

An amplified perception of Dance and Autism: a coexistence essay

A ampliação da percepção na interface Dança e Autismo: um ensaio da convivência

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Abstract

This theoretical essay explores arguments at the interface of Dance and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), based on the premise of humanization. It draws on bibliographic reviews developed in four articles published between 2019 and 2024, and the narrative of experience in the book *TEarte*. It focuses on the perspective of individuals who coexist with autistic people, prompting questions about our perceptions of ourselves and life when interacting with autistic individuals through Dance. It points to a circular movement that fosters the development of human characteristics such as availability, silence, listening, and compassion. It suggests that it is in dialogical coexistence that Dance demonstrates its expanded potential, while mobilizing our perception of reality. Thus, the role of Dance-as-art in society contributes to the recognition of the unique expression of each human being and to the development of an anti-ableist education through a critical perspective.

Keywords: dance; autism; coexistence.

Resumo

Este ensaio teórico traça argumentos na interface Dança e TEA, tendo como premissa a humanização, a partir da leitura de revisões bibliográficas desenvolvidas em quatro artigos organizados entre 2019 e 2024, e a narrativa de relato de experiência no livro *TEarte*. Atenta-se para um olhar destinado aos sujeitos que coexistem com pessoas autistas, o que deflagra o questionamento do que percebemos acerca de nós mesmas(os) e da vida quando convivemos com pessoas autistas mediadas(os) pela Dança. Aponta um movimento de circularidade que nos coloca no desenvolvimento de características humanas, tais como disponibilidade, silêncio, escuta e compassividade. Sugere que é na convivência dialógica que a Dança demonstra seu potencial ampliado, enquanto mobiliza nossa percepção da realidade. Assim, o papel da arte-Dança na sociedade contribui para o reconhecimento da expressão singular de cada ser humano, do desenvolvimento de uma educação anticapacitista por meio de uma visão crítica.

Palavras-chave: dança; autismo; convivência.

INTRODUCTION

This theoretical essay aims to outline considerations about Dance¹ as an artistic language and its interfaces in the contexts of the lives of autistic people. It draws on several works that developed a bibliographic review at the intersection between Special Education and Degrees in the field of art, developed between 2019 and 2024, as well as tracing a narrative from the book *TEarte: poéticas do encontro em dança e autismo* (TEarte: poetics of encounter in dance and autism) by Viana (2021), which indicates experience with new perspectives through coexistence.

¹ In this essay, the word Dance is capitalized to confer legitimacy as a field of knowledge.

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From this perspective, the arguments to be put forward involve Dance as a path to human development, in the perception of the process of lifelong learning² that occurs between people with and without Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the context of (co)existence.

Dance, as social practice situated within a specific geographical and sociocultural context, involves the possibility of reviving its foundational aspects: culture, language, rituals, and art, in spaces of education that problematize the practice of freedom (Freire, 2018).

Therefore, when this cultural and artistic manifestation is addressed solely through its dimensions of sensory and motor stimulation, or merely in terms of socialization, its potential is limited. In other words, it ends up being used only as an instrument aimed at addressing existential conditions intrinsic to individuals.

Thus, this essay moves beyond, elucidating the potential of Dance as an art form that, in the words of Costas et al. (2018), entails engagement with forms of knowledge that guide the perception and reflection of those involved in its practice. This enables us to be affected by the relationships that surround us, to take positions in relation to events, and to act consciously and openly within society.

We consider this to be a pillar of art: to invite us to view the spaces of its manifestation as opportunities to observe existence beyond preconceptions that remain embedded in the development of languages which, at times, "(...) understand drawing, painting, dance, and music as a pretext for learning" and "reading and writing" (Barbieri, 2012, p. 97).

Hence, employing Dance in the context of autistic individuals may activate intrinsically human conditions related to coexistence and learning.

To this end, it is necessary to be attentive to a set of attitudes and predispositions that enable the mutual involvement of two or more individuals in their exchanges of experience. According to the African philosopher José Castiano (2010), this is intrinsically linked to culture, understood as a second nature, and to the relationships established among social groups through interculturality³.

We emphasize that these relationships involve flexibility and educational processes that foster the development of individuals' perception beyond their own conditions of existence.

From this perspective, we argue that the interface between Dance and ASD can be articulated around three assumptions: the first "[...] condemns both normalization and the inferiorization and erasure" of autistic individuals, while affirming the expression of their "bodies, experiences, and intelligence" (Píccolo, 2023, p. 2).

The second aligns with the movement of neurodiversity, which has been consolidating in the twenty-first century (Singer, 1999), by understanding autism as an atypical neurological configuration rather than as a disease to be treated and, potentially, cured.

Finally, the universality of Dance as a space of synergy among different corporealities, understood as an integral science, may foster an approach that recognizes each autistic individual in their unique way of existing as a human being. This, in turn, advances the philosophical principle that Dance reveals itself as a profound unity within the widest diversity (Rodhen, 2007).

By taking this direction, Dance, as a language that is simultaneously objective and scientific, metaphorical, symbolic, and artistic, reveals its capacity to integrate dichotomies such as body-mind and efficient-deficient.

The image of the autistic body also carries its own stereotypes. It is common to hear that autistic individuals have limitations in fine and gross motor coordination (as if this were an inescapable destiny), and it is likewise not uncommon to encounter neurodivergent individuals who do not identify with the bodies they inhabit, whether due to issues related to gender or bodily abilities (Silva, 2018, p. 4).

² Lifelong learning, according to Freire (2015a), is based on praxis (action-reflection-action) in which subjects develop a critical stance toward reality throughout their lives, leading to the construction of new knowledge and broadening their perceptual horizons.

³ "By interculturality, we do not understand a fixed state of relations, but rather a process of forming attitudes and predispositions in subjects, in such a way as to make them capable of engaging in dialogue between cultures" (Castiano, 2010, p. 221).

In other words, the body has functioned as a surface for multiple cultural projections, since it is a common sign of human existence. It constitutes our objective and corporeal situatedness; it is the means through which we occupy and modify space itself (society), thereby producing meaning and reshaping our perception (Merleau-Ponty, 2011).

In this sense, the language of Dance constitutes a corporeal grammar that, according to Sander (2009), has long overflowed spaces of confinement, spreading throughout everyday human life and, in particular, enabling the recognition of individuals through the creative dimension.

Art—when it exercises its creative potency—confronts us with this composed chaos, or composing chaos: chaos-as-germ. It is the discovery of new possibilities, or rather, thresholds. For the arts offer clues to liminal zones, to edges and borders. In the case of the bodily arts, they may indicate points of encounter and disencounter between thought and body, thereby assisting us in problematizing the intensive dimension of our bodies-subjectivities (Sander, 2009, p. 340).

In this direction, the desire and willingness to engage in interaction and in encounters mediated by Dance enable a methodological approach grounded in the sharing of experiences, within the universality of ASD and Dance. It is this expanded perspective that guides our arguments in this essay.

DISCUSSION

The reflections and arguments in this discussion begin by articulating four studies that conducted bibliographic reviews and were identified on Google Scholar within the search period from 2019 to 2024, at the intersection of Dance and ASD, encompassing art and education.

Overall, the bibliographic reviews presented in these studies point to a lack of in-depth research regarding Dance-as-art. The works themselves are predominantly situated at the level of undergraduate theses and scientific initiation projects, with only one originating from a doctoral program in Special Education.

A common denominator among these works is the emphasis on the importance of Dance-based artistic language for autistic individuals. According to Silva and Orlando (2019), who conducted a bibliographic review about the Dance and ASD interface, there is an urgent need for further discoveries. The authors highlight that the existing literature already points to an interdisciplinary and collaborative perspective as a way of overcoming the medical-biological-therapeutic bias present in international studies, while also aligning with inclusive education in the Brazilian context.

This way, the Subsidiary Document to the Inclusion Policy (Brasil, 2015), at the national level, endorses the interconnection among formal and non-formal educational spaces, community environments, and the family, together with the training of the professionals involved, as a foundational aspect of the development of citizenship in society. "A new conception of education and society is shaped by public will, and it is essential that the educational system embraces this will" (Brasil, 2015, p. 23).

Thus, the second bibliographic investigation, as an undergraduate thesis by Reis (2024), focused on ASD and school inclusion, reveals the challenges faced in the teaching of arts in schools and, consequently, of Dance. It further emphasizes the guidelines of the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) (Brasil, 2018) and the importance of teacher education. In this sense, the professional's ability to develop teaching methods aligned with the ways of acting, thinking, and perceiving the world that are intrinsic to individuals' subjectivities is emphasized through Dance, understood as a language capable of connecting teaching to the expression of corporeality of autistic and non-autistic subjects within a given context, highlighting their perception of self and of the world (Reis, 2024).

Therefore, we observe that dialogue among education, Dance, and autism can enable a mediating process of identity formation for neuroatypical⁴ individuals, including in matters

⁴ A neuroatypical or neurodivergent person is an individual whose neurological development differs from normative developmental patterns.

related to the school context, particularly regarding Specialized Educational Support (SES), which is often grounded in medical-clinical frameworks prevalent in health-related research. From this perspective, it leads us to understand that artistic and Dance-based practices aligned with protocols permeated by instruments that strengthen motor attributes and psychosocial adjustment ultimately reinforce the medical model⁵ and the first wave of the social model⁶ of disability.

It should not be overlooked that the causes of ASD are controversial, as there are individual-specific variables that influence diagnosis, including age, their developmental trajectories, the presence of comorbidities, and broader issues related to life in contemporary society.

Another aspect is the status of art in the educational and social field in Brazil, yet to be properly valued. In the case of Dance, understood as a cultural and artistic manifestation, it is established and constituted through the lives of individuals and human communities, within an interactional and dynamic movement of diverse nuances.

Thus, the aspects involving art, education, aesthetic experience, and leisure, in their political dimension of coexistence, are of a particular relevance. It is within these spaces that what is established is profaned, fostering new points of view through a dialogue that unfolds into themes, discussions, reflections, and expressions shared by all those involved (Maziero, 2023).

Knowledge in Dance emerges through a richness of images, symbols, forms, sensations, and intentionalities that intersect, permeated by differences and, at the same time, by shared cores.

We highlight the use of everyday movements, alternative spaces, and dialogical play as common elements, integral to artistic expressions embedded in social practices, not as performances elaborated for the aesthetic enjoyment of spectators, but rather as possibilities for self-experimentation within coexistence.

In this direction, the dismantling of boundaries strengthens Dance-as-art as an expressive language accessible to all, opening pathways for plural forms of learning in which sensitive forms of knowledge are cultivated.

Sensitivity is not innate; it depends on subjective, cultural, social, and historical factors. It concerns the way we experience existence and, therefore, relates to the perception-connection between body and knowledge.

This integrative element reveals that individuals' behaviors are shaped both by singularity (subjectivity) and by the collective meanings we attribute through our interactions with the environment and culture.

It comes from aesthetic experience, which is how we interpret everything that surrounds us. Hence, Dance-as-art invigorates education and interpersonal relationships, allowing a "[...] curious gaze, a fertile imagination, that gives rise to creative thinking" (Barbieri, 2012, p. 20).

According to Andrade and Murad (2020, p. 5), in a work that also adopts the bibliographic review approach at the interface between Dance and ASD, the conception of art that is latent in school curricula is one of experimenting, sensing, being impressed, and transforming oneself. The authors say that "[...] what autistic individuals have been doing through art, more specifically through Dance, may be a promising question to be pursued."

Dance, as a pedagogical method, is shaped by coexistence and interaction among people. This concept had already been presented by Marques (2003) in her studies on Dance and education, in which Dance is expressed through human corporeality, permeated by meanings, and leading to reflection within the lived contexts of individuals.

Therefore, once there is a social commitment made by teachers, artists, dancers, and playful subjects⁷ that problematize the cultural roots of the exclusion of people and practices, this commitment must be aligned with diversity of expression.

It is undeniable that working in an interdisciplinary manner, integrating Dance into the learning and development processes of autistic individuals, involves a series of factors, as

⁵ In the medical model, deficiency is observed as a pathology.

⁶ In the first wave of the disability social movement, actions were directed toward the inclusion of people with disabilities, seeking to overcome aspects of their living conditions.

⁷ "Playful subjects" is adapted from the Portuguese term "brincantes", used in popular dances that emerge from street festivals, in which Dance is an integral part of folk festivities and the celebration of life.

demonstrated in the undergraduate thesis by Simas (2022). The author underlines once again the importance of training teachers, health professionals, psychologists, therapists, and artists in coexisting with autistic people through an interdisciplinarity approach aligned with playfulness, imaginative capacity, and communication.

These remarks lead us to an artistic proposal developed by Martins and Romarco (2022) in an article based on a case study involving an autistic child. The authors introduce the metaphor of the bubble as a flexible enclosure that shifts as a response to the conditions both within and around it, and shaped by the affectivity of human relationships.

Just as Freire (2015b), these authors equally point to dialogicity as a possibility for learning when there is a disposition to create bonds. Aspects such as observing, perceiving, doing, sensing, and thinking, linked to intuitive apprehension and imagination, function as mechanisms that open pathways for relationships between neuro(a)typical people who dance.

In other words, it is through coexistence that intimacy and openness are fostered in order to penetrate the world of individuals, creating connections in the construction of trust. This facilitates the perception of emotional states, possibilities for friendships, sensory overload, moments of crisis, and engagement in group activities.

From this perspective, the body discovers itself as a point of tangency between language and experience. That is, according to Merleau-Ponty (2011), the images, sounds, and nonverbal gestures employed in a dialogue, for instance, are not merely discursive elements; rather they establish a disposition, revealing inclinations and peculiarities, limitations, and commitment to our lived context.

Therefore, gesture-movement-Dance has acquired an existential character, as highlighted by Martins and Romarco (2022, p. 92). The authors state: "[...] mediation grounded in affectivity, in the context of art/education and inclusive pedagogical practices in Dance, brought about through collective artistic practice [...], was of extreme importance for the development of interpersonal intelligence and communication."

Following this direction, the book *TEArte: poetics of encounter in dance and autism* by Ana Maria Fernandes Viana (2021), a professor in the Department of Performing Arts at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), becomes essential for comprehending Dance beyond sensory and motor stimuli, as well as beyond an exclusive form of socialization.

This publication presents counter-hegemonic perspectives, addressing the difficulties, deficiencies, potentialities, and humanity of autistic individuals, professionals, and parents involved in its workshops.

Viana's experience working in a multidisciplinary team with autistic children and youth, between 6 and 20 years of age, at the *Institut Médico-Éducatif Le Triskell* and at the *Centre Hospitalier Guillaume Régnier*, respectively located in the french cities of Bruz and Rennes, opens new perspectives on the relationship between Dance and ASD through her experiential testimonies.

Although her work takes place exclusively in institutions that serve people with mental disorders who are nonverbal, her narrative does not align with a medical-biological-ableist paradigm⁸.

Dance is portrayed within a joint action plan involving specialized professionals, such as psychomotor therapists, psychologists, nurses, and special education teachers, in which Dance constitutes one component of a broader set of actions.

Thus, analysing the accounts presented by Viana (2021) unveils the potential of Dance beyond what has already been presented regarding its benefits for autistic individuals; it emerges as the viable unheard-of⁹ (Freire, 2015b). This perspective goes further by engaging in the construction of interconnected epistemologies between Dance and ASD.

⁸ Ableism is a form of discrimination based on an arbitrary view of norm and deviation that produces stigma towards people with disabilities. Consequently, people without disabilities are considered as the standard and ideal to be pursued, while people with disabilities are seen as deviant.

⁹ The viable unheard-of is a concept developed by Paulo Freire (2015b) in his published work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1st edition from 1970, edited in English and Spanish) that refers to overcoming extreme situations in order to transform reality.

This element prompted the writing of this essay and manifested the following question: what do we learn about ourselves and about life when engaging with autistic people through Dance? In this regard, Viana (2021) points to several clues, such as the need for social, educational and cultural ruptures that confronts our own existence. Hence, the author broadens her perspective; beyond observing autistic people, she introduces her own singular account of coexistence, as well as her personal learnings.

The author portrays the corporeality of the subjects, as well as her own, within a space marked by affectivity and sensitive, attentive, receptive, open, unfinished, and available listening. It is the territory of presence constructed through coexistence, with Dance as its mediating means.

As for me, I can say that every person I encountered along my journey taught me to see what my eyes previously could not, showed me a new type of beauty through fissures, taught me to inhabit new spaces, and to create new territories, and to trace new paths. From what I could notice, instead of a supposed insensitivity to what lies outside oneself, the autistic person reveals an extreme sensitivity to this dynamic of circularity between self and what surrounds them, an intense perception of affects (Viana, 2021, p. 49).

Consequently, the structures of her workshops fostered a radical shift in the relationships between autistic people and health professionals, specifically through the intrinsic contact enabled by Dance, which allows for the disruption of hierarchies of knowledge, just like decolonial pedagogies¹⁰.

A second topic concerned the development of availability as a component of listening and creative capacity, both among the working team and the participants.

Finally, the maintenance of a safe and calm environment served as a reference for identifying discomfort, also making interventions more effective (Viana, 2021).

Several strategies emerged throughout the process, offering other perspectives at the interface between Dance and ASD. The first consisted of a pre-encounter phase; in preparation and in silence, which fosters calmness in action and the absence of expectations, judgments, and desires.

That is, the framework of needs through which professionals seek to promote the development of others according to an instituted logic. According to Viana (2021) we must step outside our own bubble in order to make ourselves fully present at the encounter and, along with it, create relational spaces with autistic individuals through Dance. In this regard, receptivity allows intuition and respect to flourish, effortlessly welcoming everyone and fostering processes of humanization¹¹.

Another aspect concerns the use of improvisation by Viana (2021) as a methodology based on the poetics of singular corporealities, which "[...] at the same time explores the limits of composition between sensation and gesture, and between passivity and activity, always on the verge of doing nothing, [...] finding itself on the edge" (Bardet, 2014, p. 160). This boundary must be carefully perceived and negotiated when Dance functions as the language of interaction. Thus, within spaces of connection among diverse people, it is possible to observe the differences of each being and open oneself to horizontal communication that emerges from the encounter, from the action and nonaction, and from stepping outside oneself in order to listen, to feel, and to allow oneself to be affected by others.

In her narrative, Viana (2021) (re)calls us to temper our desires and to allow ourselves to be invited into another space that surfaces through the coexistence between subjects. It is indeed

¹⁰Walsh (2017) introduces the term decolonial, without the letter "s," in accordance with her proposal to invest the term with a meaning that goes beyond the undoing of the colonial. The author edited a collection focused on articulating pedagogy and the decolonial, bringing together scholars who address these themes, and wrote a chapter that contributes to understanding the implications of thinking the decolonial pedagogically and the pedagogical decolonially. That is, beyond the cultural assimilation of peoples who have undergone processes of colonization.

¹¹This is a concept developed in the book *Education as the Practice of Freedom* by Paulo Freire (2018), which understands the transition from subjects' naïve consciousness, when they do not perceive what limits them, to a state of critical consciousness that entails dialogical communication, by that enhancing and enlivening existential, social, and creative interdependence, originating from the human capacity to love others regardless of their worldview.

required to dissolve established knowledge about the peculiar characteristics described in studies about autistic individuals, in order to enter new poetic forms, consequently new aesthetics, through the expressive power of the body.

From this perspective, Dance shows all its full potential in the celebration and expression of existence itself, which has been conveyed through symbolic forms since prehistoric times. In its meaning, as an artistic language, it entails specificities in the context of a new Dance that has manifested through intercultural movements since the late 20th century (Maziero, 2023).

This mobility of viewing oneself from within one's own context reveals the movement intersections of Dance such as expressionist, modern, postmodern, contemporary, contact-improvisation, new Dance, free Dance, capoeira, hip-hop, Brazilian dances, Indigenous dances, among others. These forms dissolve boundaries as their themes align with the struggles of cultural, political and social movements that uphold forms of knowledge based on the respect for diversity, freedom of speech, the expansion of consciousness, and the search for peace and equity.

The structures of these manifestations translate shared concerns and pursuits toward detachment from prescriptions and constraints, in which the emotional aspects, according to Brinkmann (1990, *apud* Schimd, 2017), enable encounters with various forms of expression.

This prism through which Dance is viewed connects us to sensitive listening, a respectful attempt at openness to the unexpected, that suggests non-impositional approaches, in which new aesthetics emerge without denying the human dimension of beings.

Therefore, the constellations of senses and perceptions of autistic individuals may be different, which in turn fosters diversity in educational processes for all subjects involved.

As Viana (2021) points out, it is crucial to distinguish what can help professionals to become closer to autistic people, developing a relationship without changing them, while recognizing what may hinder or block this encounter.

The distances that health professionals consistently imposed on his body marked his life, and this wound, so profound, still appears to persist. He states that the fundamental wound of his existence lies in the lack of affection to which he was subjected, and he concludes by saying that, for him, the distance carved like an abyss between residents and educators was, and continues to be, a form of mistreatment (Viana, 2021, p. 83).

Thus, the strategy of remaining silent prior to encounters led Viana (2021) to identify her own prejudices and alienations, which are products of contemporary globalized society. She then turned her attention to the presence of autistic individuals and their repetitive movements.

In this context, the author explored her own sensations, beginning by engaging with repetition of gestures, which generated complicity. When someone mimics us, reproduces us, and (re) affirms us, the movements of autistic individuals, previously seen as stereotyped, shift beyond repulsion and fear to enter the realm of admiration, sympathy, and interest.

The creation of a communicative repertoire through Dance involves the development of specific human capacities that are not given to certain people that cannot accept and others that do not accept the autism of autistic individuals.

A third point introduced by Viana (2021) relates to temporality, an aspect that places us in immediate contact with the profound sense of urgency experienced in the present.

In this direction, she argues that coexistence among people, whether autistic or not, constitutes a field that establishes a different temporality. In certain cases, autistic people need more time to carry out some activities of daily life, which may lead professionals and family members to develop compassion.

Dance is processual, as perceptual processes implicate sensations, cognition, reflection, and creation integrated with corporeality. Hence, it enhances internal dialogue, within the subject with oneself, as well as with space and others.

Thus, Viana (2021) uses objects as bodily metaphors for communication that not only stimulate gestural interaction, but also work as an invitation for the playful game to create spaces of coexistence free from hierarchy or from aspirations to overcome particular life conditions.

This enables the manifestation of symbolism, according to Santos (2006), which is essential for understanding the relationship between content and shape, and which reinforces the knowledge and values of human communities.

They represent a cosmology that is a worldview grounded in our "[...] bodily feeling," a form of "[...] knowing from within our own bodies" (Keleman, 2001, p. 26-27).

This characteristic present in Dance arises from the integration of rationality with sensations and creation through the body, which, in dancing, tells its own story and reflects its perceptual horizons through contact with both similarities and differences in the stories of others.

From this perspective, it also functions as an element that questions social relations as they unfold through distinct languages. Dance takes place through the moving body (motricity¹²), which serves as the dialogical medium through which one may "[...] relate, overlap, branch out, engage in dialogue, and allow the connections between the roles within the fabric of Dance and social roles to flow," roles that individuals "[...] have already internalized and enact in their everyday lives, thus keeping the dialogue between art, education, and society alive" (Marques, 2010, p. 40).

Only when society develops certain expectations of behavior in relation to its members does the inability to meet those expectations become evident and problematic, entailing systems of definition and categorization that exert real impacts on people's lives (Piccolo, 2023, p. 8).

From this perspective, we open a path toward addressing the question of how we perceive ourselves and life when mediated by Dance and by coexistence with autistic people. This constitutes an exercise in circularity that, at certain moments, calls upon us to be propositional and, at others, to be receptive.

Therefore, reflecting on the interface between Dance and ASD goes beyond content learning or the development of skills aimed at integrating autistic individuals into the social sphere. We argue for the recognition of the singular expression of each human being, regardless of their conditions.

If each person is expected to contribute to the formation of society, autistic people, in their way of being, reveal, as Viana (2021) argues, the possibility of rethinking ourselves and learning new forms of coexistence.

As Freire (2015b) points out, this is part of a radical task of not allowing oneself to be trapped within circles of security that constrain our capacity to perceive reality. In this sense, it requires a willingness to break with patterns of normativity bound to power and social coercion.

From this perspective, it is imperative to remain attentive to transcultural differences tied to commitments that may result in deficiency, depending on the criteria of each community. This includes certain stigmas and power relations manifested through one's own experience of discrimination based on perceived functional limitations (Piccolo, 2023).

These conjunctions highlight the participation of people in activities and collective functions through the interpretation of their expressions, which structure spaces and social performances.

Hence, it is evident that the lack of legitimation of the field of Dance-as-art as an area of knowledge constitutes an attempt to maintain the productivist logic. This runs counter to the creation of social and educational environments that foster freedom of expression without objectives of overcoming or capacity-building.

Above all, the complex conditions of human life and their perceptions should contribute to the development of critical thinking. This is the role of Dance-as-art in society, regardless of whether it takes a popular, educational, artistic, religious, or therapeutic form.

This way, what occurs when we coexist with autistic people (neurodivergent individuals) is a sense of unease that they provoke in our perceptual field, one that is engaged in the radical experience of sensing, reflecting, and expanding our existential horizons.

¹²Human Motricity is defined as "[...] (intentional and solidaristic action of transcendence) applied to physical education, sport, sporting games, dance, ergonomics, and rehabilitation. The Science of Human Motricity also seeks to serve the aspirations of all those marginalized by an unjust society. The three main concepts of Human Motricity are body, movement, and transcendence" (Sérgio, 2022, p. 22-23).

It is this that fosters an environment for the construction of an anti-ableist education, one that runs counter to inclusive special education, as a possibility for achieving the viable unheard-of (Freire, 2015b).

To this end, opening oneself to the disability culture¹³, the culture emerging from people with disabilities, is, in a certain sense, a way of (re)cognizing forms of (re)existing.

One of these ways is coexistence through Dance, a language with integrative potential for the subjects' perceptual experience. Most importantly, due to its possibilities for freedom of expression, it should therefore be further investigated in greater depth for its attributes in the humanization of people.

CONCLUSION

Within the universality of Dance and ASD, analysing studies that conducted bibliographic reviews between 2019 and 2024, together with Viana's (2021) experience report, the interface between Dance and ASD points toward a path of epistemological deepening.

With the growing number of undergraduate Dance programs in federal, state, and private universities, we consider that this field of knowledge can contribute in an interdisciplinary manner to rethinking how autistic people are perceived in society.

In this essay, the aim of advancing arguments intrinsic to the potential of Dança in the lives of autistic people is related to the learning processes and perceptions of professionals, family members, and society at large who accompany them.

This perspective demonstrates that, beyond the development of motor, sensory, and psychosocial capacities through the practice of Dance, this form of expression broadens subjects' perception by virtue of its ludic, imaginative, creative, and relational dimensions through a language grounded in corporeality.

Thus, the diversity of expression strengthens humanization as an awareness-raising element in inclusive processes, in which those involved benefit from different ways of living and perceiving the world.

Therefore, drawing on the studies of Viana (2021), an epistemology of Dance in interface with ASD emerges, one that is attached to the characteristics of a subject who is available to listening, to silence, to inhabiting the temporality of the other, and to perceiving their own limitations. These aspects unfold through coexistence, which forges a dialogical experience.

Consequently, we observe that in professional training grounded in technical rationality derived from positivist philosophy, practices such as Dance tend to reinforce ableism when they are restricted solely to sensory, motor, and socialization-oriented stimulation.

What we advocate in this essay is to demonstrate the potential of Dance as an art form in alignment with humanization. This concept, coined by Freire (2015b), understands education as a possibility for catalyzing new ways of comprehending reality. Hence, a shift from models centered on adaptation or overcoming (inclusion) of existential conditions toward a process that questions and breaks with the notions of social functionality so present in the capitalist mode of production of life.

In this sense, the interface between Dance and ASD should function as a voice that, within everyday life, expands existence itself. This can take place through a language grounded in the body in motion, as an experience that traverses us and sets us in motion.

As a transformative possibility of experiencing "[...] the Dance of another person's being before me, so that I may take my own steps in the Dance of coexistence between us. It is to a body and to the face of another, their embodied person before me, that I direct the gaze of my face and the gestures of my body" (Brandão, 2005, p. 7).

Hence, to be part of experiences with autistic people by sharing, observing, conversing, exchanging gazes or not, mimicking gestures, and creating aesthetics through non-hierarchical relationships, opens pathways for questioning and facilitates conscious action.

¹³Disability culture is constructed from the lived conditions of people with disabilities and their singular ways of perceiving and existing in the world.

It is in moments of symbolic exchange through bodily movement that humanization is intensified in the artistic dimension of Dance-as-art. It is then that relationships are established, ones that preserve higher human functions such as self-awareness, language, freedom, and historical, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic, and ethical development (Dussel, 2003).

These singular experiences should not be disregarded; therefore, in order to advance the arguments proposed in this essay, further research in the field of Dance-as-art must deepen its engagement with questions related to the humanizing potential of Dance and the development of individuals in contact with autistic people.

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This is an essay and there were no contributions from other authors.

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