

“THE JOY OF DANCE” (TERPSICHORE): DANCE AND GYMNASTICS, CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF EDUCATION IN THE CLASSICAL ERA

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Abstract

This study focuses on the importance of Dance— and its relationship to music, poetry and gymnastics— as a means and an element of education in the historical context of the classical period (5th-4th centuries B.C.) Certainly Greek literature and archaeological finds provide a rich source for the study of dance as a social and cultural phenomenon (Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Herodotus, et al.). As a socio-cultural expression it reflected all personal, private, group, religious, and public emotions, in other words all joys, grief and major events in the daily life of the people and the state. Dance was considered a divine inspiration in which women, men and children participated. The festivals in each Greek city were regarded as “the most humane and kindly institutions in their life” and the gods, were worshipped at these festivals “not in sadness, but with joy”(Mahaffy, 1879:79). During the era of Pericles, renowned figures, such as Sophocles, Epaminondas, Aeschylus and Aristophanes danced in front of audiences. ‘Professionalization’, namely dance masters/instructors enjoyed the highest esteem, professional dancers excelled, and the state encouraged, or rather financially supported the public to attend the theatre. In contrast to the gender exclusion in the *palaistras* where adolescent males exercised and received dance lessons, as well as the non-participation of women in athletic competitions— with the exception of Sparta— women in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. participated in the dance process and were allowed to join in the dance processions to honor the gods, goddesses, deities, local or deceased heroes, athletic heroes, etc.

Keywords: dance as a socio-cultural expression, education of *mind and soma* (body), “the joy of dance” (Terpsichore), gender and dance, “free citizens with useful bodies” (Plato), professionalization, dance professionals.

Introduction

This study focuses on the importance of Dance, in combination with music, poetry and gymnastics, as a means and an element of education in the historical context of the classical period (5th-4th centuries B.C.)— through the analysis and interpretation of Dance as a social phenomenon, a socio-cultural expression— in order to initiate

dialogue with researchers especially in the field of sport sciences.¹ Dance was considered a divine inspiration in which both genders participated, in contrast to the gender exclusion in the *palaistras* where adolescent males exercised and received dance lessons. However, this paper does not focus on such socio-cultural derivations originating from cultural practices within the historical specificity, namely on gender exclusions, the biological *differences* between men and women (i.e. women's exclusion from athletic competitions, etc.). Through the methodological pluralism (Menne, 1984; Lawler, 1984, et al.) applied in this study, including historical and comparative analyses (W.B.G., 1980; Kraus, 1980), this paper examines in particular literary and philosophical observations and analyses concerning dance and gymnastics. Certainly, a rich source for the study of dance and the importance of rhythmic corporeal movement and exercise in the classical period are provided in particular by Greek literature (Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Herodotus, et al.) Additionally invaluable are studies conducted by 19th century classical scholars (Bucholtz, 1871; Mahaffy, 1879; Valentine, 1898). For instance, in 1871 Hermann Bucholtz studied Euripides in order to formulate a picture of the tragic dance.² In 1898, Henriques A. Valentine, in his study "The Athlete of the Ancients" examines the care and devotion paid to "muscular and physical education." (Valentine, 1898: 188)

It is necessary to point out that the Greek word *Orxeisis* (ὄρχησις), or *to dance/dancing*, had a broader meaning than that of the English definition. It was used by the ancient Greeks to declare different types of corporeality and corporal rhythmic movements accompanied by music and poetry, namely those that interpret poetry, such as the rhythmic movement of the legs, the hands, the head, the eyes, and the entire body in general, among other things. (Lawler, 1984: 22; Kamberidou, 1986: 22) For example, in 1618 the Dutch scholar Johannes Meursius prepared an alphabetical catalogue with over 200 dances for his work entitled "Orchestra" or "on the dances of the Ancients" ("Orchestra, sive de saltationibus veterum"). The first monograph on ancient Greek dance since Antiquity.³ J.P. Mahaffy's (1879) study on "Old Greek

¹ This paper does not focus on gender exclusions, the biological 'difference' between men and women (e.i. women's exclusion from athletic competitions, etc.), namely the socio-cultural derivations originating from cultural practices within the social-historical specificity. (Patsantaras & Kamberidou, 2007).

² Bucholtz, Herman (1871). *Die Tanzkunst des Euripides* (Leipzig, 1871) p. 4.

³ Johannes Meursius (van Meurs) (February 9, 1579—September 20, 1639), Dutch classical scholar and antiquary. At the age of sixteen produced a commentary on the *Cassandra* of Lycophron. In 1610

Life” focuses on the necessity of studying Greek literature and history to gain knowledge on “the private life and ways of the people, their habits and customs, their business and their sports, their law and their religion.” (J.P. Mahaffy, 1879: 7-8).

Dance as a social expression

In the classical period Dance as a socio-cultural expression reflected all personal, private, group, public and religious emotions, in other words all joys, grief and major events in the daily life of the people and the state. In the era of Pericles renowned figures, such as Sophocles, Epaminondas, Aeschylus and Aristophanes danced in front of audiences, an accepted custom of the time. (Kraus, 1980) Children participated in religious dances at many festivals.⁴ For instance, during the Dionysus festivals, Athenian children performed circular dances and sang at the theatre to honour the god Dionysus.⁵ Youth danced at athletic games, at the public contests in the games which included the discus, running, wrestling, throwing the dart, managing the sword and shield, and riding. The severest contest was the pancration (παγκράτιον). (Mahaffy, 1879: 55-56) They danced during feasts, festivals, religious celebrations, and at the side of official processions, etc.⁶ In contrast to the gender exclusion in the *palaistras* where adolescent males exercised and received dance lessons⁷ and the non-participation of women in athletic competitions—with the exception of Sparta— women in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. participated dance and joined in the dance processions to honor the gods, goddesses, deities, local heroes, athletic heroes, deceased heroes, etc.

People danced for the restoration of Peace, for fertility, at weddings, at the birth of a child, at dance competitions/contests, at religious festivals, feasts and celebrations. Even the guests at symposiums danced, and not only. It was not uncommon for women hetaires (εταίρες) to perform dances and play music at

he was appointed professor of Greek and history at Leiden, and in the following year historiographer to the states-general. Meursius was the author of classical editions and treatises, many of which are printed in J.F. Gronovius's *Thesaurus antiquitatum graecarum*. Their lack of arrangement detracts from their value, but they are a storehouse of information. Complete edition of his works by J. Lami (1741-1763). See Van der Aa's *Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden* (1869), and J.E. Sandys, *Hist. of Class. Scholarship* (1908), ii. 311.

⁴ Αθήναιος 14, 626 B-E

⁵ Πλάτωνας, Τιμαίος, σ. 21B.

⁶ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι, II, 654 AB

⁷ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι 794 Δ' 5 - 795 Δ'.

symposiums to entertain guests.⁸ “There were dancing girls and flute girls, who were dispensed with in serious society [...] and the conduct of the late drinking parties was not very different from what it now is.” (Mahaffy, 1879: 74)

Dance was not considered a lack of manhood, on the contrary men felt proud to honor the gods with a dance. According to the philosopher Xenophon (Ξενοφών) the circular dances were beautiful miracles to watch. The meaning of dance was so significant that those who participated in the preparations for the Dionysus festivals were relieved from their military service. (Νικηταράς, 1988) For instance, in the 3d century B.C. the individuals who participated in the preparations for the Dionysus celebrations became members of an elite union, and as members enjoyed special privileges. They were allowed to cross from one city state to the other during times of war in order to offer their services. Dance masters/instructors enjoyed the same high esteem in the classical era. In Athens for example, dance education was in the hands of private teachers, who enjoyed the greatest respect. Originally dramatic and lyric poets themselves taught dance. Sappho, the first and greatest lyric poet of the Aegean, as well as the first ‘feminist’ in the ancient world, taught dances to her female students that were based on her own lyrics. (Kamberidou, 1986: 22) Dance, music and poetry signified the essence of civilization, “*the Art of the Muses*” (Lawler 1984), and accordingly education of *mind and soma* (body), psychosomatic balance.

In order to know the real greatness of a people, their customs and daily life, it is necessary to study their literature, “*in which we may find not only the purest models of prose writing—both history and oratory—but also every form of poetry in its highest development—epic, lyric, dramatic, and idyllic [...] the great fact which must strike all who know and understand the Greeks, is the extraordinary frequency of this exceptional genius among them. No man can explain the origin of a single genius in the world, far less the origin of so many together.*” as J.P. Mahaffy, Professor of Ancient History in the University of Dublin, argues in 1879. (100- 101)

Greek festivals: “The most humane and kindly institutions in their life.” (Mahaffy, 1879:79)

Ancient poets attribute the invention of dance to divine inspiration,⁹ to the Muses Polymnia (Πολυμνία) and Terpsichore, (Τερψιχόρη), the name of the latter meaning

⁸Ξενοφώντος, Ανάβαση 6,1, 7-8

“the joy of dance”, etc. Poetry was closely tied to Music and to Dance, and as a result “they danced poetry”! (Kamberidou, 1986:22) With regard to the religious feeling of the Greeks, not only the athletic games, but also dramatic shows were held in honour of the gods, or sometimes in honour of deceased heroes—such as those at Patroclus’ funeral, described in the Iliad. Religious sacrifices and prayers were commonly practiced at the festivals. Namely these celebrations or rituals included sacrifices, prayers and solemn processions (*πρόσοδοι*). “*We have, fortunately preserved to us in the frieze which ran round the wall of the cella of the Parthenon at Athens, a splendid representation of such a procession. Most of the reliefs are in the British museum.*” (Mahaffy, 1879: 78-79) Specifically, the festivals were combined with public feasts at which animals were slain. One inscription tells us of 169 oxen being required for one feast at Athens. “*As in every other religion, prayer is the leading feature of Greek religion. But when the Greek raised his hands to the gods at their temple, he sought to conciliate them by sacrifices of oxen, goats, or other animals, as well as with incense, and thought them bound in fairness to hear him.*” (Mahaffy, 1879:87)

In reference to the devout feeling¹⁰ of the Greeks, we must not judge their piety by the superstitions of their sacrifices and oracles or merely by their art. Indirect evidence in their literature indicates that common people believed in the rule of a Divine Providence, according to justice and mercy, and usually spoke of the deity as one. They regarded not only ritual but devotion to be their duty towards the gods. Not merely physical advantages, but all the foundation of their liberty and their national greatness, were commonly ascribed to the Divine favour. The greatest monuments of their architecture, their sculpture and their poetry, were worked out with a devout feeling for the honour of the gods, and not merely, as perceived by us, as pure works of art. (Mahaffy, 1879:88)

“*We must regard the home festivals in each Greek city among **the most humane and kindly institutions in their life.** They corresponded to our Sundays and holydays, when the hard-worked and inferior classes are permitted to meet, and enjoy themselves [...]* The women also in such cities as usually insisted upon their seclusion, were allowed to join in processions, and see something of the world; and ‘the stranger that was within their gates,’ or who came to worship at the feast, was

⁹ The citizens of the island of Crete during the classical period claimed that a large part of the Greek religion, which entails Greek dance, had its origins from Crete, an observation supported by many current researchers, such as Lillian B. Lawler (1984).

¹⁰ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι 799 A.

received with kindness and hospitality. No executions or punishments were allowed; prisoners were let out on bail, and the sentences of the law for debts or fines were postponed in honour of the gods, who were worshipped not in sadness, but with joy.”¹¹(Mahaffy, 1879:79)

Women and Dance

Many ancient artifacts, urns or vases depict half-nude or nude dancers (hetaires). Literary sources refer to the participation of female dancers (hetaires) at symposiums, as well as women’s participation in beauty contests, namely beauty pageants, and even in contests dedicated to voting for the most beautiful feet or hips!¹² Women’s participation in dance has been observed in the works of: 1) Euripides’ (Ευριπίδη) ‘*Hercules Mainomeno*’ (Ηρακλή Μαινόμενο) where the Nymphs are invited to dance, 2) in Sophocles’ ‘*Trachinaes*’ (Τραγχίνιες) where the dancers are the women of Trachenos. 3) In Aristophanes’ ‘*Lyssistrate*’ where men and women dance together, something quite uncommon in Athens at the time.

Although in the Greek tragedies the role of the dancer was originally depicted exclusively by men— and in some circumstances women participated but never together with the men— the participation of women in the dance process has been long-established: (1) at the celebrations/festivals/feasts/contests and processions dedicated to the goddesses Demeter, Artemis and Athena,¹³ and at those held in honor of the god Dionysus, (2) in the ceremonies dedicated to the Auroras (Αιώρας) and the Anthestirion (Ανθεστηρίων), (3) in regions of Thrace where women participate as Favni (Φαύνοι), as Thiades (Θιάδες) and as Vakhes (Βάκχες) during the festivals dedicated to the god Dionysus¹⁴, as well as in the dances dedicated to local deities such as Vendida (Βένδιδα) and Kotitto (Κοτυτώ). Specifically, in Thrace women

¹¹ In addition to all the splendour of the festivals and athletic contests, Mahaffy observes that they were also attended by “the usual collection of mountebanks, jugglers, thimble-riggers, and other bad characters, who now frequent horse races. This was so much the case in later days, that Cicero indignantly denies the report that he had gone to the Olympic Games, just as some sober divine might now object to being seen at the Derby.” (Mahaffy, 1879:79)

¹² Ξενοφώντας, Ανάβαση 6,1, 7-8

¹³ (Demeter was the goddess of corn and agriculture, worshipped in the mysteries of Eleusis and elsewhere, along with her daughter Cora, the wife of Pluto, brother of Zeus, and king of the dead. Athene or Athena, the goddess of arts and sciences — who played a leading role in the Illiad and the Odyssey— was the special protectress of Attica and Athens. Artemis, the goddess of the chase, was also worshiped as a goddess of the underworld. She was the sister of Apollo and both were said to be born at Delos, of Latona, another wife of Zeus. (Mahaffy, 1879: 84- 85)

¹⁴ Ηρόδοτος 5,6.

called Thyades (Θυάδες), Vakches (Βάκχες) or originally Maenads (Μαινάδες) danced in the mountains and in the forests, during winter, holding lighted torches, wearing leather cloaks or gowns while screeching and screaming and playing the ‘toubeleki’ (τουμπελέκι) or the flute.¹⁵ (4) Women danced and screeched on rooftops to mourn and honor Adonis, the goddess Aphrodite’s favourite who died prematurely,¹⁶ (5) in Vravra (Βραυράνα), near Athens, in the Attica region of the 5th century BC where young girls aged 5-10 dressed as bears and performed the ‘bear dance’ in honor of the goddess Artemis, the *Parthenos* (Virgin).¹⁷ (6) Women also participated together with men in the dance of Savazio (Σαβάζιο), the god of nature. As an offering to the god of nature, women and men of high society performed wild and ecstatic dances in the streets, holding snakes in their hands, while passersby would offer them sweets.¹⁸ (7) In the 4th century BC women participated in funeral processions performing graceful gestures and dances, (Lawler,1941) as well as in processions such as that of the “Canephor” (Κανιφόρο), in which the most beautiful woman was chosen as a “Canephor”, namely to carry on her head a basket of holy items/objects. (Lawler, 1984).

Dance-Music-Gymnastics

“The candidates for Olympic honours were not confined to the athletic class only. Philosophers, mathematicians, historians, orators, poets and musicians were found among the list.” (Valentine, 1898:187)

“All the special exercises for developing muscle practiced in our gymnasia seem to have been known, and they were all practiced naked, as being sunburnt was highly valued...” (Mahaffy, 1879: 56)

For Plato, human nature was the source of dance, which emerges either from the natural desire of young creatures to move their bodies in order to express

¹⁵ Αθήναιος, 5, 198 E

¹⁶ Aphrodite, whose worship was often confused with that of the Syrian and Phoenician Astarte, was the goddess of love. Her son Eros was the personification of Desire of all sorts. (Mahaffy, 1879: 85)

¹⁷ Καλλιμάχος, Ύμνος Ι Ι Ι. στην Αρτεμη 237-247

¹⁸ Δημοσθένης, για το Στέμμα 259-260

emotions, and especially joy¹⁹ or from the evolution and development of the mimicry (μίμησης) of words through rhythmic corporal gestures.²⁰ According to Plato, that which distinguishes dance— which is inseparable from music²¹— from instinctual movement is the feeling of harmony and rhythm which is a separate gift from the gods, and particularly Apollo and Dionysus.²² Plato observes that dance and music are a significant part of the general education and cultivation of the citizen,²³ and proposes that both boys and girls begin their dance and music education at an early age in order to achieve and maintain, not only good health, physical beauty, a sound body and flexibility, but also mental balance/mental health and goodness/kindness of soul (psyche). The Greek philosopher also distinguishes between two types of music and dance: (1) noble and (2) undignified /degrading/ improper (ποταπός που μιμείται ότι είναι άσχημο και μικροπρεπές). In the second category Plato includes the Vachian dances which he considers improper for the Athenian citizens,²⁴ in which the dancers perform ecstatic/orgiastic movements. However, although Plato believes that in these ceremonies the violent movements relieve individuals of their restlessness or restless behaviors, he proposes that the dancers who participate in them be punished severely.²⁵

Plato's student, the philosopher Aristotle also believed in the role of human nature and especially in those endowed or born with the gift of harmony.²⁶ Both Plato and Aristotle conceive dance as a composing-constituent element of human nature. Namely, Plato, in defining the human instinct in games, includes rhythm and chants/music (άσματα) as inseparable elements, and in particular inseparable elements displayed at all feasts or religious ceremonies, which also included sacrifices and prayers.²⁷ For every sacrificial ceremony special chants (άσματα) and rhythmic

¹⁹ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι 2,653D-E, 672D, 673 D

²⁰ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι 7, 816 A.

²¹ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι, II 654B

²² Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι 2,653D-E, 672D, 673 D

²³ Πλάτωνος Νόμοι, 2, 672.E.

«Οκουν ο μέν Απαίδευτος Αχόρευτος ημιν εσται τον δε πεπαιδευμένον ικανως κεχορευκότα» (Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι, II, 654 AB).

²⁴ Πλάτωνος Νόμοι 7, 814-17

²⁵ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι 7, 815 C και 10, 910 B-C

²⁶ Ιδιαίτερα όσων είναι «πεφυκότες προς αυτά» δηλαδή «γεννημένου» για αυτά, όπως επίσης τόσο για το χορό, όσο και για τη μίμηση, τον ρυθμό και την αρμονία. «Κατά φύσιν δε όντος ήμίν του μιμείσθαι και της αρμονίας και του ρυθμού εξ αρχής οι πεφυκότες προς αυτά μάάλιστα κατά μικρόν προάγοντες εγέννησαν την ποιήσιν εκ των αυτοσχεδιασμάτων.» Επειδή η μίμηση όπως η αρμονία και ο ρυθμός, προέρχεται από τη φύση μας, όσοι έχουν πλαστεί επιτήδειοι προς αυτά, γέννησαν την ποιήση και τα αυτοσχεδιάσματα.» (Αριστοτέλους Περί Ποιητικής 1448 b 20 , 1448 a 2).

²⁷ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι 799 A.

movements or forms were formulated.²⁸ According to both philosophers, dance is an inseparable part of daily life and a constituent element of human nature.

With regard to gymnastics, Plato argues that in Gymnastics, such as in all other means of education, every innovation must be avoided in order not to deviate from the established order. Allowed must be every means that contributes to modesty/decency, corporal vigor or physical strength and health. Additionally, one must avoid ethical/moral laxity or demoralization, and anarchy (anarchic spirit) that can be provoked by dance.²⁹ Accordingly, Aristotle proposes studying the formulation of an educational framework of exercise practices (gymnastics/physical education) for youth that will assist them in cultivating and attaining *civic virtue*. Namely, to determine with which melodies and rhythms youth should exercise to, so that their education is concluded only when they are able to feel the beauty of rhythm and music— thereby cultivating civic virtue.³⁰ According to Aristotle, games and gymnastics must be included in the exercises of the psyche (mind/soul) and the *soma* (body), with the purpose of promoting virtue and the creation of “*free citizens with useful bodies*”.³¹ Aristotle, in his reference to youth and the Doric (Δωρικούς) and Frygike (Φρυγικούς) dances, proposes the use of appropriate music and rhythms since the psyche is related to harmony and rhythm.³² Aristotle distinguishes dances in relation to the effect they have on the psyche of the human being for tranquility vs. disturbance/agitation.³³

Accordingly, at this point it is necessary to point out the importance of physical exercise to renowned figures of this period, namely that the candidates for Olympic honours were not confined to the athletic class only. “*Philosophers, mathematicians,*

²⁸ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι, 802 E5.

²⁹ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι II 656CE, III 700A-701C.

³⁰ «μέχρι περ αν δύνωνται χαίρειν τοις καλοῖς μέλεσι και ρυθμοῖς» Αριστοτέλους Πολιτικά Θ 5-6, 1341a, 15, Ο Πλούταρχος αναφέρεται στην όρχηση και την θεωρεί τέχνη «η την τέχνη ποικίλη πολυμήχανος, ευέλικτη στις απαιτήσεις της ποίησης, ικανή μάλιστα να αποδίδει τα Πάθη της ψυχής» Πλούταρχου, Συμπόσιο, Θ', 15, 2 βλ. Αθήναιος, ΙΔ', σελ. 629 -631 E

³¹ «τα παιχνίδια και η γυμναστική πρέπει να παρεμβάλλονται στις ασκήσεις τις ψυχής και του σώματος με σκοπό να προάγουν την αρετή του ανθρώπου και την δημιουργία σωμάτων χρήσιμων στους ελεύθερους πολίτες» Αριστοτέλους Πολιτικά Θ 1338a, 21-31

³² «και τις έοικε συγγένεια ταις αρμονίαις και τοις ρυθμοῖς, διό πολλοί φασι των σοφών οι μὲν αρμονίαν είναι την ψυχήν, η δ εχειν αρμονίαν» Αριστοτέλους Πολιτικά Θ 5 1340b, 20-22

³³ Specifically: « προς μὲν ενίας οδυρτικωτέρως και συνεστικότηως μάλλον.....προς δε τας μαλακωτέρως, την διάνοιαν.....οιον δοκει ποιείν η δωριστί μόνη των αρμονιών, ενθουσιαστικούς δε η φρυγιστί.....τον αυτόν δε τρόπον έχει και τας περι τους ρυθμούς (οι μὲν γάρ ήθος έχουσιν στασιμώτερον οι δε κινητικόν) ... όπως η αρμονία αν είναι θρηνώδης, η ψυχή θλίβεται ενώ εάν είναι μαλακή συμβάλλει στη χαλάρωση της διάνοιας, όπως η δωρική που παρέχει γαλήνη και η φρυγική που ενθουσιάζει τους ανθρώπους..... το ίδιο συμβαίνει και με τους ρυθμούς, άλλοι από αυτούς επιφέρουν ηρεμία στην ψυχή και άλλοι τους συνταράζουν» Αριστοτέλους Πολιτικά Θ 5 1340b, 5-15

historians, orators, poets and musicians were found among the list. It is said that the learned and eloquent Plato competed with the wrestlers in the Isthmian and Pythian games, and that the meditative Pythagoras once carried off a prize at the Olympiad, and in addition trained a pupil for a later contest when he also was successful.” (Valentine, 1898:187)

Plato distinguishes between three forms of dance: 1) the Pyrrichios³⁴ (Πυρρίχιος), or war dances, 2) Social and religious dances (εμμέλεια),³⁵ or *peace dances*, such as those performed at weddings, funeral processions or during mourning or grief, as well as the dances performed in the Greek tragedies and comedies,³⁶ (i.e. religious dances, such as the Pan (Παιάν), the Geranos (Γέρανος), the Parthenia (Παρθένια), the Anthea (Άνθεα), the Aures (Ωρών), the Peploforon (Πεπλοφόρων), the Caryatid (Καρυάτιδων) and finally 3) the Vachean dances or the Dionysian improper-satirical dances, for which, as previously mentioned he proposes that the dancers who participate in them be punished severely.³⁷

According to Nikitaras (Νικηταράς, 1988: 64-74), Plato distinguishes between three forms of dance: war dances, religious dances and peace dances. Specifically, (1) war dances, such as the dances of Crete, the precursors of the Pyrrichios (Πυρρίχιος) and the Gymnopaideies (Γυμνοπαιδιές). Additionally, in order to avoid moral deviations and the anarchic spirit (anarchy) Plato proposed the omission of certain corporal movements in the war dances of the Couretes (Κουρητών) of Crete and in that of the Dioskours (Διόσκουρων) of Sparta. (2) Religious dances, such as the Pan (Παιάν), the Geranos (Γέρανος), the Parthenia (Παρθένια), the Anthea (Άνθεα), the Aures (Ωρών), the Peploforon (Πεπλοφόρων), the Caryatid (Καρυάτιδων) and the Dionysian (Διονυσιακοί), and finally, (3) Peace dances, such as the dances performed at weddings, funeral processions or during mourning or grief, as well as the dances performed in the Greek tragedies and the Greek comedies. (Νικηταράς, 1988: 64-74)

In accordance with Plato’s description of the Pyrrichian dances (war dances), the dancer performs a series of defensive rhythmic movements, such as jumps, leaps, etc. with which he can avoid any type of direct attack, as well as aggressive movements in the use of his arms during battle (sword, bow and arrow, javelin).³⁸ At the

³⁴ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι 796 B.

³⁵ Πλάτωνος Νόμοι 814.

³⁶ Πλάτωνος Νόμοι 814.

³⁷ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι 7, 815 C και 10, 910 B-C.

³⁸ Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι, 815a.

Panathenian festivals, competitions were held and awards given for the best ‘orchesi’ (composition) of war games.³⁹ The Athenians also engaged in the Pyrrichios armed orhesi (όρχηση) or in dances that originated from the Lacedaemonians (Λακεδαιμονίους) from whom all war games originated. (Νικηταράς, 1988)

With regard to the exercises or training for war, young men at the age of 16 or 18, having passed the age of boyhood, when they were called children (παίδες), were made έφηβοι, or ‘men of age’, and were registered in the list of citizens. In Athens this was done with a religious service in which the youth promised to defend their city against all enemies and seditions and declared their allegiance to the laws and to the religion of their city. They were then enrolled on a list called ‘το ληξιαρχικών γραμματείον’ (a roll of their deme or parish). Subsequently they were employed for two years in outlying garrison duty and in patrolling the frontiers of the land, during which time they were called *περίπολοι*. This gave them the necessary training for war. (Mahaffy, 1879: 57)

Moreover, at age 18 Athenian males were enrolled in the schools of the Politeia (state) the so-called Epheivio (Εφηβείο) under the supervision of specialized school masters. In these schools two cycles of lessons were provide, the first of which aimed at empowering the body through gymnastics/physical exercises, military exercises, dance lessons and participation in dances at festivals. The second focused on intellectual cultivation and development, namely education of the mind. This educational framework or program reveals that dance and physical exercise were a significant part of an adolescent’s education in the classical period. Among the various exercises taught were running, wrestling, throwing the discus, as well as those of use in war such as riding, throwing the dart, and managing the sword and shield. All these exercises were in fashion at the public contests in the games, at which the severest contest was the pancration (παγκράτιον), where the naked and unarmed combatants were allowed to use any violence they liked to overcome their adversary. (1879: 55-56)

“Such intellectual feasts, provided in the service of religion, but really becoming an engine in the politics and the culture of the day.” (Mahaffy, 1879: 78)

³⁹ Αθήναιος ΙΔ' 6.630 Ε.

In addition to athletic games and contests, many musical, poetical and dramatic contests were encouraged at the festivals, as for example, at the Pythina games, held in Delphi, and at the Dionysia, held in Athens. Sophocles, Euripides and other tragic authors provide a plethora of information concerning characteristics of the melodious/harmonious tragic dance, including mystical dances in which gestures or a rather a code of symbolic corporeal rhythmic movements were a significant characteristic—in which women’s roles in the dances were originally played by men. In 1871 Hermann Bucholtz studied Euripides in order to formulate a picture of the tragic dance.⁴⁰ In the Greek tragedies other forms of women’s dances are observed, such as ceremonial dances, wedding dances as is the case in Euripides’ ‘Vakhes’ (Βάκχες). (Kraus, 1980). Aristotle reveals changes in Greek drama⁴¹ due to the incorporation of chorus music and dance by the tragic poet Agathona (Αγάθωνα)⁴². In Sophocles’s tragedies ‘Trachinies’ (Τραγχίνιες) the dancers are women from the city of Trachinos (Τραχίνος), as is the case in his play ‘Phoenisses’ (Φοίνισσες) in which the dancers are from Phoeniki (Φοινίκη) (S .Said, M.Trede, Alain Le Boulluec, 2001). In Aristophanes’ ‘Lysistrate’ (Λυσιστράτη) there is an ‘anamix’ (αναμίξις) dance, namely comprised both of men and women, something uncommon in Athens of the classical period.⁴³

It seems that the state encouraged and promoted the citizen’s intellectual cultivation and artistic development, by supporting the public to attend the theatre. For instance, the state granted a fee of two obols to each male citizen and his wife so they could attend the theatre—to watch the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, satires on the politics, the manners, and the tendencies of the day, that gave a great deal of sound advice to the audience. The abundant remains of the ancient theatres throughout Greece—Athens, Argos, Syracuse, and even in small and obscure towns—indicates that the Greeks were a ‘play-going people’. At the festivals, not only athletic games, but many musical, poetical and dramatic contests/competitions were encouraged:

“For a fee of two obols, granted him by the state, every citizen and his wife, at some contests even resident strangers, could go and sit in the theatre, and hear four

⁴⁰ Bucholtz, Herman (1871). Die Tanzkunst des Euripides (Leipzig, 1871) p. 4.

⁴¹ At this point it is necessary to point out that the Greek word drama is derived from the verb *dran* (δρᾶν) which means to present/perform/represent with movements, a factor that indicates possibility that tragedy originates from mime/mimic (S .Said, M.Trede, Alain Le Boulluec, 2001).

⁴² Αριστοτέλους Ποιητική 1456 A,29-30.

⁴³ Αθήναιος, 7, 276 A. 10, 448 B.

*plays of Aeschylus pitted against four plays of Sophocles, and four of Euripides. [...] it is not easy to conceive how the audience could endure and enjoy so much. They are said to have had wine and sweetmeats handed round to them during the play, and Aristotle alludes to their eating such sweetmeats when the acting was bad. A certain number of judges were chosen by lot, and they assigned the prize (originally a goat) to the poet of the best plays. The tragedies, which had a satiric or serio-comic drama added by the way of contrast to each group of them, were even more relieved by the comedies, of which we have splendid specimens in the remaining plays of Aristophanes. These were the bitterest satires on the politics, the manners, and the tendencies of the day, and with no lack of coarseness and ribaldry, gave a great deal of sound advice, and a great deal of wholesome reproof. They corresponded very much to our leading articles and reviews. [...]. **Such intellectual feasts, provided in the service of religion, but really becoming an engine in the politics and the culture of the day.**" (Mahaffy, 1879: 77- 78)*

Professionalization and Dance

Greek philosophers of the classical period scorned and condemned any type of professionalization, such as the professional athlete, who first made his regular appearance in Grecian history about three or four centuries before the Christian Era. (Valentine, 1898:186) Philosophers of the classical period believed that professional athletes developed only their bodies thereby neglecting the harmonious development of mind and soma (body). (Νικηταράς, 1988) Nonetheless, with regard to ‘professionalization’ in dance, the works of Demosthenes and Xenophon, not to mention excavation finds, reveal that this category of professional dancers and dance masters/instructors had an institutional role during the classical period. There seems to have been many esteemed dance instructors/masters, such as Telestes (Τελέστης) (Girard, 1894), as well as masters of orchestration (Ορχήσεως), such as Cleopas (Κλέωπας) of Thebes, and Zenon (Ζήνων) of Crete.⁴⁴ After the Peloponnesian war and the major destructions in Athens— at a point in time where the need for military duty was high in Athens— dancers,⁴⁵ members of parliament and merchants⁴⁶ were

⁴⁴ Ιδίου Α' σελ. 22 C-D.

⁴⁵ Λυκούργου, Κατά Λεωκράτους, 96.

⁴⁶ Λυκούργου, Κατά Λεωκράτους 55.

relieved/exempted from their military service. (Νικηταράς, 1988). Demosthenes⁴⁷ refers to professionals who gradually eliminated amateur dancers, such as the theatrical troupe of Savazio (Σαβάζιου) in Athens of 4 BC. (R. Kraus, 1980), and the ‘travelling troupe’ or a trained team of dancers from Athens who went to the oracle of Delphi to perform at the festival of Dionysus. (Lawler, 1984)

Greek literature and archaeological finds of the classical period undoubtedly depict female dancers at symposiums, women who were slaves or liberated/emancipated slaves hired or ‘rented’ (ενοικιάζοντο) for their services at symposiums. In his symposium Xenophon (Ξενοφών)⁴⁸ refers to the head of a troupe who brought in a female dancer-acrobat and a boy dancer-musician who played the lyre. As he observes, the female dancer threw twelve rings into the air with dexterity while turning them to the rhythm of the flute, and she then whirled her body into the air and through the ring without getting injured. Socrates, who was present during this performance, observed that the girl who had been accompanied by the flute in her ‘acrobatic’ dance was capable of moving her body in a manner that emphasized with meaning that which she wanted to show.⁴⁹ Undoubtedly, during the classical period and later, finds reveal the appearance of professional dancers who received payment for their services, and who usually belonged to a lower social status, such as that of slaves, liberated slaves, and hetaires. (Roos 1951). According to Xenophon (Ξενοφών) such dance performances by female dancers (hetaires) were quite common at symposiums.⁵⁰

Concluding remarks: “A magnificent nation of athletes” (Valentine, 1898: 184)

“Comparisons have often been drawn by writers between the ancient and modern athlete, in which the performances of one are weighed against those of another, and the argument has generally resulted detrimentally to the former [...] Allowing due margin to the Grecian historians and poets in their exaggeration of the feats of their athletic heroes, we must none the less concede that the ancient Greeks

⁴⁷ Δημοσθένης, για το Στέμμα 259-260.

⁴⁸ Ξενοφώντος, Συμπόσιο 2, 1-2.

⁴⁹ Ξενοφώντος, Συμπόσιο 2, 11-15 and 6, 4.

⁵⁰ Ξενοφώντος, Συμπόσιο 2, 11-15 and 6, 4.

were a magnificent nation of athletes, and is some of their methods could very well teach us many a good lesson [...] That these athletic contests produced the finest results there can be no question; and it is not assuming much to say that the Greeks owed their supremacy over contemporary nations to the care and devotion paid to their muscular and physical education.” (Valentine, 1898: 184-188)

Dance, a divine inspiration⁵¹— in combination or rather in kinship with music, poetry and gymnastics— was a means and an element of education in the classical era. It not only reflected the Muses but also the desire to attain corporal flexibility, a sound body, and beauty.

Philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, considered dance a constituent element of human nature. Plato observed that dance and music were a significant part of the general education and cultivation of the citizen,⁵² and proposed that both boys and girls begin their dance and music education at an early age in order to achieve and maintain, not only physically sound bodies, physical beauty, and flexibility, but also mental balance and goodness/kindness of soul (psyche). Aristotle recommends the promotion of physical exercises in conjunction with rhythm and melodies in order to cultivate and inspire civic virtue.

Accordingly, women in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. danced at festivals and feasts, and were also allowed to join in processions to honor the gods, goddesses, local deities and deceased heroes. Dance ‘professionals’ excelled, despite the fact that Greek philosophers of the classical period scorned and condemned any type of ‘professionalization’, such as the professional athlete, since they claimed that professional athletes developed only their bodies thereby neglecting the harmonious development of mind and body. Moreover, it seems that the state encouraged the citizen’s intellectual and artistic cultivation, by financially supporting the public to attend the theatre— i.e. the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides at which a great deal of advice was given to the audience through these satires on the politics, the manners, and the tendencies of the day.

⁵¹ The citizens of the island of Crete during the classical period claimed that a large part of the Greek religion, which entails Greek dance, had its origins from Crete, an observation supported by many current researchers, such as Lillian B. Lawler (1984).

⁵² Πλάτωνος Νόμοι, 2, 672.E.

«Οκοῦν ὁ μὲν Ἀπαιδευτὸς Ἀχόρευτὸς ἡμῖν ἐστὶ τὸν δε πεπαιδευμένον ἰκανῶς κεχορευκόντα» (Πλάτωνος, Νόμοι, II, 654 AB).

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