Napoli, Parthenope

luigi.aruta@studenti.uniparthenope.it

Double Blind Peer Review

Citazione

Aruta L.,(2023) The dance of "onlife" bodies: psychomotor and didactics aspects, *Giornale Italiano di Educazione alla Salute, Sport e Didattica Inclusiva - Italian Journal of Health Education, Sports and Inclusive Didactics*. Anno 7, V 1. Edizioni Universitarie Romane

Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.32043/gsd.v7i1.881>

Copyright notice:

© 2023 this is an open access, peer-reviewed article published by Open Journal System and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

gsdjournal.it

ISSN: 2532-3296

ISBN: 978-88-6022-469-9

ABSTRACT

Neuroscience clarifies the relationship between dance, cognitive activities, and biobehavioral responses. Digital technologies, in this sense, can create virtual choreographic spaces to express emotions and build relationships. Therefore, dance can be a didactic 'tool' in real and virtual environments an intracorporeal and intercorporeal practice useful to promote psychomotor development through expressive-digital performances. For this reasons, this contribution discusses the relationship between corporeity and "onlife" dimension, such as dance on Tik Tok.

Le neuroscienze chiariscono la relazione tra danza, attività cognitive e risposte biocomportamentali. Le tecnologie digitali, in questo senso, possono creare spazi coreografici virtuali per esprimere emozioni e costruire relazioni. Pertanto, la danza può essere uno "strumento" didattico in ambienti reali e virtuali, una pratica intracorporea e intercorporea utile a promuovere lo sviluppo psicomotorio attraverso performance espressivo-digitali. Per questo motivo, il presente contributo discute il rapporto tra corporeità e dimensione "onlife", come ad esempio la danza su Tik Tok.

KEYWORDS

Corporeity; Dance; Digital technologies; Onlife
Corporeità; Danza; Tecnologie digitali, Onlife

Received 2/05/2023

Accepted 17/05/2023

Published 20/05/2023

1. Psychomotor growth in onlife: some premises

The intense use of technologies, following the restrictions imposed by the pandemic (Duan et al. 2020), has led to a reduction in physical activity levels, especially in children and adolescents (López-Bueno et al. 2020), causing negative consequences on the psychomotor level with medium- and long-term repercussions on health and well-being (Iavarone, 2013), especially of digital natives (Rosa & De Vita, 2018).

Such considerations are also supported by the comparison between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic generations of children and adolescents with regard to motor skills (Ayubia & Komainib, 2021), resulting in increased anxiety, depression, and obsessive disorders (Conti et al. 2020) amplified by poor sleep quality due to excessive use of devices before bedtime (Jniene et al. 2019; Limone & Toto, 2021). Moreover, technological overuse affects the neuroplasticity of children and adolescents by affecting overall cognitive-motor functioning (Mandolesi, 2012).

Psychomotor growth, therefore, determined by the reciprocity intrinsic to every intracorporeal and intercorporeal practice acted out in everyday life (Bonifacio & Aruta, 2022), is significantly affected by the onlife (Floridi, 2015) of children and adolescents, expressed in physical-digital environments that are continually contaminated with each other, and bearers of a cognitive overload that compromises attentional capacities and comprehension of information (Carr, 2020).

Without wishing to demonize technologies, but aware of the negative effects resulting from its mismanaged use, it is appropriate to observe the present time by questioning the extent to which they influence the development of identity (Anna, 2012), which in turn is influenced by the environment in which bodies experience (Frauenfelder et al., 2018), as a result of internal dialogic negotiation (Damiano, 2009). In this sense, every embodied act' (Paloma, 2013) is determined by neurobiological mechanisms, also determined by digital experience.

The ways in which a social and cultural environment determines the learning of children and adolescents (Sousa, 2010), in fact, cannot fail to take into account that neurodevelopment processes are negotiated, today, within spaces of relationship and socialization that are expressed beyond online/offline binarism, suggesting the experimentation of new ways of putting the body and movement at the center of educational action (Damiano et al. 2015), wondering how they can be protagonists in digital environments.

1.2 Expressive-digital performances: dance on Tik Tok and Instagram

In light of the above, it is necessary to question the extent to which movement appears to be a privileged device of digital use on platforms such as Tik Tok and Instagram, for example, but also in traditional media. Consequently, one has to look very carefully at the way it is used, in the knowledge that movement, acted or observed, expresses inner states (emotional, motivational, intentional) and elements of personality development (Mircea & Dana, 2013).

Many advertisements, for example, use dance as a marketing tool, useful to captivate the customer about the goodness of a product or the efficiency of a company: “Tim” with the famous advertisement of the dancer in a dinner jacket with a hat, “Glovo” with its danced punctuality of delivery, “Eni Gas e Luce” that uses the academic rigour of classical dance to give a solid and disciplined self-image, without forgetting the dancing motto of “Riso Scotti”, “Miel Pops” or Mu Yogurt” for children.

On Instagram, on the other hand, and even more specifically on Tik Tok, dance is one of the languages most frequently used by influencers to gain followers; consequently, the challenges proposed become the object of media diffusion and emulation. This is the case of the “Sturdy Dance”, the “Wednesday Dance” by “Wednesday Addams”, the “Cuff It” or the generic “Dance Challenge”: in all these cases, users share a customised movement design to the notes of a piece of music (Patel & Binjola, 2020).

What has been said so far has indirectly turned the spotlight on these 'expressive-digital performances' by directing curiosity towards understanding, irrespective of their marketing or social following, the 'educational filter' with which they are (not) constructed. Moreover, when dance is chosen for the transfer of content within the digital space, it undoubtedly also has a destiny aimed at the real-life space, which consequently remains conditioned by it and conditions it in turn. Moreover, in all the above-mentioned cases, the digital proposal is conceived in virtue of the potential that the communicative device (the dance and the media) offers, but above all, it is accompanied by a design phase that is inevitably made up of analyses and critical reflections on the content (movement, piece of music, message) and on how to transfer it, and hence on how to package it for the recipient (customer or follower).

From the perspective of psychomotor development, dance, as described above, seems to respond to the typical logic of digital environments that favor 'digitized minds' at the expense of 'functions in action' (Ciccarelli et al. 2022) and this,

precisely in the phase of auxological development, where learning processes are in relation to the environment within which they take place (Frauenfelder & Santoianni, 2003), can be decisive for the genesis of "lost corporeities" in which the body and movement are used "without presence," i.e. without stimulation of the neural and biobehavioural processes already widely recognized to the experience of dance (Christensen et al. 2017) and more generally to movement practices (Bidzan-Bluma & Lipowska, 2018).

2. *Empowered bodily practices: didactic suggestions between dance and technology*

Expressive-digital performances, as described in the last lines of the previous paragraph, depotentiate the role that the artistic experience plays in the activation of cognitive processes (Cela-Conde & Ayala, 2018), since choreographic composition or choreography, as it is simplistically defined on social is not given by the 'effects' and 'effects' affects' and 'affects' provoked by the encounter between the compositional material and the perceptual-cognitive predisposition of the subject (Pontremoli, 2018), but exclusively by the fascination of the content and the liking of the community that defines the 'trends of the moment.'

Dance is, however, an unrealizable experience without the cognitive activation of both the performer and the observer, both of whom are called upon to 'read' the body by resorting to imagination and reflectively delving into their own personal and emotional experiences (Stevens et al. 2009). Therefore, we should ask ourselves what reading and experience of the body is brought to light by the dance proposed on social networks and generic entertainment platforms, often relegated to the sole possibility of eliciting mockery or laughter, without any attempt at narration or sharing an emotional or personal state (Evola & Skubisz, 2019).

Without risking proposing a debate on the extent to which dance can be a device for profound reflection of the human and, at the same time, a superficial instrument of entertainment, it is necessary to clarify the point of view of what has been said so far: regardless of its use, dance is corporeity, expression, and communication, abstract concepts that are realized in the motor gesture, which, therefore, can be chosen with meticulousness and worked on precisely so that it is capable of transducing intentions, wills, beliefs, opinions, and views. From the relationship between dance and digitality, moreover, it is possible to derive a series of educational opportunities, operational declinations capable of allowing a responsible and functional didactic use, through "empowered bodily practices".

2.1 Technologies as "arts are useful to art"

Expressive-digital performances, making use of dance and technologies, represent a largely participatory and emulative performance space, de-personalized in both action and fruition. The possibility of creating virtual choreographic environments (Monda, 2019), on the other hand, returns the opportunity to create spaces for psycho-body experimentation capable of reinforcing the immersive experience of the digital, and vice versa. Therefore, in this way, the relationship between dance and digitality is to be understood to the extent that the experience of the physical gesture reinforces the virtual action, making technological environments that have reason to exist by virtue of the presence of bodies to inhabit them.

Indeed, the body that becomes the protagonist of the digital experience reappropriates its communicative capacity, giving dance the role of "technology of the body" and technology the role of "art useful to art", thus being able to contribute to the synaesthetic and holistic involvement of the body (Fischer-Lichte, 2014) in the onlife experience. Therefore, the need emerges to refocus the role of corporeity in education, hypothesizing digitally integrated application trajectories (Aruta & Ambra, 2020) capable of looking at expressive-digital performances as "bodily" enhanced practices, "tools" for the definition of innovative dance-based didactic models. In this sense, digital skills should not be understood as "hard skills," but rather as "soft skills" (Iavarone & Aruta, 2022), to be promoted starting from the body.

3. Dance-based didactic suggestions

From the perspective of embodied-centered teaching (Iachini et al. 2013), what has been said so far is preparatory to the proposal of innovative dance-based didactics that take into account the possibility of expressing oneself through digital use. Dance represents, in fact, the opportunity that the body has to measure itself with contents that concern contemporaneity (environmental crisis, war, pandemic, etc.) or with contents belonging to other arts (paintings, musical works, literary texts, etc.) and technologies, understood as "environments" and not "tools" (Iavarone & Aruta, 2022), are fields of psycho-body and creative experimentation.

The content, in this sense, is a cultural object that the experience of performance allows one to manipulate, with the aim of achieving an 'exhibition' that will be a 'restitution' of what one has worked on, but also of how one has been transformed in the creative experience. Manipulating a cultural object to be returned in the form of a performance, even a virtual one, implies an important work on the process, to be understood as the need to understand how things work (Prey, 2019) and the

ability to operate according to praxis that looks at aesthetics as "consciousness of expression" and not as an empty and asphyxiated form of expression, as is usually the case with Tik Tok and Instagram.

In this sense, the digital ceases to be a field of action with dilated space and contracted time, but, when applied to dance, becomes the opportunity to be a creative space inhabited by subjects who share a precise dramaturgical trace that, in a diluted and personal time, meets the compositional identity of each subject who can, therefore, share his or her own idea about it according to a 'bodily feeling' denied, instead, in the consumerist experience of a pre-set social product.

The experience of performance, from the perspective of a didactic centered on the body and dance, imposes a constant reflexive filter on the relationship between thought and action. In the production of the cultural object "to be returned," moreover, one is measured against the acquisition of "soft skills" implicitly promoted by the need to operate according to procedural coherence and design vision in the creation of the performative output, appropriately on an educational and dramaturgical level (Aruta et al. 2022).

In conclusion, expressive-digital performances can be an excellent didactic expedient capable of harmoniously correlating psycho-corporeal development and onlife experience, overcoming the idea of a dualistic and dichotomous relationship between corporeality and digitality in favor of an integrative and biunivocally supportive relationship, in which dance can play a pedagogically relevant role by transversally crossing the formal, informal, and non-formal spheres of education.

References

- Anna K. (2012). *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, New York: Oxford University Press
- Aruta L. & Ambra F. I. (2020). Salute, scuola e benessere: educare il corpo ai tempi del Covid-19. In *Salute Umana*, 280
- Aruta L., Pontremoli A. & Iavarone M. L. (2022). Corporeità digitali e performance virtuali: la danza come dispositivo narrativo dell'emotività cross-covid. In *Mizar. Costellazione di pensieri*, 15, 43-47
- Ayubia N. & Komainib A. (2021). The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children's Motor Skills (Literature Review). In *Children*, 21.

Bidzan-Bluma I. & Lipowska M. (2018). Physical activity and cognitive functioning of children: a systematic review. In *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 15(4)

Bonifacio A. & Aruta L. (2022). Empowered bodily practices: sfondi dell'innovazione psicomotoria. In (a cura di) Iavarone M.L. (2022). *Educare nei mutamenti. Sostenibilità didattica delle transizioni tra fragilità ed opportunità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli

Carr N. (2020). *The shallows: What the Internet is doing to our brains*, WW Norton & Company

Cela-Conde C. J. & Ayala F. J. (2018). Art and brain coevolution. In *progress in brain research*, 237, 41-60

Christensen J. F., Cela-Conde, C. J. & Gomila, A. (2017). Not all about sex: neural and biobehavioral functions of human dance, in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1400(1), 8-32

Conti, E., Sgandurra, G., De Nicola G., Biagioni T., Boldrini S., Bonaventura E. ... & Battini R. (2020). Behavioural and emotional changes during covid-19 lockdown in an Italian paediatric population with neurologic and psychiatric disorders. In *Brain Sciences*, 10(12), 918

Damiani P., Santaniello A. & Paloma F. G. (2015). Ripensare la Didattica alla luce delle Neuroscienze Corpo, abilità visuospatiali ed empatia: una ricerca esplorativa, in *Italian Journal of Educational Research*, (14), 83-106

Damiano L. (2009). *Unità in dialogo*. Milano: Mondadori

Duan L., Shao X., Wang Y., Huang Y., Miao J., Yang X. & Zhu G. (2020). An investigation of mental health status of children and adolescents in China during the outbreak of COVID-19. In *Journal of affective disorders*, 275, 112-118

Evola V. & Skubisz J. (2019). Coordinated collaboration and nonverbal social interactions: a formal and functional analysis of gaze, gestures, and other body movements in a contemporary dance improvisation performance. In *Journal of nonverbal behavior*, 43(4), 451-479

Fischer-Lichte E. (2014). *Estetica del performativo – Una teoria del teatro e dell'arte*. Roma: Carocci

Floridi L. (2015). *The onlife manifesto: Being human in a hyperconnected era*. UK: Springer Nature

Frauenfelder E. e Santoianni F. (2003). *Mind, Learning and Knowledge in Educational Contexts: Research Perspectives in Bioeducational Science*. UK: Cambridge Scholar Press

Frauenfelder E., Santoianni F. & Ciasullo A. (2018). Implicito bioeducativo. Emozioni e cognizione. In *RELAdeI. Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Infantil*, 7(1), 42-51

Iachini T., Iavarone M. L. & Ruotolo F. (2013). Toward a teaching embodied-centered: perspectives of research and intervention. In *REM-Research on Education and Media*, 5(1), 57-68

Iavarone M.L. (2013). *Abitare la corporeità. Nuove traiettorie di sviluppo professionale*. Milano: Franco Angeli

Iavarone M.L. & Aruta L. (2022). Le digital skills tra 'soft' e 'hard'. L'Educatore Mediale tra criticità e opportunità. In *Form@re*, 3/22

Jniene A., Errguig L., El Hangouche A.J., Rkain H., Abouddrar S., El Ftouh M. & Dakka T. (2019). Perception of Sleep Disturbances due to Bedtime Use of Blue Light-Emitting Devices and Its Impact on Habits and Sleep Quality among Young Medical Students. In *Biomed Research International*

Limone P. & Toto G. A. (2021). Psychological and emotional effects of Digital Technology on Children in Covid-19 Pandemic. In *Brain Sciences*, 11(9), 1126

López-Bueno R., López-Sánchez G. F., Casajús J. A., Calatayud J., Gil-Salmerón A., Grabovac I., ... & Smith L. (2020). Health-related behaviors among school-aged children and adolescents during the Spanish Covid-19 confinement. In *Frontiers in pediatrics*, 8, 573

Mandolesi L. (2012). *Neuroscienze dell'attività motoria: Verso un sistema cognitivo-motorio*. Berlino: Springer Science & Business Media

Mircea N. & Dana P. (2013). Dance contribution to the development of youth personality. In *Ovidius University Annals, Series Physical Education & Sport/Science, Movement & Health*, 13

Monda L. G. (2019). Luci ed ombre sull'uso del digitale nella danza. In *SigMa-Rivista di Letterature comparate, Teatro e Arti dello spettacolo*, (3), 959-981

- Paloma F. G. (2013). *Embodied cognitive science: atti incarnati della didattica (Vol. 1)*. Roma: Edizioni Nuova Cultura
- Patel K. & Binjola H. (2020). Tik Tok the new alternative media for youngsters for online sharing of talent: An analytical study. In *Available at SSRN 3600119*
- Pontremoli A. (2018). *La danza 2.0: paesaggi coreografici del nuovo millennio*. Roma: Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa
- Prey K. (2019). Design per pensare, design per sognare.... In (a cura di) Weyland B., Stadler-Altman U., Galletti A. e Prey K. (2019). *Scuole in Movimento. Progettare insieme tra pedagogia, architettura e design*. Milano: FrancoAngeli
- Rosa R. & De Vita T. (2018). La valenza educativa della Corporeità e delle Attività Motorie nell'apprendimento delle Life Skills Education nella Scuola. In *Giornale italiano di educazione alla salute, sport e didattica inclusiva*, 2(1)
- Sousa D. A. (2010). *Mind, brain, & education: Neuroscience implications for the classroom*. Bloomington: Solution Tree Press
- Stevens M. L. (2009). *Creating a class*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press