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Governance**



PERFORMING RIGHTS. THE SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL POTENTIAL OF DANCE IN THE
HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Arts and culture do not represent a completely new theme in the human rights discourse, but their potential could be more widely explored. This thesis proposes a holistic analysis of dance's social and political potential for human rights, through an interdisciplinary approach combining international human rights law, politics, and sociology. By analyzing five heterogeneous case studies, the Chilean cueca through diverse social and political contexts and German modern dance during Nazism as the main case studies and three additional case studies on human rights choreographies, this thesis unveils the potential of dance, as a non-verbal artistic language, in conceptualizing and promoting human rights. The case studies are analyzed through a combination of Hans Joas theory on *self-transcendence* and Dana Mills' concept of *sic-sensuous* applied to the human rights discourse. Viewing dance as one of the possible experiences in which a person transcends herself and grounds motivation, creating the moment when commitments to value take root in the human personality, is combined with the concept of *sic-sensuous*, the transfer of meaning through the processes of intervention which occur between two sensed and sensing bodies. In embodied spaces that bring individuals together, it is possible for the reader to understand the several nuances of the instrumentalization of dance, illuminating its potential as a non-traditional tool for socialization, transmission of memories, and advocacy in the human rights discourse.

Keywords: *Dance, Human rights, Sociology, Culture, Politics*

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Introduction

“Just as people (some by formal skill, others by a knack) use colors and shapes to render mimetic images of many things, while others again use the voice, so too all the musical arts mentioned produce mimesis in rhythm, language, and melody, whether separately or in combinations. That is melody and rhythm alone are used by music for aulos and lyre, and by any other types with this capacity, for example music for panpipes; rhythm on its own, without melody, is used by the art of dancers (since they too, through rhythms translated into movements, create mimesis of character, emotions, and actions)”.
(Aristotle, 1996)

Have we ever thought about the potential of dance in the human rights discourse? In Aristotle’s explanation we can read the potential of dance, one of the many performing arts, to create, through language represented by movement, an imitative representation of real-world character, emotions, and actions. Dance can be then framed as a specific type of movement, a language, a medium, an artistic expression and as an instance of socialization. How can dance, which in its essence embraces all these elements, be connected to human rights? What is the link between them? This essentially represents the research gap this thesis proposes to explore, framed by the following research question: Does dance have a social and political potential in the human rights discourse? If yes, is it positive or negative? How and where does it manifest? Who are the actors who take part in this process? What are the motivations and the modalities which characterize this potential?

It might seem bizarre to draw a connection between these two elements. Most of us agree that the human rights discourse is essentially characterized by verbal communication: conventions, treaties, reports, academic articles are some of the media we think about when we speak about human rights. This thesis underlines that verbal communication is key when defending one’s or another’s human rights and with my thesis I don’t intend to depreciate its importance. But for a second, we could ask ourselves the following question: have we, in the human rights discourse, explored thoroughly the potential of both arts and culture, as well as other forms of communication? Why should we rely

only on traditional verbal communication to promote and defend values, which, according to many, are universal? Why should we pursue only that path in a time characterized by the gentrification of human rights? (Fagan, 2019)

Precisely, according to Fagan, human rights are in danger at home, in the so-called "liberal societies", where demagoguery has partly been able to coin human rights as adverse to the needs of the "ordinary" citizens, the electoral target of demagogues. Human rights are, unfortunately, more and more associated with the élite, an élite that isn't perceived to be socially and politically representative of all people. More and more, demagogues want to associate and show to their electorate that the human rights community is simply a minority, and a very despised one. Maybe this perception of the human rights community, even though partly created and emphasized by demagogues, is not entirely untrue. Have we really made a reflection on how we communicate human rights and if they reach the people who need them the most? Fagan warns us to the danger of not asking ourselves these questions: human rights will be more and more unpopular, designed only for a decreasing number of proponents, with ever decreasing influences in the whole spectrum of society.

Returning to the topic of dance, it might be interesting to think on how a type of performing art might help to promote and defend human rights, not only because dance represents a different type of communication that might bring an innovative perspective to the human rights world; but also because it might promote further reflection on the role of culture and arts for social change: how arts and human rights, in an interdisciplinary perspective, are connected and what can be the benefits of a wider acknowledgment of that connection for our societies. The choice of dance and not another performing art as a topic is not only related to a personal interest, but because a phenomenon emerges.

In a time where, as highlighted above, human rights are very "bureaucratized", a performing art that requires only the body for its expression might create a feeling of inclusiveness: even if we all have different bodies, when we dance, we are equals, and, in a certain way, a level of "democracy" is reached by those who engage in the practice.

Those feelings are essential if we want human rights to succeed: human rights will never be successful if people don't feel included, and dance, as, above all, a cultural element, has been used for generations in different parts of the world to bring communities together, to promote self-expression and to portray opinions through our bodies. The body appears to have limitless possibilities of communication.

To answer the research question in the most complete way possible, the thesis will be structured in three main chapters.

Throughout the first chapter "*An interdisciplinary perspective with a human rights focus*", dance is analysed through an interdisciplinary lens, reflecting and respecting in this way the very essence of the human rights discourse. Even though I will be providing a brief definition of dance and its history, a task which is not easy given dance's nuance both as an artistic expression and as an instance of socialization, I will not focus specifically on dance studies; my focus will be essentially on social sciences.

The first subchapter will address international human rights law, and where can we find dance in this framework: which are the human rights connected to dance? Which human rights legal instruments protect dance as an art form and which documents protect the individuals who dance? Human rights legal instruments will be then followed by two subchapters: one on politics and another on sociology. A thorough analysis of how dance has been explored by these two disciplines will be provided, emphasizing the main theoretical approaches and what implies viewing dance politically and sociologically.

After this interdisciplinary analysis, hopefully I will have enough data to open a debate on the existence of a social and political of dance in the human rights discourse. The theoretical framework used throughout this will consist in, simultaneously, international human rights law as the frame of the thesis; and the combination of Dana Mills' concept of sic-sensuous with Hans Joas' theory on self-transcendence. Essentially, this theoretical framework acknowledges and respects the role of international human rights law in the human rights discourse, while merging two comprehensive political and sociological theories to unveil of the social and political potential of dance.

Such a theoretical framework will be key for the subsequent chapters of the thesis: human rights are interdependent and indivisible, so if we consider the connecting dots between dance and human rights, possibly all the other rights are connected to it, and therefore, if respected, they promote and defend each other. This idea will possibly allow me to sustain that dance does have something to “offer” to the human rights world, as dance most likely is already a part of it.

After a brief exploration of the connecting dots between arts and human rights, the second chapter “*A performing art with social and political potential*” will consist in thoroughly exploring the social and political potential of dance in the human rights discourse, and this will be achieved through the analysis of two main case studies: the instrumentalization of cueca, Chile’s national dance through different social and political contexts, mainly during and post-dictatorship; and the role of German modern dance during the Third Reich. In the analysis of the two main case studies, the following elements, read together with Mills and Joas’ theories, will be considered: actors, motivations, modalities, and context.

To better complete this analysis, and to be able to answer the question if dance’s social and political potential emerges only inside social and political movements or if it can also be found in other contexts, the last part of the second chapter will include three shorter case studies. These include the artistic creations of the Swedish company Cullberg Ballet, the Mexican company BRAE, and the English choreographer Botis Seva and his company Far From the Norm. Given that these three case studies are framed outside social and political movements, my focus will not be so much on the results of the performances, but mostly on the actors and on their capacity to promote awareness on human rights matters through dance.

Finally, the third chapter “*A possible role for dance in the human rights discourse*” will develop the findings of the second chapter and explore the idea that the potential of dance for the human rights discourse consists in its relevance as an instance of socialization, as a tool for transmission of memories and as a non-traditional instrument of human rights advocacy. These findings will subsequently be used to propose the idea

that dance, and possibly other arts, might help to reduce the gentrification of human rights and defend the idea of dance as part of a bottom-up approach to human rights, an approach that would give even more relevance to culture inside the human rights discourse.

It is important to clarify that this approach will not sustain that the arts are the only tool for social change, they are one of the possibilities. This proposal will therefore not undermine the role of international human rights law or the relevance of verbal communication in the human rights discourse.

The thesis will invite the reader with one final question and prompt further discussion in the human rights world: Is there a human right to dance and to enjoy dance? What would be the consequences of acknowledging such a right in the human rights discourse?

Chapter One - DANCE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE WITH A HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

1.1 Dance: a performing art

“Dance is a world in itself.” (Klein, 2011, 17) The definition of dance, one of the many performing arts, is as wide and multifaceted as the range of the subjects who study it: dance studies, history, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, archeology, are just some of the disciplines who have made dance their object of research.

The various attempts to define dance highlight diverse and, at the same time, complementary aspects of this performing art. The definitions range from its aesthetic expressive character; to its role in allowing humankind to organize movement, its social function inside a group, and eventually even to its ability to express the essence of the human soul. All these characteristics help to build the skeleton of dance as an ancient non-verbal language.

In order to delimitate a possible connection between human rights and dance, it is necessary to understand, even if briefly, the character and essence of this performing art. Some view dance as an activity whose goal is to communicate an idea or a feeling, liberating energy, or simply enjoying the movement itself. A metrical movement of the body, normally to music and within a circumscribed area. (Mackrell, 2024) Others focus more on the aesthetic product of dance, dance consisting in an artistic manifestation of our bodies, and the body also being artistically shaped in dance. Dance hence represents an activity which is entirely created and perceived by the individual, meaning that the material character of dance can only be recognized in and through human motion. (Horton Fraleigh, 1996, 43) From a more historical perspective, one might view dance as demonstration of the individual and its wholeness, the first attempt made by humanity to establish a pattern of movement. Some authors even suggest that the first of the arts was dance, that communicating oneself using only the body is a marvel. The history of dance would therefore also consist in the history of humanity, and history of dance will forever be subject of changes, like the gesture, which like movement develops and accompanies the growing complexity of civilizations, feelings, and human emotions.

(Testa, 2005, 9-12) Viewing dance as gesture is an idea shared by other authors, who coin it as an activity instinctively human, the first universal language, maybe even more than music, a language that inherently voices the motion of the soul, because “*this language predates all conventions and is natural to all breathing beings on earth*”. (Ménil, 1980, 1-4) Dance is also identifiable as a form of non-verbal communication, which can often be found inside the dynamics of groups, a practice, and a social behavior. (Cappelle, 2020, 15) It is also possible to define dance according to a different set of elements, one of them being function. For a long time, dance has fulfilled religious, military, and social necessities, for example experiences of self-transcendence as part of religious ceremonies, war dances used for training soldiers spiritually and mentally for combat, and even celebratory, recreational, entertainment, and courtship roles. In fact, the association of dance with aesthetic enjoyment only started with the appearance of more intricate social and economic structures. Nevertheless, all types of dances, in all phases of evolution, have preserved some significance as a method of collective cohesion. (Mackrell, 2024)

The recognition of dance as a language and consequently of its ability to communicate feelings and actions in an in-depth way has been a theme of many debates. It is nevertheless agreed that dance’s power of expression and communication is limited by cultural conventions and traditions, which influence the efficacy of dance as a language in front of a public not acquainted with certain symbols. If this limitation exists, where does it rely then the power of dance as a language? Precisely in the fact that it is universal: dance can convey emotions in a very intense way, even if it can’t communicate specific occurrences or ideas. Dance movements are similarly associated with day-to-day gestures, allowing the spectator to recognize promptly what it is being portrayed: the spectator simultaneously values the gesture and shares a moment of empathetic kinesthesia with the performer, resulting often in an efficient moment of communication. The act of dancing generates a diverse experience of time and space for the dancer and for the spectators, allowing for an experience of transcendence of the ordinary. In fact, kinesthesia enables dance to exercise a power over the audience (Mackrell, 2024)

The universality of dance as a nonverbal language allows the proposal of dance as a tool to efficiently communicate human rights. Even though, as highlighted above, dance is regulated by cultural conventions and practices, the expression of powerful feelings and emotions enables communication, creating a space of equality between the participants. To be able to prove its efficiency as a universal nonverbal communication tool in the human rights discourse, a myriad of links between the two of them needs to be explored. These will be the theme of the subsequent sub-chapters, starting with an analysis of dance through the lens of human rights legal instruments.

1.2 Dance through the lens of international human rights law

The present interdisciplinary analysis of dance begins with the identification of articles related to dance in human rights legal instruments. After an in-depth analysis of a variety of documents, I was able to identify many rights which are very much connected to dance. For the purposes of acknowledging the social and political potential of dance in the human rights discourse, the most relevant rights are the following: the right to the realization of cultural rights and the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Also somewhat directly related to dance are the right to strike, the right to cultural diversity, the right to education and the rights of human rights defenders. The accepted and generalized interdependence and indivisibility of human rights means that if one can identify the relationship between dance and human rights, one also has to recognize its link to all the other human rights and ensure its protection and promotion.

When proceeding with the selection of the human rights legal instruments, I began with the cornerstones of international human rights law, accordingly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966. I included in the list the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights of 2007, and the Report of the high-level expert meeting of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) “Exploring the connections between arts and human rights” of 2017. To

complete this analysis, I included the most relevant reports by the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. Even though all of the reports published since the establishment of this special procedure in 2009 are very pertinent, for the purposes of this thesis I am only considering the following reports: “The right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity” of 2013, “The contribution of artistic and cultural initiatives to creating and developing right-respecting societies” of 2018, and “Cultural rights: an empowering agenda” of 2023.

1.2.1 The right to the realization of cultural rights and the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community

Acknowledging the link between dance and human rights is clearer if we start by linking this idea with the concept of cultural right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 in its article 22 establishes that “...*everyone is entitled to the realization of the economic, social, and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality*”. If we try to answer the question “which cultural rights are indispensable for the development of the individual personality?”, a possible answer could be dance, one of the performing arts.

This idea is sustained by article 27, which in its first part establishes that “*everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts...*”. The article is very “wide”, in the sense that it doesn’t give examples on what “*freely participate*” means. Therefore, one can assume, that for the purposes of the UDHR, it is possible that one can participate and enjoy the arts by dancing or simply by watching someone dance. Enjoying the arts equals enjoying dance.

Strictly connected to article 27 of the UDHR is article 15 of the ICESCR, a key article if we want to suggest the idea of dance as a cultural right, as it establishes the right of everyone to take part in cultural life. This is important, as many questions emerge from this right if we apply it to dance. Do you take part in cultural life when you dance? Do you take part in cultural life when you watch someone dance? Do you take part in

cultural life when you talk about dance? Furthermore, does this mean that there is a social and political potential of dance in the human rights discourse?

For the purposes of this thesis, it would be impossible to ignore the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights of 2007, developed by the international working group “Fribourg Group”, which operates out of the Interdisciplinary Institute for Ethics and Human Rights of the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. Starting from its introduction and article 1, it emphasizes the importance of cultural rights, which, alongside all human rights, constitute an expression of and a prerequisite for human dignity. If we view the right to dance and to enjoy dance as a cultural right, then it might be possible to theorize dance as an art capable of expressing human dignity, whatever the definition of that dignity might be.

Article 2 provides important definitions such as “culture” and “cultural identity”. In my analysis, I try to search for elements that might help to sustain connection between dance and human rights, represented by its social and political potential. The definitions go as follows:

“For the purposes of the present Declaration:

- a. The term "culture" covers those values, beliefs, convictions, languages, knowledge and the arts, traditions, institutions, and ways of life through which a person or a group expresses their humanity and the meaning they give to their existence and to their development.*
- b. The expression "cultural identity" is understood as the sum of all cultural references through which a person, alone or in community with others, defines or constitutes oneself, communicates and wishes to be recognized in one's dignity.*

In the definition of “culture” it is essential to highlight the fact that “arts” are mentioned and that we are considering not only groups, but also individuals. Dancing and enjoying dance can be considered a cultural right even when it is experienced only by one person. It doesn’t depend on an expanded group of people to be considered a way to express humanity. To dance and to enjoy dance can be a way for all humankind to express the

meaning of their existence and development. Accordingly, “cultural identity” also highlights this possibility of experiencing culture “*alone or in community with others*”. Human beings can use culture, and therefore dance, to define or constitute themselves and communicate. They are able to choose whatever form of culture to use or to participate in to express themselves.

Article 5 concerns the access to and free participation in cultural life, and it establishes that this right includes “*the freedom to express oneself, in public or in private in the language(s) of one’s choice.*” Here I believe we could interpret more widely the term “language”, encompassing not only all the verbal languages present in our world, but also non-verbal languages, like dance. The article also highlights that it is necessary to have the freedom to develop these cultural expressions. Any form of participation in cultural life presupposes the freedom to do so, otherwise we are preventing people from exploring their expressive potential.

The 2018 report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, entitled “*The contribution of artistic and cultural initiatives to creating and developing right-respecting societies*” highlights, in its section “Socially engaged and art-based initiatives: goals and challenges. Strengths and limitations of different approaches”, the immense “*restorative and transformative power of arts and culture*”. This power is connected to the very essence of the aesthetic experience. When we take part in an aesthetic experience, we are vividly reminded of values and relationships. In the case of survivors of human rights violations, they are able to feel powerful and to picture and to codesign a more positive future. Aesthetic experience can therefore help victims to find again their dignity. Artmaking and culture-making are able to create connectedness between different dimensions: individual, groups, local and global and the opportunities generated do not depend on verbal language. This idea strengthens my argument that dance, as a nonverbal language, is able to promote and protect human rights and to promote social resistance. Art includes the potential for transformation.

Concerning the question of viewing arts as languages, the report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights “Exploring the connections between arts and human rights”, in its section “What can human rights do for arts?” highlights that from the high-level expert meeting it emerged that there is not only a human right to create art,

but also to criticize it, to appreciate it, to question it, to be incited by it, to react to it, and to ignore it. For the purposes of this thesis, it is important that in the meeting it was concluded that art includes all type of arts, meaning that dance is also a part of this group, and that a link can be drawn with human rights. It was also highlighted, in line with key human rights legal instruments, that everyone has the right “... *to enjoy and have access to art and cultural institutions.*”

The report “*Cultural rights: an empowering agenda*” of 2022, the first of Alexandra Xanthaki in the quality of third Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights highlights the progress that has been made in the previous decades regarding the clarification of cultural rights, and the realization that they are related to other human rights and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, she sustains that the evolving nature of human rights standards and challenges means that the topic of cultural rights should be given more priority in human rights debates.

Very important for the purposes of this thesis is the section “III. Positive force of culture and cultural diversity”, in which the Special Rapporteur proposes somewhat a definition of culture. Staying away from the idea that culture is just a sum of products, she views it as a way of life, a process. Penetrating all domains of life, “...*it is as essential to human experience as air, water, shelter and security.*” She proceeds, stating that culture allows human beings to understand the experience of being human, to give a meaning to our lives and to comprehend its big challenges; it is able to express our ways of communicating with each other and how we organize social life. Culture is relevant in our lives and is connected to the very essence of being human, resulting in the need to protect it and have more debates in the human rights field about it. Culture can help the realization of human rights. Viewing culture as a “way of life” changes our idea of culture from simply material aspects (such as objects) to daily expressions of identity. Therefore, all kinds of interaction, as expressions of identity, have at their core the human dignity. The Special Rapporteur underlines that we aren’t shaped only by one cultural resource, that instead the individual is an ensemble of many cultural influences, that can contradict each other or converge. Individual wills and social institutions are profoundly intertwined in the individual’s “...*constant contradictory state of*

becoming... ”. In line with this argument, when we recognize and protect cultural rights, we are affirming our identities and empowering ourselves. The Special Rapporteur explains how we can learn more about ourselves through culture and feel empowered: by accessing cultural activities and cultural heritage, we can understand history and civilizations, let art inspire us emotionally, and ponder on our individual and collective worldviews. For the purposes of this thesis, if dance is a cultural right, and if cultural rights are recognized as essential, then dance can be a tool of affirmation of one’s identity and ultimately a tool of empowerment.

1.2.2 Freedom of opinion and expression

Opinion and expression are fundamental for identifying the social and political potential of dance in the human rights discourse. Article 19 of the UDHR concerns the right to freedom of opinion and expression and can be divided into two important parts: *“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas...”* which, when keeping dance in mind, points to the possibility of seeking, receiving and imparting information and ideas through our bodies. The second part of the article *“...through any media and regardless of frontiers”* is key, as it allow us to conclude that all media can be used for opinion and expression, thereby confirming that dance can be one of these media.

Article 19 of the UDHR on the right of freedom of opinion and expression can be correlated with article 19 of the ICCPR, which expands the matter of expression, by providing a more detailed description of the tools one can use to express oneself *“...either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.”* By adding *“art”* and *“any other media of his choice”* this means that we can include dance in the discussion, that we have the freedom to seek dance, to receive dance (in the quality of spectator, when we watch a spectacle the dance “enters” in us, imprinting us) and to communicate through dance. I make a small remark on part 3 of article 19 of the ICCPR: it is interesting because it enlightens us on the restrictions to the right of freedom of opinion and expression, which can be activated when there is the

need to respect the rights or reputations of others or in matters of national security or public order, health, or morals. One might consider in which scenario described above would be necessary forbidding someone to dance? “Morals” is an easy argument to use in order to prevent people from expressing themselves. An enlightening example is the one on antdance literature in 19th century USA. When condemning dance, American antdance writers have focused their arguments mainly on four ideas: religion, health, adequate use of leisure time, and anti-feminist perspectives. They have based religious condemnation of dance on a narrow reading of the Bible; sustained that dancing could lead to negative consequences for the body, especially for women, who were also criticized for tempting men through dance and their ball gowns (but at the same time needed to be protected from the dangers of the ballroom); and finally, that Christians should pursue other activities in their spare time. Social dance was mainly associated with immorality and temptation, and these 19th-century views still have an impact nowadays, as the fear of dance’s insubordinate power results, for example, in supervision of social events which include dance, mainly those where adolescents and women are present, as well as reduced funding for the arts. (Aldrich, 2008)

Additionally, the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights in its article 3 makes a bridge between cultural rights and other human rights: the freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, and expression. Cultural rights are then exercised in interconnection with the other ones. Dance can only be exercised if freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, and expression are respected: one cannot dance and enjoy dance freely if the right to share an opinion or an emotion, a value, or an experience through our bodies is not allowed.

The right to freedom of expression is the central theme in Farida Shaheed’s report “The right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity” of 2013 in the quality of Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. In the introduction, it is highlighted that everyone should be able to *“enjoy the right to freedom of expression and creativity, to participate in cultural life and to enjoy the arts. Expressions, whether artistic or not, always remain protected under the right to freedom of expression.”* No one, not a single individual and not a community can be forbidden to express themselves and everyone

has to be able to enjoy the rights related to artistic freedom. When taking these statements in mind, one can sustain that dance is expression and creativity, so everyone who dances or appreciates dance has the right to do it freely and to participate in cultural life through dance. Dance is protected under the right to freedom of expression. Adopting an extensive approach, the report addresses different forms of expression which encompass an *“aesthetic and/or symbolic dimension”*, highlighting that these forms of expression can use different media, including dance. According to the Special Rapporteur, the right of all persons to enjoy the arts and freedom of artistic expression and creativity go hand in hand, as restriction of this freedom is frequently conducted with the goal of preventing the public access to specific artworks. Not allowing people public access to a specific artwork is then a strategy to restrict artistic freedom. The public has to be able to formulate its own judgment when it comes to art. The report highlights that the reason for attacking freedom of artistic expressions and creation is often the fact that art can be powerful in transmitting particular messages and figurative values, and that these violations happen in all continents. Was dance ever under particular attack because of this reason? Article 11 of the report allows us, once again, to draw a line between artistic freedom and other human rights, such as: the right to freedom of opinion, and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. It is specifically highlighted that *“...art is also a means of expressing a belief and developing a world vision.”* Article 12 underlines that no discrimination is possible, and that everyone has the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity, independently of their specific situation or status, which, following this line of thought, means that all persons have to have the right to pursue dance.

1.2.3 Freedom of peaceful assembly

The right to peaceful assembly, present in article 20 of the UDHR, can also be connected to dance, as many times flash mobs and dance presentations are performed in public spaces, and although not always with a political goal in mind, often consist in the sharing of important social messages. The definition of the OHCHR helps to clarify the connection between peaceful assembly and dance: *“The right of peaceful assembly includes the right to hold meetings, sit-ins, strikes, rallies, events, or protests, both*

offline and online. It serves as a vehicle for the exercise of many other rights guaranteed under international law, with which it is linked intrinsically and that form the basis for participating in peaceful protests. In particular this concerns the rights to freedom of expression and to take part in the conduct of public affairs.” Accordingly, dance, as a media able to portray freedom of opinion and expression, can be used to exercise freedom of peaceful assembly.

The right to peaceful assembly is also recognized in the ICCPR in article 21 and it is explained more in detail, highlighting that the only reasons serious enough to restrict the right to peaceful assembly are those necessary to maintain a democratic society “...*in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*”. The right to peaceful assembly associated to dance might be difficult to decode for the authorities. If someone assembles in a square and dances to share an opinion for or against something, can that be considered peaceful assembly? What restrictions can be imposed on dance in this context? Are we used to associating dance with peaceful assembly? The performance *Duran Adan* is an interesting example. The performer, Erdem Gündüz, stands alone on the square, observing the Atatürk Cultural Center. Within the previous days, there had been numerous political strikes, occupations, and marches regarding the Gezi Park (about to be demolished to make way for a shopping center) and were accompanied by a police ban on public gatherings. For the police, the action, which is actually based on a technique of deceleration used in contemporary dance, is blurred and questionable, but they don’t know how to behave, since the man’s behavior was not explicitly forbidden by the law. The man’s action undermined police regulations, because the police weren’t able to decide what to do when confronted with the banality of the act. The act ranged between the day-to-day, the political, and the artistic. (Foellmer, 2016)

1.2.4 Other rights human rights related to dance

Taking into consideration the interdependence and indivisibility of human rights, there is the possibility that other rights might be connected to dance. This would be the case

of the right to strike, the right to cultural diversity, the right to education and the rights of human rights defenders.

The right to strike, recognized in article 8, point (d) of the ICESCR might also be of relevance, and it will be connected to the content of chapter 2. Can we strike through dance? Is dance a way of striking? We might think of dance this way if we consider its potential for revolution and anti-conformism.

The right to cultural diversity also emerges as a key theme related to dance. Enshrined on the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, which identifies cultural diversity as the “*common heritage of humanity*”, this might help to sustain the argument that it is necessary to protect dance and those who “live” it, as it is clearly an element present in numerous cultures.

Dance can also be directly connected to the right to education, as many people from different age groups and cultural backgrounds engage in educational activities through dance. In terms of human rights instruments, several are the documents which protect the right to education: to begin with, the UDHR of 1948 in its article 26. Additionally, one can cite the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 (ICESCR) in articles 13 and 14, as well as two General Comments of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the General Comment 13: The Right to Education and the General Comment 11: Plans of Action for Primary Education. The right to education is also represented in the Convention of the Rights of the Child of 1989 (CRC) in its article 28, which ensures education is a legal right for every child; on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 (CEDAW), which considers in its article 10 the specific circumstances and needs of women and girls regarding education; on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 (CRPD) in its article 24, recognizing the right of people with disabilities to education; and on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965 (ICERD) in its article 5 concerning the impossibility of using race, colour or national or ethnic origin as a reason to make a distinction between people when it comes to education. There are also several UNESCO documents on the matter, for example the Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960 (CADE). (UNESCO & Right to Education Initiative (UK), 2019)

Furthermore, if we consider dance as a tool for protesting, defending, and sharing information on human rights, the individuals who engage in those activities would be protected under the Declaration on human rights defenders of 1998, which “*Identifies human rights defenders as individuals or groups who act to promote, protect or strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms through peaceful means.*” This idea will be further explored and exemplified through the several case studies in “Chapter 2 – Dance: a performing art with social and political potential”.

1.3 Dance through the lens of politics

The relationship between dance and politics has been explored essentially by dance scholars and researchers. The current state of the art analyzes the aesthetic and political potential of dance, fundamentally how dance is present in the political and how it creates its own politics, and the moments in which dance can be characterized as “political”. Additionally, some scholars have drawn similarities between dance and protest in order to demonstrate that dance is a social kinesthetic able to mobilize. Dance is also seen by some as a social interaction, a multidimensional “cultural text” and a perceptive medium.

Research suggests that the most comprehensive theory coupling dance and politics is the one presented by Dana Mill’s in her book “Dance and politics: Moving beyond boundaries”, the main question of the book being: how do we broaden our definition of politics to include dance? The question clearly generates a myriad of intimately correlated questions, most specifically regarding what we qualify as a political statement and as a speaking subject, but also the time, space, and context of dance in politics, as well as the relevance and capacity of dance to express politics. Mills’ view is relevant for my thesis inasmuch as she sees politics occurring in dance in moments in which, by using dance, individuals were seen as part of the community: she exemplifies this occurrence using Isadora Duncan’s revolution through dance, Martha Graham’s danced politics, gumboot dance in South Africa, and the One Billion Rising movement. For Mills, and this is key, dance is a corporeal and subversive means of communication, able to intervene and to communicate. The acknowledgment of this democratic and at the

same time transgressive characteristic of dance is essential to ascertain its social and political potential in the human rights field.

Through her tridimensional argument, Mills proposes a new conception of politics. This argument is consequently structured around three axes, most precisely: the tension between contraction and release (the body is a space inscribed by politics, and the interaction between two moving bodies generates politics), the differentiation between the weak and the strong reading of political dance (the differentiation between communicating through dance ideas previously expressed in words versus communicating through dance ideas only expressed through dance, a unique system of inscription and reception); and the concept of sic-sensuous (the transfer of meaning through the processes of intervention which occur between two sensed and sensing bodies). From these three axes emerges the tridimensional argument: her new idea of politics is one that includes dance and places in the same level of equality dancing and speaking beings (even if they aren't equal in other symbolic structures). Secondly, Mills argues that dance is a "*method of inscription*" and a "*system of communication*", meaning that dance has its own grammar, letting individuals speak through their bodies. When individuals put aside politics articulated in verbal language, another world of communication opens up for them, a world of corporeal methods of inscription. Thirdly, dance inevitably generates embodied spaces, spaces shared in the individuals' bodies. These shared spaces embrace equality between the individuals, the bodies communicating with each other in that moment are equal. (Mills, 2017, 1-10) Her argument wants to highlight specifically moments in which dance transcends other systems of communication, moments in which generating shared spaces is difficult, and dance allows those spaces to be created without emphasizing the privilege of some bodies over others, as for example, in the case of gumboot dancers in South Africa, one of her case studies, which is highly relevant.

Gumboot dance is a type of dance with roots in the gold mines of South Africa, a place characterized by harsh working conditions and prohibition of speaking, refusing black South African presence in the public sphere, and reflecting the system of racial segregation. Wellington boots, known as gumboots, were worn by the miners given the threat of flooding, and initiated a non-verbal communication system in the mines. For

Mills, the creation of gumboot dance resulted in two analogous consequences: the African mining community developed a non-verbal voice, and that voice reached those who instituted the system of apartheid. In this context, dance as a mode of communication surpassed and triggered a prejudiced legal and political framework: initially, the white bosses instrumentalized gumboot dance to enhance worker morale, and encouraged the formation of teams that could practice and compete in performance against teams from other companies. Ultimately, however, the miners "appropriated" gumboot dance, creating a vocabulary of intervention and rebellion in and of itself. Gumboot dance, aside from being an example of how oppression and inequality may be defied by dance, is also an example of the strong reading of political dance, the autonomous political force of dance, in a context in which the weak reading of political dance was not conceivable. (Mills, 2017, 66-82)

Other scholars have also given their contribute to the debate on dance and politics. Many dance and performance scholars, like Mills, have based their arguments regarding the political potential of dance on the relationship between politics and aesthetic developed by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière. This is the case of Gabriele Klein, who views dance and politics as two ways of "*dividing the sensual*", in "Rancierian" terms. Politics is essentially all that consists in political activity, which means that the aesthetic is already inscribed in political practices, as these practices decide how to socially place people. Through the aesthetic present in the political, cultural, and social codes become apparent, contradicting the "police order", the established order. This leads Klein to propose that dance, as a performing art, is not political or non-political per se. Instead, it is political when it goes against the established norms, conventions, and practices, but also when it transforms them, when it helps to create a sense of community, as similarly defended by Mills. For Klein, community functions as a precondition for dance, and the development of collective identities as a precondition for showing that dance is political. When voiced through corporeal activity, in this case dance as a medium, political practices can challenge the status quo. Klein highlights that many social movements have used corporeal practices: for example, the act of African American Women persistently seating on a bus, non-heterosexual couples kissing in public, the

choreographic politics of demonstrations, sit-ins, or smart-mobs, and activists chaining themselves.

The political and aesthetic potential of dance is also present in the intertwinement between dance, power, and work. In fact, the emergence of contemporary dance in the 20th century explored the potential of the individual, an individual who was able to have a new aesthetic experience based on the connection between freedom and movement. Outside the factory door, the individual found a political space and a new independent aesthetic experience: who am I outside the factory door? What is my inner potential? Spontaneity and virtuosity, present in contemporary dance, transformed freedom into an aesthetic language. (Kunst, 2011, 49-50) However, the disappearance of the boundary between “work” and “non-work” had certainly a consequence for the relationship between dance and freedom: the political potential of dance in Western societies is based on the concepts of singularity, creativity, and individual potential, which also became elements key for production in capitalist societies. Movement is at the nucleus of appropriation. (Kunst, 2011, 54) Nevertheless, even with the disappearance of the line between work and non-work, dance is still able to resist the “now” and bring new discourses, since it has its own materiality based on the body, time, and space. Its political potential resides precisely in the ability of the dancing body to show the current scenarios and to suggest how materiality can be changed and reimagine the way we live and work together, shedding light on the difficult relationship between the new modes of production and our bodies. (Kunst, 2011, 57-58) The materiality of dance is present in the case study used by Kunst, the dance performance “*I poor and one*”, by BADco., a Zagreb-based performance group, which begins with the images of the first film ever made “*La sortie de l’usine à Lyon*”, depicting the old separating line between work and leisure time, public and private life, rationalization, and flexibility. The dancers reproduce this line on stage, represented by a simple crossbar. They cross this line repetitively and talk about work-related issues, specifically the steady disappearance of the line. The dancers mimic the movie and use short sequences of movement to portray an impression of timing, resulting in a performance which creates a set of pieces and memories of movements. To demonstrate that the separating division between work and private life no longer exists, dancers implement in the dance fluidity of movement.

(Kunst, 2011, 47-48) The dance performance becomes a criticism to the actual organization of labor, and how creativity and imagination are constantly required to individuals.

Kunst was not the first author exploring the connection between politics, freedom and movement represented through dance. The concepts of *choreopolicy* and *choreopolitics* also contribute to the debate on the political potential of dance. Inspired by Hannah Arendt's "moving politically", which essentially means moving freely, André Lepecki proposes these two new concepts as opposites, highlighting the role of the dancer in a contemporary world characterized by "control societies". Societies that, in his view, altered our social political field and changed our possibilities of moving freely through continuous monitoring and immediate communication. For him, our freedom of movement is only superficial: strict control and preconditioned movement direct us towards certain pathways for motion depicted as the only ones conceivable and suitable. The concepts of *choreopolicy* and *choreopolitics* are then able to shed light on the relationship between the political, freedom and movement: *choreopolitics* of freedom based on planning, and *choreopolicy* based on policy, here meaning the homogeneity of enforced consensus. *Choreopolicy* for Lepecki is based on Jacques Rancière idea of police: the police ensure the movement continues, a pre-established movement, walking away from freedom. Therefore, in their essence police are already *choreopolicy*, hindering the formation and expression of the political. For Lepecki, one example of police's role in controlling movement and freedom can be easily found in the period between 2011 and 2012, in which ever-expanding social movements and political protest spread across the world and the common denominator of these movements were the choreographic presence of the police, who controlled the movement and choreographically decided the space for motion of the participants. (Lepecki, 2013)

On the other hand, the core of *choreopolitics* is the developmental exercise of freedom, which allows the emergence of a subject who explores the possibility of moving politically, of reinventing and reorganizing the body. The "dancer" stimulates the emergence of the "*highly mobile political thing*" and is able to remold the previous spaces of choreopoliced circulation into spaces of freedom. Lepecki proposes the

performance “Yak Film’s Dancing in the rain in Oakland Street” (2009) as an example of *choreopolitics*. The performance consists in a viral video made by Yak Films, with a style of hip hop called TURF, featuring the dance crew Turf Feinz. It shows four young men dancing in the corner of MacArthur Boulevard and 90th Avenue, in Oakland. A Rancierian scenario of police motion is found in the performance: the road represented guidelines and rules, while the sidewalk is a space where people, and most specifically black youth, are expected to follow the *choreopoliced* movement and not linger or dance. After an Oakland PD car stops next to two of the dancers, the two young men wait for a few minutes and then start to dance. The camera functions here as a documentary tool and even though the surrounding environment isn’t staged, the video is highly edited, becoming a prolongation of the choreography. All the elements of the performance are choreographed, planned. We have here an evidently political and eventually *choreopolitical* performance: it goes, through movement in the form of dance, directly against police regulations and curfew-for-minors laws. The performance shows how the “political” and choreography become synonymous: *choreopolitics*, choreography as synonym of planning ensures the emergence of the political. TURF’s choreography reveals how the “political” emerges from an anticipated, non-policed and dissensual organization of bodies and movement. (Lepecki, 2013)

Lepecki shows the exact opposite, *choreopoliced*, in Tania Bruguera’s “*Tatlin’s Whisper #5*”. Bruguera investigated, with her performance, the existent choreographic kinetics between public and police in a control society. She places anti-riot mounted police, an intermittent image of power throughout the 20th century, in Tate Modern in London, a place that should be considered safe for the public to rebel, to understand if people are more prone to habitus and submission, or insurgence and freedom. The performance reveals that the safe context of art (represented by the museum) didn’t inspire people to revolt, as everyone ultimately obeyed the police orders. The performance shows the already regulated, choreographed, and restrained conduct of the public when confronted with the police, which helps us to understand that the question of freedom even in democratic societies is one of self-policing and that the police is a widespread function of power. (Lepecki, 2013) I agree with Lepecki in the sense that, even though the performance does not specifically regard dance, it is still able to show that choreography

and structure of movement is constant in our lives, from the most rebellious to the safest contexts.

Keeping the concept of *choreopolitics* in mind, one might find some similarities between dance and protest. The interrelation is key for this thesis, as it helps to sustain the argument that it is possible to choreograph human rights and that dance can be a part, if not one of the central elements, of social and political movements.

Similarly to protest, there is the hope that a single dance performance will have a future worthwhile impact. Dance and protest require a hard work of preparation and organization, resulting in a spectacle of organized ephemerality, but we are not able to exactly quantify the lasting impact of the performance. Will there be a “return”? (Martin, 2011, 29-30) Like for the authors mentioned above, Randy Martin views dance as something present in the political, but also as a performing art able to create its own politics, materializing ephemerality and our view of a desirable world. To accomplish this, he believes that dance needs to be demetaphorized, and that we should shift our focus from movement to mobilization: there is an ongoing mobilization in dance, as it reflects how people move. The body shows a bigger portrait of how people move. Dance is a social kinesthetic, which, when in contact with other social formations, elaborates the world based on the concept of a universal body, a bodily humanity, leaving its mark on our collective vision for moment. (Martin, 2011, 33-34)

The connection between dance and politics might not seem evident, as many of us are more acquainted with a traditional concept of politics. The theories and ideas explored above shed some light on this relationship, which, as movement itself, will have the potential to evolve and embrace new nuances, as a consequence of the future developments in the organization of society and the economy, the new ways of expressing social and political activism and citizenship, and the significance of art in the societies to come.

1.4 Dance through the lens of sociology

Sociology has not yet explored dance as a subdivision of sociology of culture, and most specifically, sociology of art. It was anthropology and ethnography, for reasons related to ontology, that have been elaborating the tradition of body symbolism since the late 19th century. (Thomas, 1995, 175) While there have been some proposals on the development of a sociology of dance, these were not presented inside the sociological field, but instead in the world of dance studies. Two names are worth citing as pioneers of this proposal: Helen Thomas and Peter Brinson.

In her book *“Dance, Modernity and Culture: Explorations in the Sociology of Dance”* Thomas argues for the development of a structured and interdisciplinary approach to the sociology of dance, exemplifying her framework through a case study of the birth and development of American modern dance, specifically through the work of dance pioneer Martha Graham. In my analysis I will not examine Thomas’ framework or dwell on her proposal for the creation of a sociology of dance. What is particularly relevant for my thesis is instead the brief description she makes in her book of how the body has been explored by sociology.

Thomas underlines that the body as the focus of sociology had been largely neglected until the 1970’s, when the theory of body symbolism, with its roots in sociological theory of Émile Durkheim, was explored by Mauss, Hertz and Mary Douglas. Mauss (1973) and Hertz (1973) wanted to apply Durkheim’s ideas on the social construction of knowledge to the study of the body. Viewing the body as an image of society as a suitable area for sociological research, Mauss shows that even the most conventional routine bodily behaviors, generally and frequently perceived as “natural”, are instead socially controlled, that ordinary bodily behaviors are part of an encoded system. Therefore, according to Mauss, a natural (non-social) body would not exist. Mauss insists that education plays a key role in this scenario, as throughout our lives we are taught to use our body in specific and proper manners (he uses as main example the acquisition of sexual gendered behaviors). Educational processes allow society to rule body techniques. Hertz presents a different view: that the physical body is a small-scale version of the social body. For him, natural behavior is not per se an antonym of social

behavior, or, in other words, natural behavior does not necessarily indicate non-social behavior: instead, society gives a symbolic meaning to the natural (non-social) characteristics of the human body, and because of that, they are perceived as natural (non-social). Hertz speaks therefore of a double transformation on the perception of what is natural and non-social. Mary Douglas' research, in line with Mauss' theory, suggests that the body has a natural inclination to express society. The society and the body symbolize each other: we are not in front of a one-way process between the physical and the social body; this process is reciprocal. A reciprocity that, according to Douglas, is mostly instinctive and embedded in our everyday bodily behaviors: human beings have a "slice" of society within themselves. Particularly important is her view that all societies and cultures take part in body symbolism, and that body symbolism and its connotations are culturally determined. (Thomas, 1995, 176-181)

These three views on body symbolism, when applied to dance, are able to shed some light on its social potential. Relevant in Mauss' theory is the idea that apparently "natural" behaviors are instead socially controlled, that a natural (non-social) body is inexistent. Consequently, this would mean that all the actions and movements human beings conduct in their daily lives are social, including dance. Dance would have a social potential because the main instrument of dance, the body, is inherently a social body. Additionally, the way we dance is also socially controlled: individuals are taught to express themselves through dance in a particular manner as a result of educational processes. In Hertz's theory, what is particularly relevant is not so much his focus on the natural behavior of the individual, but the idea that the physical body is miniature version of the social body. The physical body contains in itself all that is social, and dance, as an art and activity present in society, is therefore also a (perhaps) intrinsic part of the physical body. Regarding Douglas, accepting a reciprocal process between the social and the physical body would mean that dance would, simultaneously: (as a social activity) influence the body and foster a certain type of expression based on how the society is structured; and (as a physical activity having the body as its main instrument) influence society in terms of how the body is perceived and open individuals to new possibilities of how we move together. Additionally, the idea that, according to Douglas, body symbolism is recurrent in all societies and cultures, might mean that dance, as an

example of body symbolism, has a certain universality, even if the interpretation of dance and its associations are culturally determined.

Another proposal for the creation of a sociology of dance was made by Peter Brinson, stemming from his experience as lecturer in the course “Dance and Society”, as part of the BA Honors Degree in Dance in the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance, a course he initiated in 1978. Brinson admits that although the course had its importance, it didn’t make the necessary connection with sociology.

To be able to defend the need for a sociology of dance, it is necessary, according to Brinson, to establish if, and ultimately conclude, that dance has a social role/importance in contemporary society. Dance is a social fact, displaying generation, sex, race, and class, which are all a response to a specific social configuration. Nevertheless, dance has been largely neglected in scholarship when compared to other arts; this unfortunately means two things: refuting the significance of the body both as a tool of production and as one of the oldest medium, which allowed for the communication of emotions and the progress of society. Among other tasks, a sociology of dance would answer to the question of what the place of dance in the current society is and how it will be subject of changes as a result of the reorganization of society, the (at the time but still relevant today) new balance between working and personal life, and the progress of technology. Describing dance’s place in our current social system means not ignoring its relationship with problems of ideology, industrial society, and class. More than asking what dance is, a sociology of dance would ask who dances, why and how. A sociology of dance should therefore investigate all kinds of dance, not only European dance, or professional dance; local and practical instances on which dance happens. For the discipline to be perceived as universally significant, it needs to embrace a global view. Brinson also believed that the culturally disadvantaged, particularly young people, should be a priority for the dance sociologist. Furthermore, a sociology of dance would inevitably analyze non-verbal communication, a type of communication largely neglected by contemporary education, and ultimately become its defensor. Regarding social theory, Brinson argued that a sociology of dance requires the help of a coherent theory of social evolution and social investigation, suggesting to firstly concentrate on the work of the founding fathers of sociology. After this initial approach, two examples of thinking would, according to him, indicate the direction to follow: one has to do with the issue of

what Marx identified as the “super structure”; and the other is related to issues of morality and ethics. (Brinson, 1983)

Brinson was somehow visionary in 1983, but nowadays we still can't talk about a real discipline, a real sociology of dance, with a structured methodology and social theory. Nevertheless, his proposal certainly touches on a series of important points when it comes to the place of dance in society, particularly the “*who, why and how*” of dance, which will be relevant in my exploration of its social and political potential, particularly in the analysis of the cases studies of the second chapter. The “*who, why, and how*” of dance are also key when it comes to, after demonstrating the social and political potential of dance, establishing a relationship between dance and human rights. The individual, currently at the center of the human rights discourse, might move in a certain way, or in this case dance in a certain way; individually or in a group; for a reason or an ensemble of reasons that might be related to human rights (even without being aware of it); and in doing so, produce a political and/or social effect having consequences for the human rights discourse. The relationship between dance and society appears to be reciprocal: on the one hand, society can have an effect and mold how people across different cultures dance; on the other hand, dance is able to express values, social and cultural messages, and identities. A sociology of dance would then explore both dimensions, and possibly engaging more deeply with the second one.

Taking into consideration the very sporadic and few proposals for a sociology of dance and, additionally, of a lack of literature on the relationship between sociology and dance, there is more academic freedom in the choice of the sociological lens through which one might analyze this performing art.

A theory which might help to clarify the social and political potential of dance is Hans Joas' theory of self-transcendence, which he applies to religion. This is a theory which frames religion by systematically grasping the internal relationships between the individual, social-community, and societal levels. Staying away from a functionalist or utilitarian interpretation of religion and its presence and role in contemporary society, the main question of his book is “Do we need religion?”, but the subject is not society or culture: it is the human being as an individual and as collectivity (or humanity). The focus of his attention is the individual with its religious, individual, and collective

experience. Being an extremely sensitive theorist to the contingency of socio-cultural processes, the symbol of Joas' thinking is to embrace plurality without the goal of a "grand unification", bringing together the strength of particularities and differences with the potential for universalization that arises from them. Therefore, Joas observes religion, and the necessity for it, by systematically linking its individual, institutional and macro-social components. (Maccarini, 2010, 13-14)

His interpretation of religion is based on the central and key concept of self-transcendence, which I will apply to my analysis of dance.

According to Joas, there is a myriad of experiences of self-transcendence available to the individual. His definition of self-transcendence goes as follows:

"Experiences in which a person transcends herself, but not, at least not immediately, in the sense of moral achievements but rather of being pulled beyond the boundaries of oneself, being captivated by something outside of myself, relaxation of or liberation from one's fixation on oneself...a movement away from oneself...there is no doubt that we do have such experiences." (Joas, 2016, 7)

Joas analyzes religious experiences, or those which can result in a religious experience, though the experience of self-transcendence. This is an experience which consists in being taken beyond the limits of one's ego, to an entity that transcends us, thus showing us our limitation and dependence, but at the same time embodying our self-realization. Events of self-transcendence also ground motivation, that is, they create the moment when commitments to value take root in the human personality. For Joas, when applied to religion this means that some types of experience are impossible without a religious community, and that we need religion not to pursue an external goal (even of moral character), but to develop a very dimension of our humanity (available only through certain experiences of self-transcendence). (Maccarini, 2010, 14)

Experiences of self-transcendence are, according to Joas, available to all human beings. All human beings are capable of having them, and these experiences aren't only limited to religion: they are able to be experienced in many circumstances, including in the

individual a general awareness. Self-transcendence can be experienced through nature, but also through interactions with other human beings. These can range from a conversation between two people who realize that their personality is being deeply understood by the other, leaving in the interlocutors a feeling of emotional bond: to other human interactions such as falling/being in love and sexual relationships. Falling in love, for example, is a symbol of the forces that bring two individuals together, an experience of recognition of and acceptance by the other. The individual feels that he or she is falling in love with the other, in its wholeness, and that there is no logical explanation for it. Sexual experiences are also powerful experiences of self-transcendence, as they allow a combination of fusion with nature and fusion with another person: the individual simultaneously appreciates the other (as a person) and the pleasure of a body. Another experience of self-transcendence through interaction with others are the acts of receiving or giving help, selfless acts, so to speak. These are events in which we are shaken by others' neediness, in which we feel that we could also be in a situation of, for example, deprivation or poverty, and more: that the person we are helping could be a loved one. The experiences of self-transcendence aren't necessarily only between two people, they can also be collective. Joas speaks of "collective ecstasy", an experience that emerges from a feeling of excitement, characterized by overconfidence and engagement in activities beyond our capabilities. Essentially, moments in which our actions are being well-received by others, and therefore we feel more confident to express ourselves. A key idea in his discourse is that, according to Joas, experiences of self-transcendence aren't necessarily (morally) good. Not all experiences of self-transcendence are exciting or stimulating, they sometimes leave us feeling vulnerable, traumatized, aware of the precarity of our existence in this planet. Consequently, one would have to try to analyze with a "value-free" approach all the experiences that draw individuals to values (even if we don't appreciate certain values). The realization that experiences of self-transcendence aren't always good sustains Joas' idea that these experiences are available to all, and that they are essential to human life. We don't need to formulate "the need" for them, we merely have them. (Joas, 2016, 8-10)

Keeping in mind the plurality of experiences of self-transcendence we might have in our life, the fact that they can be experienced individually or as part of a group, and that they

can combine more than one element; the proposal of analysing dance through the lens of self-transcendence is actually quite plausible. 'Dance allows for a diversity of experiences of self-transcendence: it can be performed individually or in a group, and corporeal empathy permits self-transcendence to be experienced not only by the performer, but also by the spectator. Even if, as Douglas pointed out, body symbolism is culturally determined, corporeal empathy is still possible, as, generally speaking, probably all individuals are able to identify feelings and emotions which for many are universal. Additionally, dance involves a "fusion" with more than one element: nature (the body of the other: the one who I observe or the one I dance with), music (in the case that the dance is accompanied by it), and space (to dance inevitably involves the use of space and it might change how we perceive the surrounding environment and society, whether we are talking about the private or public spheres).

In the following chapter, I will apply the theory of self-transcendence to a set of case studies, in order to hopefully shed some light on dance's social and political potential inside the human rights field.

1.5 Theoretical framework

Taking into consideration all the theories presented above, my theoretical proposal is a combination of Hans Joas' theory on self-transcendence and Dana Mills' concept of sic-sensuous. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the relevance of this choice.

Sic-sensuous moments are catalysts of experiences of self-transcendence through dance. As previously explained, dance can be considered as an experience of self-transcendence because: dance, as an artistic expression, as a way to express an opinion, or even as a tool of peaceful assembly, can be experienced individually or collectively; and dance can blend more than one element: dance involves a "fusion" with more than one element: nature (the body of the other: the one whom I observe or the one I dance with), music (in the case that the dance is accompanied by it), and space (to dance inevitably involves the use of space and it might change how we perceive the surrounding environment and society, whether we are talking about the private or public spheres).

The important thing is to not forget the common denominator in these experiences of self-transcendence as theorized by Joas: these are experiences in which a person transcends herself, is pulled beyond the boundaries of oneself, because she is captivated by something outside of herself, relaxing or liberating herself from one's fixation on oneself. The individual is taken beyond the limits of his ego, which at the same time embodies his self-realization, but also shows him his limits and dependence. These experiences aren't necessarily (morally) good, sometimes they leave us vulnerable and shattered, which sustains the idea of universality and availability of these experiences. As previously highlighted, and this is key for identifying dance's potential in the human rights discourse, according to Joas these experiences possibly establish motivation, generating the moment when commitments to value take root in the human personality.

I propose that sic-sensuous moments are then potentiators, the fertile ground, of experiences of self-transcendence.

Even if Mills focuses her research and argument mostly on moments in which alternative political spaces are created by people (through dance), when they aren't able to perform their equality, and therefore generating lasting spaces of resistance towards human rights abuses, I also argue that: the social and political potential of dance can be equally identified when people feel as part of the community through dance in repressive contexts; that is to say, when through dance they identify with values contrary to the human rights discourse. Consequently, I propose the following addition to Mills' theory: like Mills, I argue that sic-sensuous moments, precisely because they generate embodied spaces, spaces shared in the individual's bodies, might establish an equality between the individuals who dance and between the spectators: bodies which are different might find equality through dance. However, even if this sic-sensuous moment indeed happens, it is still possible that these individuals might view themselves as in a superior position to other human beings, in a given social and political context. This will be further analyzed in the subchapters dedicated to Chilean cueca and German modern dance and Nazism. Another addition to Mills' theory that I propose is that sic-sensuous moments might not only happen between sensed and sensing bodies (dancers and spectators), but also between the dancers themselves.

The main theoretical idea is then that sic-sensuous moments can be catalysts of experiences of self-transcendence which might be positive or negative for the human rights discourse. The potential of these moments is ambivalent and never static, depending on the actors, modalities, and motivations faced.

Chapter Two - DANCE: A PERFORMING ART WITH SOCIAL AND POLITICAL POTENTIAL

2.1 The connecting dots between arts and human rights

Arts and human rights share some connecting dots, and dance is no exception to this connection. The idea that human rights permeate many areas of our lives might mean that the relationship between arts and human rights can be found in numerous settings if one is sensitive enough to pay attention.

Regarding social movements, arts, as an established part of many movements, may serve different purposes. They can be one of key elements of the movement, a way for the movement to define itself, a sort of mirror to the movement, giving shape to the emotions and ideas that inspire and drive it. They can also be a tool of communication between the movement and the surrounding environment, helping to attract potential followers, spreading protest traditions through art, and providing lifelong sets of values and ideas expressed by the movement. Additionally, they can also be a way to draw a line between “us” and “them”, establishing and identifying who are the “others” that our movement is opposed to. (Eyerman, 2015) As there are many types of arts, we might hypothesize that each one of them, in different contexts, might bring their own specificity and contribution to human rights causes, inside or (even maybe) outside social movements. This is easier if we read arts as languages. Visual art, for example, might be effective in expressing dissent: the very own act of performing a collective public demonstration as part of a social movement is able to shed light on and expose conflict. Viewing these collective public displays as performances makes the visual symbols visible. (Doerr et al., 2015) Arts, I believe, and in in this case dance, might, in certain contexts, also be identifiable as what author Julia Eckert defines as practice movements. Practice movements consist in unorganized and unrepresented collective action that share several differences with traditional social movements. Firstly, we are not in the presence of guidelines or statements, but in what Eckert defines as “acts of citizenship”. Practice is the key word here. The practices which define these types of movements can be recognizable in everyday living activities, such as moving. But even if mundane, they are transgressive because they clearly disobey restrictions on prescriptive regulations,

the material organization of space, status imperatives, etc. The space of action of those who participate in the movement is enlarged. These practices are social, even if they are not formulated in a group. Some examples include envisioning opportunities and strategies to accomplish them and seeing oneself as rights bearing subjects. The author suggests that we might find practice movements both in situations in which social movements are repressed and in others in which they are flourishing. They have a significance in both scenarios. Why? Because they are, according to Eckert, “*one form in which the subaltern can speak*”. Sometimes articulating hopes, ambitions, and visions that are explicitly or implicitly contrasting to the conceptions produced within social movements, practice movements reflect invisible aspirations and wants before they are expressed within the context of a specific vision of social and political transformation. Eckert suggests that practice movements might be “*non-sovereign forms of political power*” because, in addition to all the other characteristics, their main goal is not to govern, but to improve life’s conditions. This opens “the door” to a new perception and analysis of political power, one that is not simply based in organized collective action. Practice movements, for the fact that they try to evade different types of prescriptive rules, are often associated with the word “resistance.” Regarding the effects, Eckert touches on an important point: that these practices inside these movements embody social change, that their success is measured by their capability to affect the typical and customary practices. This can translate into changing provisionally the access to public space, for example. (Eckert, 2015)

If we remember again the connecting dots between arts and human rights, an even further reflection needs to be made on the link between social movements and human rights. As Fagan put it, human rights are becoming gentrified. And one of the reasons might be almost exclusively relying in international human rights law instruments to ensure their protection which, of course, is an essential part of the human rights discourse and highly significant. But are they enough? One must only think on the number of people who are not acquainted with the United Nations and the several legal instruments at their disposition. Ironically, these are the people who need human rights the most.

People should be able to define human rights in manners that might produce a positive effect in their lives, in a way that will assist them in surmounting the challenges they face. For human rights to have a positive impact on people's lives, individuals need to have the capacity to identify the context and the manner in which they can voice their concerns. It requires people to use rights, and this is directly related to what they claim as rights and how they delineate them, which is dependent on group identity and action, an element needed at all levels. The question is that, in the human rights discourse, "movement" is a word that serves many ends and identifies very broad situations. The term "Human rights movement" implies that popular demands for human rights are being directed "from below" via international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), which in reality results in the strengthening of global elites. Unfortunately, surprisingly not much empirical research has been made to examine how human rights are put together by social movements. (Nash, 2015)

And even less research has been done on how arts are part of that picture. And how is then dance part of the picture? Are there identifiable examples of its political and social potential? And is this potential present only inside social movements? Or practice movements? Or are there other contexts in which this potential can be found?

Maybe one of the connecting dots between arts and human rights is idealism. Arts' capacity to provide a picture on how the world might be or could have been and the creation of utopian moments might be one of the reasons why they are powerful in being a mirror to the notions and emotions behind social and political movements, and more generally speaking, human rights. Arts can imagine the end result if the goals of the social and political movement succeed. In this sense, arts inside these movements are able add a different touch to protest traditions, creating tools which might be recycled in other movements. But maybe there are even more than tools: they are languages able to move the audience and to communicate with it on a level playing field, assuming therefore a very important role in recruiting and integrating supporters in the movement. (Eyerman, 2015)

Concerning dance, my goal is not to analyse its potential only inside social and political movements, but I would also like to explore if this happens in sort of isolated cases, for example, human rights choreographies. Analysing dance's potential for the human rights discourse only inside social and political movements would be reductive, as human rights can possibly be found in a different myriad of scenarios. Additionally, focusing solely on collective movements, especially on those who are organized and largely represented, would be the equivalent of adapting an elitist approach to human rights, something that might not have a positive impact for the human rights discourse.

In the present chapter, I will delve into the social and political potential of dance through two main case studies: the evolution of Chile's national dance, cueca, through different social and political contexts; and German modern dance and its links with Nazi ideology. The choice of these two case studies reveals a desire for heterogeneity. Additionally, I will analyze a set of human rights choreographies, to provide a broader picture of the place of dance in the human rights discourse.

2.2 Dance in social and political movements – Case studies

2.2.1 Cueca: Chile's national dance through different social and political contexts

Dance isn't part of protest narrative only in Chile. Several ethnic and class struggles all around Latin America have consciously used the language of dance to achieve some of their goals, which includes instrumentalizing some of dance's social codes (historical origins, movements, instruments). Some examples include merengue in the Dominican Republic, tango in Argentina, rumba in Cuba, samba in Brazil, and Aztec dance in Mexico. (Jaeck, 2003) To this list, we add and explore in detail the Chilean cueca.

2.2.1.1 The history of cueca

Chile's national dance, cueca, has suffered different transformations in its significance and representations throughout the years. As an important element of Chilean culture, cueca has been instrumentalized in diverse scenarios: to serve anti-democratic goals during the Pinochet dictatorship, but also as a human rights protest tool that keeps its contemporality in today's political and social scenario. Here, I don't use the word

“instrumentalization” to refer only to negative uses of dance, instead I refer to all the possible uses of dance in political and social terms that produce an effect in the human rights discourse.

Cueca is a known form of dance in Chile since 1824, having the title of national dance. Its origins are said to remain with Arab and Andalusian influences, influences that assume different artistic nuances in Andean areas in other South American countries, such as Argentina and Peru. (Spencer Espinosa, 2016) The dance is a figurative depiction of the mating ritual between a rooster and a hen: semantically, at the origin of *cueca* would be “*clueca*”, which denotes the process of a hen on the verge of laying eggs. (Brezeanu, 2020)

A brief description of the traditional cueca is able to enlighten us on its earlier significance and essence:

“A man in traditional clothing, or “huaso”, approaches his female counterpart, or “china”, and as she takes his arm, they walk around the dance floor. Facing one another, they start their movements in circles around one another, waving white handkerchiefs in the air. During the dance, it’s important that partners maintain strong eye contact throughout the different steps” (Brezeanu, 2020)

This description allows us to understand the traditional cueca followed the classical gender roles and that it fell easily into the folklore category. As we will see, in the quality of traditional tales, sayings, dances, customs or art forms of a group, folklore can be easily manipulated, as it plays right into what peoples believe to be their roots.

In addition to the expressive elements outline above, the geographical range of cueca was also key: cueca was geographically performed all around Chile, in events, squares, a data which reveals one of cueca’s most important characteristics, and later the reason for its instrumentalization by Pinochet: its popularity among Chileans. (Brezeanu, 2020)

2.2.1.2 The different types of cueca throughout the years

Regarding its classification, cueca suffered a division, around the 1930's, into urban-style cueca or cueca brava and peasant-style cueca: urban-style cueca, canto a la rueda, or round singing, was only marginally popular until the end of the Pinochet dictatorship; and the second, which is rendered by female folk musicians known as cantoras de rodeo or campesinas, and which is rooted on traditional repertory sung performed by female duets or trios. Until the 1960's peasant-style cueca was produced, mediated, and hybridized largely on a mass scale; particularly under Pinochet's dictatorship, whose nationalist-leaning cultural policies promoted folk music and other cultural forms reminiscent of the peasantry. Peasant-style cueca was associated with aristocratic-agrarian ruling class groups. (Spencer Espinosa, 2016)

Cueca during Pinochet's dictatorship

In fact, cueca's instrumentalization followed the political and social transformations at the time. Chile already had an economic liberal market in the 1960's, and this was explored by Pinochet by the time he arrived in power in 1973, when he started to develop a new idea of society based on the neoliberal model. This new societal model, emphasized, among other things, the uneven reorganization of the land, which resulted in less political and economic power for the peasant population. In an effort to avoid anti-farm narratives as a consequence of the new foreign influence in the country, Pinochet understood that it was essential to create a sense of "Chilean identity", in order to motivate the peasants to serve the regime. Cultural symbols proved key in a strategy of this kind, and folklore in the image of cueca was one of the answers. The dance, declared by Pinochet as the National Dance of Chile on September 18, 1979, started to be integrated in events such as military parades, eventually transforming into a symbol of authoritarian dominance and repression. (Brezeanu, 2020)

This first part of the history of cueca dance in Chile is highly relevant, as here we have a first example of the social and political potential of dance in the human rights discourse. The moment when cueca becomes the national dance of Chile is a moment where we can see the negative potential of dance as tool to support repression. Here, dance is not simply viewed as an artistic practice used to entertain or distract people, but

also to forge a strong sense of Chilean identity in the context of dictatorship. In this scenario, the instrumentalization of dance is made easier given the acquaintance of Chileans with cueca, a dance, as underlined above, known in the territory since 1824. We can then see that instrumentalization here is easier, since we already have a somehow strong cultural element that allows for the manipulation of meanings and traditions in order to develop a feeling of national pride. In the second case study, German modern dance and Nazism, it will be interesting to analyze if this negative instrumentalization of dance is also possible when the type of dance is not a strong element of national culture, that is to say, if the language of dance can also be a tool for oppression when its cultural ties aren't apparently as strong as in the Chilean example.

To complement and solidify the institutionalization of cueca, the regime has produced evidence and publications on the history of this National Dance, in order to justify its Chilean essence and roots and to, together with other elements, develop an irrefutable narrative of Chilean collective memory) (Brezeanu, 2020)

Similarly to other repressive regimes, we are in the presence of manipulation of historical facts, and during Chilean dictatorship, dance, as a cultural element even more than an aesthetic experience, was part of this manipulation. But cueca wasn't only manipulated by Pinochet and his followers: it also became an instrument of human rights resistance that is still used nowadays in contexts very diverse from that of dictatorship. Was there a positive instrumentalization of cueca?

Cueca sola

Cueca sola might be one of the answers to this question. Contrary to the traditional cueca, cueca sola emerged as a protest dance against the “disappearances” during the dictatorship. It wanted to show the absence of a partner, friend, or brother, not the courtship between a man with a woman. To serve this end, the dance begins with the declaration of kinship with the person for whom the dance will be dedicated/performed, his or her photograph carried on the chest of the dancer. (Navarrete, 2022) Before singing the cueca, the following verses, originally pronounced by Inelia Hermosilla, mother of detained and “desaparecido” Héctor Garay, are recited:

*“Yo brinco por la verdad, la justicia y la razón
Porque no exista opresión, ni tanta desigualdade
Con coraje y dignidade, de este mal hay que salir
Vamos a reconstruir
Y con cimientos bien firmes
Para que jamás en Chile esto se vuelva a vivir”*
(Concha, 2020)

Later included in the song “Canto a la Esperanza”, by Gaia Torres, this message speaks to the human rights discourse: that human rights were violated during the dictatorship and that it is necessary to ask for justice, in order to prevent another event like this one to happen in Chile. Truth, justice, and reason are the requests of these women. The cueca dance was transformed and reappropriated to accompany the song by Gaia Torres, and its verses are sufficient to understand the powerful evocative power of cueca sola:

*“En un tiempo fui dichosa
apacibles eran mis días,
mas llegó la desventura
perdí lo que más quería.*

*Me pregunto constante,
¿dónde te tienen?
Y nadie me responde,
y tú no vienes.*

*Y tú no vienes, mi alma,
larga es la ausencia,
y por toda la tierra
pido conciencia.*

Sin ti, prenda querida,

triste es la vida.

—**“Cueca sola”, Gala Torres.**

(El Universal Chile, 2021)

The clothing used during the performance points to a striking difference between the cueca and the cueca sola: cueca sola is melancholic and sad, there having no place for the traditional folkloric colored dresses. Women dress in a black skirt, white blouse, black shoes, and a white handkerchief, which is part of the dance performance. The picture of the loved one is either in the chest or next to the heart of the dancer, representing a story with no ending, since these women were never informed about what happened to their loved ones. The photograph is a strategy to bring some humanity to the performance, as the public can clearly see who was detained and at the same time understand the human connection between the performer and the loved one. (Concha, 2020)

The organization of the space and the structure of cueca sola sheds light on its significance and on its solitary, but at the same time interventive and community character. The whole performance creates kinaesthetic empathy between the performers and spectators, a moment that revives old and painful collective memories, as the people share this pain with the women. Initially, all the women put themselves in line, some will dance, and some will play the guitar. Those who dance occupy the frontline, slowly singing the lyrics of the song. The rhythm is established by simple steps, and the dancer follows an imaginary circle while she uses her white handkerchief. Since cueca sola is, as underlined above, melancholic, and sad, the elements of “escobillado” and “zapateo” of the traditional cueca aren’t present in this version of cueca. The performance of cueca ends with the dancers placing the white handkerchief close to their foreheads, portraying the idea of a comeback to reality, a reality characterized by the absence of a loved one. The women remain in this position, with a static gaze and standing still. (Concha, 2020) In the description of the “classical” performance of cueca sola one might find a sic

sensuous moment: the women dancers share an embodied space that allows for communication between their bodies through a non-verbal language (even if they are initially guided by the music). More than communicating between themselves their pain, they also communicate with the spectator, the body that not only watches, but also takes part in this interaction: the spectator identifies the message through the lyrics of the song; and the appropriation of the cueca, now performed without the traditional male counterpart, something done purposely to highlight the human rights violations committed during the dictatorship. What these women desire to communicate is essential to understand the connection with Mills' theory: by performing cueca sola, these women create an alternative political space to denounce human rights abuses suffered by their relatives. In the moment of the performance of cueca sola, they are able to perform their equality as political subjects, something that was denied to them by the regime. The moment of performance of cueca, loaded with emotions and awareness between the participants and the spectators, is then a catalyst for an experience of self-transcendence. If we think about the theoretical framework of self-transcendence by Hans Joas present in chapter one, it is possible to identify in cueca sola the elements of fusion which characterize the experience: the women dancers communicate with their bodies, which represent nature; at the same time, the performance of cueca sola also includes the element of music, which stimulates the sensorial; there is also a connection with space, not only the symbolical meaning of the spaces in which they perform, which will be explained further bellow, but also how they move and choreograph the movement, appropriated the public space through cueca sola; but fusion doesn't resume only to these elements, but there are also visual elements, like the photographs, used to identifying publicly the victim of human rights violations they are trying to defend, and at the same time reinforcing the emotional character of the performance. Consequently, the fusion of all these elements might result in an experience of self-transcendence: the women dancers and the spectators are able to step outside of their egos in the moment of performance of cueca sola, because they are captivated by a something that, although it is connected to them in the quality of Chilean citizens, it also is part of a bigger picture. Spectators focus, for a moment, on the suffering of these women, left without husbands, brothers, and sons, and stop fixating on themselves. The fact that these women directly contest human rights violations places this particular experience of self-transcendence

in the human rights discourse: by performing or watching a performance of cueca sola in this particular social and political context, some values might have taken root in their personalities. In this case, values contrary to the Pinochet regime and part of the human rights discourse: the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to peaceful assembly, the right to liberty, among others. In essence, Cueca sola disarms the audience with its simplicity and ability to evoke memories that were once private, creating a powerful protest tool through the reappropriation of the national dance, a dance that was negatively instrumentalized by the regime. Through cueca sola, these women demand to be heard, demand for the past not to be forgotten and for the human rights violations not to remain unsentenced.

Cueca sola became a subversive protest tool created, performed, and used by Chilean women, and can be related to all the four rights mentioned in the subchapter “Dance and human rights legal instruments”, even if the most evident connection is to the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. Reunited in the squares, women were exercising their right to peaceful assembly, sharing an artistic experience through cueca sola, at the same time that they were expressing their political opinions, disagreeing with those in power and demanding justice. The fact that this protest is made through art is an additional element that demonstrates art’s potential for instrumentalization in the human rights discourse (in this case, a positive one). Art, and most particularly dance, as an experience of self-transcendence with a social and political impact in the human rights discourse is a key element of this thesis: in the case of cueca, and most particularly cueca sola, we do not only talk about an experience of self-transcendence almost purely aesthetic, but we also talk about a social and a political dimension. The actors, motivations, and modalities of instrumentalization of cueca sola add another dimension to the experience described by Joas. Values take root in the human personality of those who dance and watch the performance of cueca sola, and the context sheds light on the type of values one adheres to.

One of the most emblematic performances of cueca sola was on March 8, 1983, in Caupolicán Theater, in Santiago. 1983 was a year characterized by a tumultuous political atmosphere in Chile, exacerbated by economic hardship. Protests were part of a broader movement that asked for elections, the resignation of Pinochet and the end of human rights abuses. The cueca sola ends up being part of this movement. In this date, several

groups of Chilean women who were united to fight Pinochet's regime gathered in Caupolican Theater to celebrate International Women's Day. With signs and banners alluding to the systemic public and private violence against women perpetrated by the regime, there were several performances in the event, the most emblematic being the *cueca sola*. *Cueca sola*, performed by a female member of the Association of the Detained and Disappeared, opened the possibility of body appropriation in a public space, a female body that is systemically controlled by the state. (Agosín, 2008) As highlighted since the beginning of the first chapter, the familiarity of Chileans with the dance allows for an efficient communication between the performers and the audience, creating a sentimental moment which evokes common memories. As Mary Douglas underlined, the body and society symbolize each other, and many Chileans in this moment see themselves in *cueca*, are able to interpret what is being communicated and understand the satire and criticism of the dance, given the at-the-time social and political context of Chile. As previously underlined above, *cueca sola* represents a moment of *sic-sensuous*, catalyst of an experience of self-transcendence which grounds motivation and adherence to certain values. This particular example is key to delve into the political and social potential of dance in the human rights discourse. We can easily identify how the actor, the motivation, the modality, and particularly the scenario shapes the experience, and how the final result of instrumentalization of *cueca sola* is positive. In this scenario, *cueca sola* participates in the social and political movements asking for elections in Chile. This is highly relevant: the experience of self-transcendence can't be dissociated from the political and social context at the time. Furthermore, the adherence to values doesn't only include the "classicals" freedom of expression and opinion, right to liberty and right to peaceful assembly, but also introduces gender violence and women's human rights into the debate, embracing the interdependence and indivisibility of human rights. The fact that *cueca sola* is performed in Caupolican theater expands the number of participants taking part in a *sic-sensuous* moment: the number of the bodies communicating as political subjects is greatly expanded and the collective experience of self-transcendence assumes a very wide dimension.

Urban cueca and civilian cueca

Cueca sola isn't the only example of the transgressive power and the social and political potential of cueca dance. Civilian cueca, the former urban cueca, is a contemporary example.

Following the end of the dictatorship, peasant-style cueca lost its central stage, giving space for the resurgence of urban cueca. The openness to new musical experiences and instruments certainly had an impact in the Chilean cultural scene, and this was possible given the freedom associated with the end of the dictatorship. Popular cultural representations, previously viewed as marginal, were revived by a middle-class young generation who desired to develop a new Chilean identity free of repressive constraints. Reframed since the bicentennial celebrations in September 2000, urban cueca converted into "civilian cueca" after 2010. The revived urban cueca after the end of the dictatorship represents:

"...the sense of loss that transforms into a new "geography of sociability", a new sense of locality, and engaged the need of reconstructing the city, of "our places". (Brezeanu, 2020)

Maintaining historical lyrics and, at the same time, visualizing a "new world", in which imagined real urban settings are linked with real local urban memories that produce a new "locality", both are two ways of elaborating urban development. Creating a "claimed community" with networks of daily life where past and present coexist is the aim. Essentially, the importance of urban cueca and later civilian cueca resides in the capability of the cuecas to generate local significances that have an impact on the audiences, in geographical, historical, and social terms, and the fact they promote a new feeling of community and vicinity. The cueca, as a dance, has suffered a true process of reappropriation by the population, transforming into cueca sola and urban and civilian cueca. Politically speaking, we are in the presence of an instrument of awareness raising that suffers several transformations across different time spans and by different actors. An example of protest through the civilian cueca was the performance of the National Folkloric Ballet in front of the Theatre of the University of Chile, in Plaza Italia, advocating the "right of living in peace" and to celebrate their sense of being part of a "Chilean identity". Cueca found a new legitimation in the tribute to the "desaparecidos"

and social action, an artistic experience that belongs to the people. The experience of cueca, in this case civilian cueca, together with other elements of Chilean culture, explores a hypothetical future in which people are free to celebrate their “Chilean identity” and “live in peace”. In this regard, the thought-provoking performance attempts to imagine the change from the “lost community” to the “claimed community”, building therefore a new idea of collective memory. The inclusion of cueca in a social and political movement that aims to promote a new “Chilean identity” (at the time in the context of Piñera’s neoliberal government; Piñera was in power two times, between 2010-2014 and 2018-2022) based on collective memories reinforces mobilization inside this particular sociopolitical cause. Since Chileans are acquainted with cueca, when the performance of cueca is included in the movement it is easier for people to feel incited to participate in the fight. Art helps to build a sense of identity inside social and political movements. Even if Chile is currently a democracy, some problems still affect the society: for example, gaps in terms of income, the privatization of the pension system, the cheap labor, social welfare constraints, and the fact that militaries are still independent from the government. Therefore, there was still a feeling of austerity in the air. (Brezeanu, 2020)

2.2.1.3 Analysis of cueca’s social and political potential

The question that emerges is the following: how can the theories on self-transcendence by Hans Joas and sic-sensuous by Dana Mills be related to the experience of the cueca promoted by the regime and also by the other cuecas of intervention? The hypothesis is that the experience of self-transcendence, catalyzed by sic-sensuous moments, can be found both in the episodes of negative and positive instrumentalization of cueca. This is possible, first of all, as highlighted in the first chapter, because: firstly, dance is able to create a shared embodied space between sensed and sensing bodies; secondly, dance can be considered an experience of self-transcendence; thirdly, because experiences of self-transcendence can be both positive and negative.

Following this historical and descriptive analysis of the several nuances of cueca throughout the years, we now arrive at the core of cueca’s social and political potential

inside the human rights discourse. To illuminate this potential, one needs to focus on the actors, the motivations, and the modalities of cueca. The fact that cueca has seen many transformations and reappropriations throughout the years enriches this analysis and allows us to hypothesize that arts and, in this case, dance can easily “travel” between a negative and a positive instrumentalization of its potential, depending on a series of factors.

Actors are highly relevant in the realization of this potential. In this case, heterogenous are the actors who have instrumentalized cueca, positively and negatively for the human rights discourse, the most relevant and the ones I chose to highlight being Pinochet and his regime, the association Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD), and the Collective Cueca Sola.

2.2.1.3.1 Pinochet and his regime

Pinochet and his regime represent a repressive actor, responsible for numerous (and still not sentenced) human rights violations in Chile. Pinochet’s 17-year dictatorship, which has lasted between 11 September 1973 and 11 March 1990, relied on cueca as one of the symbols representatives of the “Chilean identity”.

As highlighted above, the familiarity of Chileans with cueca, together with the mass production of peasant-style cueca, helped in reducing possible criticism to a government who was strongly neoliberal and strived, among other things, on foreign investments and on the uneven distribution of the land. To provide some data on the human rights violations, Pinochet’s regime was responsible for massive oppression: already in the first months of dictatorship, more than 4.000 people were made disappear or were electrocuted. In the 1980’s, the dismantling of the Chilean social-political tissue and of the welfare state was evident, consequence of a state terrorism that had privatized education, health, retirement, and strongly reduced the rights of the population, including workers. This decade was therefore characterized by a growing discontentment among the Chileans, particularly enhanced by high levels of unemployment (31.3% in 1983), who during this decade have gathered on the streets on

the occasion of national protest days. The people who gathered on the streets revealed some heterogeneity: it included, among others, women, students, and workers. (Palma, 2015)

In the Chilean case, the regime did not give arts a particular mission. It was enough to reduce, as much as possible, its threatening potential by the means of censorship and the imposition of mass culture. Pinochet's approach to the arts was a "negative" one, based on prohibitions and bans. Anchored ideologically in anticommunist feelings, traditional values, nationalism, neoliberalism promoting the market as the only possible entity to articulate the arts, and the creation a mass-culture supported by both the market and the state; he nevertheless had no particularly developed political program for the arts, he did not want the regime to be portrayed by the arts: the arts simply had to express the regime. That is also a choice. Particularly, the regime showed some continuity in its approach to the arts, the policy of the Ministry of Education was that of artistic extension, and the regime also has tried to develop an apolitical art, and this one was to be developed by private enterprises. Pinochet's strategy of eradication of the artistic opposition had the opposed effect: the emphasis on a consumer culture, cleansing of adversaries and communist ideology left a blank space for the arts to develop their own substitute space, a space in which critical thinking fed and supported the political opposition. (Preda, 2008)

Another key question is the following: what were the dictatorship's motivations in instrumentalizing cueca? Essentially, Pinochet desired to establish cueca as a cultural element and symbol, in order to sustain the regime and to make people comply more easily with the rules. In this sense, cueca was one of the instruments used to create and defend the idea of a "Chilean identity".

In line with what was explained in the paragraphs above regarding the regime as an actor (which already reveals something concerning its motivations about cueca), one has to further explore its cultural and political impetuses, particularly through its first decree ever published, on the 18th of September 1973. The decree underlines, among other instances, that the members of the Junta Militar had the patriotic duty of "*restoring Chileanity*". (Junta de Gobierno de la Republica de Chile & Ministerio de Defensa

Nacional, Subsecretaría de Guerra, 1973) The affirmation of this key idea resulted in the issue of a series of decrees to sustain the regime's political project and to create a certain idea of national identity. Cultural models were homologated, and traditions were consecrated to give consistency to the regime. Keeping the goal of "restoring Chileanità" in mind, the motivation that lies in the institutionalization and instrumentalization of cueca can be explained by its popularity among Chileans. The elements of the cueca, the popular and common subjects, the *huaso* (the Chilean peasant) and the *china* (the woman of the huaso), are seized by the regime to symbolize a unified Chilean cultural identity, which aims to take the voice of the peasant and to embody it in the cueca, the national dance. Additionally, the popularity of the cueca was not verified only among the peasants, as it was also appreciated by the government and the Chilean high class. This data is insightful, in the sense that we are in the presence of a national dance that is appreciated by strongly opposing groups in the Chilean society. More specifically, one might suggest that the Chilean upper class "validated" and "approved" the cueca a peasant expression and tradition, a popular dance, as they themselves appreciated it. (Abarca, 2015) The cueca is instrumentalized to be associated and identified with values promoted by the regime, such as order, respect, virtue, and seriousness, in opposition to chaos and impurity, which were repudiated. (Ramos Rodillo & Spencer Espinosa, 2021) Through the analysis above, we can place cueca as one of the tools used by the regime to "restore Chileanità". Here I apply my criticism to Mills' theory, including it on my theoretical framework. Sic-sensuous moments do not only create shared embodied spaces that establish equality between the political subjects: the creation of these spaces can also be orchestrated in order to promote adherence to values contrary to the human rights discourse. In other words, dance's power as a non-verbal universal language can be equally instrumentalized in negative terms. To better explain, even if the promotion of the cueca by the regime results in an equality between those who perform it, meaning the "common" Chilean, this does not necessarily produce a positive impact or effect in the human rights discourse. Furthermore, at the same time this embodied space is created between political subjects, an experience of self-transcendence occurs, reinforcing stigmatization and repression. In the context of dictatorship and repressive governments, the regimes might promote several moments of sic-sensuous. Here I argument that the regime tried, through cueca, a national symbol, to place the majority of Chileans in a

position of inferiority as compared to the élite and in this way to ensure its indoctrination and compliance with the “restoration of Chileanité”, associated, as mentioned above, to values such as order, respect, and virtue. In this scenario, several experiences of self-transcendence can occur: it would be naive to think that only in moments positive to the human rights discourse such instrumentalization would happen. An individual can certainly go beyond his own ego and fixation on himself, producing a change in his identity, and go in the direction of anti-democratic values.

Regarding the modalities of this instrumentalization, Pinochet and his regime established cueca as the National Dance of Chile through the Decree Law No.23, published on the 18th of September 1979, and made the cueca part of several official events, such as military parades.

Decree Law No.23 is very enlightening. Through the reading of point number of the decree, one is able to understand the significance of cueca in the construction of a “Chilean” identity during the dictatorship, as the cueca is defined in musical and dance terms as “...*the most genuine expression of the national soul*”, that its lyrics englobes “...*the witty wit of the Chilean popular wit, as well as enthusiasm and melancholy*”, pointing to a set of values and cultural elements associated with Chileans’ identity. Additionally, Chilean cultural roots are emphasized, and perhaps might I suggest also mythicized through the cueca, as the decree sustains that the dance “*has been identified with the Chilean people since the dawn of the Independence and celebrated with them their most glorious deeds...*”. The decree also sustains that the cueca contains in itself a wide range of feelings that display “...*with greater property than any other the national being, in an expression of authentic unity.*” These words are easily reflecting an instrumentalization of cueca to serve dictatorial interests. Even if cueca was not used to kill, terrorize, or threaten people, it was part of a project of national unity and cultural indoctrination of Chileans. The decree law establishes the main modalities of this instrumentalization: these were the teaching, divulgation, endorsement and research of cueca’s musical choreographic values, a work that was fueled by the varied organisms and institutions of the cultural sector, and supervised by the Secretariat of Cultural Relations; and the organization of an annual contest of cueca in the month of September,

a task that was to be conducted by the Ministry of Public Education. The national contest was created for basic, secondary, and high school education students. (Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno, 1979) The decree-law 23 legally establishes the places and scenarios in which sic-sensuous moments based on cueca would be conducted, because cueca is the “the most genuine expression of the national soul”. The values to be promoted through cueca can be read in the decree: the national soul, authentic unity, feelings that display the nation being. Here we have the elements that should characterize the experience of self-transcendence of the individuals who dance the cueca through the modalities established by Pinochet and his regime. The scenario is created to promote experiences which ground motivation to the regime’s values. The fact that this is legally established through a decree-law is essential: law, culture, and politics come together to, even if indirectly, sustain and validate the cultural indoctrination and compliance with human rights violations.

This position on cueca was complemented, before and after the publishment of the decree, with several pieces of literature and media. One of these pieces was the reedition in 1976 of the book of Pablo Garrido, *Biografía de la Cueca*, first published in 1943. The book, following a traditionalist and Eurocentric narrative, underlines, among other elements, the peasant romanticism of cueca, represented by the huaso and the china: the huaso embodies the Chilean roto (the common Chilean) and the china is his object. These two elements are both validated and instrumentalized by the upper class and identifiable in the popular dance of cueca. Newspapers also played a part in this promotion of cueca as the national dance of Chile, as it was the case of El Mercurio, a supporter of the regime. Its September newspaper editions included a series of commentaries and news on cueca, which contributed to reinforcing its identity. This was the case of the newspaper edition of the 19th of September of 1979, which highlighted that cueca had become the national dance of Chile and that Pinochet offered to the folkloric cueca groups previously invited to the 18th of September ceremony the book “Historial de la Cueca”, by Pablo Garrido. (Abarca, 2015)

2.2.1.3.2 Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD)

According to the information available on their website, the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD) started to operate on a regular basis at the end of 1974. (Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos desaparecidos, 2024) The foundation of the association occurred some months following the first disappearances of several militants of leftist political parties, included members of the Unidad Popular government (1970-1973), which resulted in the beginning of a strong group political activism conducted by the families of the “desaparecidos”. Finding their family members became AFDD’s main focus. (Diaz & Gutierrez Ruiz, 2008) Actually, the association was made up predominantly of women related to the victims, with many of them being already acquainted with each other as a result of previous political militancy. Those women who weren’t successful in the search for their loved ones eventually came together as AFDD. Their work, which suffered repression, merges the public and the private spheres: on the one hand, they privately mourn the “Detenidos Desaparecidos”, a trauma and heartfelt experience; on the other hand, their mourning is also public, as they go on the streets to ask for justice and truth for their loved ones. (Palma, 2015) We can view the work of these women as similar to the work of human rights defenders.

AFDD, as a form of resistance, has worked to avoid three types of denial regarding human rights violations committed during and after Pinochet’s dictatorship: denial of reality, denial of justice and denial of memory. These “denials” translate in, respectively, activism in combating the regime’s refutation of the desaparecidos, the systematic amnesty during the dictatorship and the will to leave crimes without punishment during democracy, plus the idea that in order to be able to look at the future more positively one has to forget the traumas of the dictatorship. Therefore, the counter narrative conducted by AFDD focuses on justice, equality, identity and memory of the political collectivity. (Diaz & Gutierrez Ruiz, 2008)

In which concerns human rights tools and strategies, the work of AFDD during the dictatorship included many different activities, alternating between chaining, protests, hunger strikes, production of the Arpilleras (a series of stickers) and also participation in a series of international congresses on Disappeared Detainees and Human Rights.

(Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos desaparecidos, 2024) All had the aim of making the cause visible at a national and an international scale. More specifically, the activities of the AFDD can be divided into two categories: written documents and demonstrations. To the first category, we include open letters, public statements, petitions; and in the second category, as highlighted above, we can identify chaining, protests, hunger strikes, protests, sit-ins, marches, among others. (Diaz & Gutierrez Ruiz, 2008)

Concerning its current work, AFDD claims to still being an active actor in the fight for justice and human rights. AFDD still demands the prosecution of high-ranking members of the Pinochet regime for their human rights violations and shares information in order to keep the memories of the dictatorship alive. AFDD also participates in the ongoing fights to protect human rights in Chile. (Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos desaparecidos, 2024)

Regarding the modalities of instrumentalization of cueca by AFDD, throughout its history the group has conducted a series of performances, all reflecting a myriad of political and social interpretations and significations, but always with the goal of finding their relatives detained and disappeared and defending human rights. The women family of the detainees protested through the cueca sola in public places with historical meaning, during and after the end of the dictatorship. Here we can imagine numerous sic-sensuous moments and experiences of transcendence generated by these women. The interesting element, when applying the theoretical framework to these examples, is that their goal, when performing cueca sola in public places, was essentially a “human rights goal”. That is to say, as participants in sic-sensuous moments and consequently experiences of self-transcendence through cueca sola, from the start their actions can be located more distinctly inside the human rights discourse. Here, not only the effects produce something that somehow can be connected to human rights: the action itself is framed as human rights advocacy and cueca sola emerges spontaneously as a human rights tool.

One of the group’s most significant performances was its first, on the 8th of March 1978, in Teatro Caupolicán. The theater was filled with several groups of women opponents of

Pinochet's regime, as they met to celebrate International Women's Day and to ask for democracy in the country and at home, which suggested a moment of acknowledgement of the public and private dimensions of violence and of the link between domestic violence and the systematic violence conducted by the regime. In this event, the performance of cueca sola by AFDD was particularly relevant and noteworthy. (Agosín, 2008). The general event was relevant, not only because the date is key when it comes to the human rights discourse, but also because of the context: this was the first massive celebration during the dictatorship. Many have gathered in Teatro Caupolicán, groups ranging from women from many areas of the capital to diverse musical groups. (Concha, 2020) Cueca sola was danced for the first time in this date, and it was one of the most memorable moments of the day, becoming eventually the most representative symbol of AFDD. Even if cueca was only a part of the repertoire to be presented in that day, it created more impact in the public, as it evoked strong emotions, and the public was able to empathize strongly with the performers, to the point that some members of the audience bursted into tears. Probably a reason for this more "efficient" shared empathy is explained not only by the common experience of dictatorship and human rights violations, but also by the fact that cueca was already seen by Chilean citizens as a national dance even before the Decree-Law No.23. The cueca later becomes the identity of the group, as explained by one of the members *"our symbol is the cueca alone, as a national dance and as a testimony of the absence of the detained-disappeared comrade."* The members also explained why they have created the cueca sola, highlighting the essence of the dance as a human rights tool: the cueca sola was created as a testimony to their experience of loss and absence of loved ones. The goal in performing cueca sola was precisely to prevent any similar situations of happening in the future, so that no woman needs to dance the cueca alone again. (Rojas Sotoconil, 2009)

Another important moment was the participation in the "NO" Campaign of 1988, in the context of the plebiscite called by Pinochet for that same year, which was designed to reinforce his permanence in power. Several electoral campaigns were carried out and AFDD took part in the "NO" campaign through the cueca sola. Since the electoral campaign was for the first time accompanied by television slots, AFDD was invited to participate in one of the recording sessions for the "NO", to be projected during the

electoral campaign. This moment is key in the history of AFDD, and it enlightens us on the social and political potential of cueca for mobilization, as this was the first moment in which cueca sola was transmitted in a massive media as television, and in a particularly relevant social and political context. The transmission of cueca sola in a crucial period such as this electoral campaign was key for communicating the message of AFDD, an essentially human rights message: the message, that many of their relatives disappeared during the dictatorship, becomes part of the subconscious of the population who watches the television slot. The cueca sola becomes then a way for the “NO” campaign to be defended and to present to the population evidence on all the detentions and disappearances. The performance of cueca sola in television attached a visual image to a collective suffering (Concha, 2020) Of course, we do not know precisely the impact that AFDD’s television slot had on the Chilean population, we do not know if this was the television slot that touched people the most or if there were others more effective (or if it was a combination of all of them). Nevertheless, we can reflect on its potential. The context is very relevant here: the “NO” Campaign of 1988. The fact that AFDD is invited to participate in the television slots through cueca sola hints to the powerful essence of cueca as a tool for political and social instrumentalization. In this case, the sic-sensuous moment is experienced through a screen, meaning that the exchange and communication between sensed and sensing bodies is unidirectional. Additionally, the element of the screen is included in the experience of self-transcendence, further expanding the nuances of the event. The people watching the television slot are given an opportunity to: first of all, perceive themselves as political subjects, able to communicate in a shared embodied space (and consequently to take part in a political decision), and secondly, to have an experience of self-transcendence, in the sense that by stepping outside of their own egos, in that moment they might have realized a collective trauma, their vulnerability and limitations as pawns in a dictatorial regime, the fact that what happened to these women’s husbands, sons, and brothers could also happen to them, and that voting for Pinochet would signify more instability and precariousness. Consequently, this might have grounded motivation in them, and adherence to values aligned with the human rights discourse.

This hypothesis might indeed be true, since the “NO” campaign eventually won the plebiscite and presidential elections in Chile gave the victory to Patricio Aylwin. There were higher hopes for this government, in the sense that the population, and in particular AFDD, wanted for their relatives detained and disappeared to be found and for the perpetrators of the several human rights violations to be punished. In this context, on the 12th of March of 1990 in the National Stadium, a concert was held, entitled “Chile, Chile again.” This venue has an important significance, as the stadium was used as a concentration and torture camp during the dictatorship. AFDD was present in the concert, and Gala Torres was the one who danced the cueca sola, creating an emotional moment that made the public stand. (Concha, 2020) The scenario reflects the post dictatorship period and the hope for societal and political changes in Chile. There is the possibility that this sic-sensuous moment contributed to the reinforcement of the adherence to democratic values. The element of collective trauma, as in the previous example, can’t be dissociated from the present experience of self-transcendence: once again, through the performance of cueca sola, Chileans recognize the suffering that almost all the population experienced collectively, they recognize their vulnerability as a society and the need for change in the country. The element of space is key in this experience of self-transcendence: the fact that the National Stadium had been used as concentration and torture camp evokes powerful memories and potentiates the action of stepping outside one’s ego towards a collective empathy. At the same time, the participants engage in a sic-sensuous moment that establishes equality between all of them, as independently of their social status, age, gender, they communicate as political subjects through a non-verbal language.

Still in the same year of 1990, in the 12th and the 13th of October, Amnesty International organized an International Concert “Desde Chile...un abrazo a la Esperanza”, to commemorate the end of the dictatorship. The venue of the event was again the National Stadium and AFDD was invited to participate as a collective. The fact that the event counted with the presence and the performance of Sting and other international artists like Peter Gabriel and Sinéad O’Connor helped AFDD with its international visibility. Sting, for example, already had given its adherence to the cause of the detainees and disappeared in Chile and Argentina in the year of 1988, in another Amnesty International

concert in Mendoza, to which he had invited AFDD and the Argentinian group “Madres de la Plaza de Mayo”. (Rojas Sotoconil, 2009) In fact, in 1987 the singer even composed a song for the cause, entitled “They dance alone”, which was performed together with AFDD in the 1990 concert, intending to portray and reflect the sadness of the cueca sola. The moment of the performance was very emotional, and the public strongly empathized with the members of AFDD, to the point that some of the audience cried. (Concha, 2020) This instance of sic sensuous and experience of self-transcendence had a possibly wider impact in the human rights discourse given the scenario and the international visibility of the performance, part of an Amnesty International concert. The fact that the famous musician Sting composed a song on cueca sola doesn’t necessarily translate into more or wider experiences of self-transcendence, but it helped the international community to be more acquainted with the human rights violations in Chile. Dance and music came together to defend human rights and to later commemorate the end of the dictatorship. As previously explained in chapter one, dance can be a powerful experience of self-transcendence. In this case, the elements of fusion with nature, music and space are included in a scenario that potentiates the visibility of cueca sola and evokes once again powerful feelings among the dancers and the spectators, who identify as political subjects in a new democratic period.

Today, AFDD still dances the cueca sola to bring awareness to the human rights violations perpetrated during the dictatorship. In fact, last year, in 2023, AFDD was invited to perform in the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the military coup, on the 11th of September of 2023. (CNN Chile, 2023) This example provides us with the understanding that the work of AFDD, and consequently, cueca sola, still has a social and political impact even after 50 years. The relevance of cueca sola and AFDD’s work in creating sic-sensuous moments and catalyzing experiences of self-transcendence remains contemporary, as demonstrable in this example. The actor, the modalities and the motivations remain the same, but they can be situated in a new page of Chilean history, subject of different social and political changes. Nevertheless, the performance of cueca sola in an institutional event reinforces its potential, widens the range of its message to a significant number of people, and reinforces its importance as a human rights tool evocative of collective memories and cultural trauma. Even after 50 years of

democracy, cueca sola is still a reminder of human rights violations and promotes the adherence to democratic values inside a collective experience of self-transcendence.

2.2.1.3.3 Collective Cueca Sola

Collective Cueca Sola was officially founded in on the 8th of March of 2016, in an historical context of memorialization in which Chile was starting to rethink what and how the dictatorship was being remembered. 'The Collective identifies as a memory action group connected and operating in the social and political Latin American landscape. The emergence and the formation of the collective can be located in a social and political context characterized by significant social mobilizations: the 2011 student movement that occurred as a result of accumulated social forces of discontent around neoliberal policies; and the use of the march as the main tool of protest during Sebastián Piñera's government. The movements that have originated in this context have used a diverse range of demonstrations that can be included in the "action art" category, performing essentially in public places. This has continued throughout the years and can be seen in relation to other types of movements, such as the Mapuche, environmental and feminist movements. The work of the Collective Cueca Sola, as being part of this landscape, has used dance as a main tool to publicly expose human rights demands. Even if the collective was founded in 2016, its formation dates back to 2013. The collective made an intervention on September 19, 2013, in front of the National Stadium. The context of the intervention was the filming of a movie by Paula Godoy, "*Aún tenemos patria*", which desired to illuminate and illustrate the inconsistencies faced by Chilean society regarding the memory of Pinochet's coup d'état and the celebrations of national holidays (in Chile, National Day is celebrated on the 18th of September and Army Day on the 19th of September). The members of the collective answered the open call and used the cueca sola as a tool to demonstrate these contradictions and to also query the site of the memories in dispute. This intervention was crucial and symbolizes the prelude to the trajectory of the collective. The origins of the collective dating back to 2013 are very symbolic, because 2013 was the year of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the coup d'état in Chile and a steppingstone in the approach to memorialization practices, which became open to a more heterogeneous group of social actors focusing

on a more inclusive memory of the dictatorship through manifestations, street interventions and marches, which did not necessarily fit into the classic processes of memorialization. Therefore, the Collective Cueca Sola became, through dance, part of the debate on how to commemorate the end of the dictatorship. (Navarrete, 2022)

The Collective has been conducting a series of public performances starting even before its official foundation in 2016. The membership of the collective is very diversified, including women and sexual dissidents with ages between 15 and 60 years old, including people who are part of the collective since its formations who design, plan and create the interventions, taking into account its aesthetic and theoretical dimensions; and people who are invited by the group, through social networks, open calls and sometimes direct invitations, to participate in the dance interventions. One important element to highlight, before analyzing thoroughly some of their performances, is the fact that they base their actions on open calls. The character of the calls is very relevant to understanding the social and political potential of the Collective's interventions: the public calls are made mainly through social networks, which expands the range of people able to be reached. Additionally, several actors are invited to perform, and people are interpellated to participate because cueca sola affects them in an emotional way, given its symbolism inside the Chilean culture. Many are acquainted with the cueca sola as a resistance practice from the dictatorship period. Another important element of the Collective's performances is the "democracy" regarding the participants, the fact that the calls are open to different types of actors: mothers, women, workers, who have all different bodies. Particularly relevant is also the fact that even though some professional dancers participate in the calls, that is not the norm in the performances. (Navarrete, 2022) Here the public is able to participate in the experience of self-transcendence, if desired, through the use of their own bodies. Even if the experience of self-transcendence can also occur in the quality of spectator, in this scenario the public can easily decide to participate more actively or not in it, easily "jumping" from one role to another. Both dancers and spectators still feel as political subjects communicating through a non-verbal language and establishing their equality in the context of contemporary Chile. Even if these subjects sometimes do not feel heard in the social and political arenas,

through cueca sola they are able to communicate their equality and reflect together not only on collective memories, but also on current human rights matters.

Regarding the motivations that the members of the group that explain their participation, three causes can be presented. Firstly, the members of the collective are interested in working with memories in a nonconventional way, through dance or performance resources. The will to work with memories stems from personal and/or emotion interests, as well as the will to participate in the social and political mobilizations which characterize Chile and Latin America. Secondly, the members of the collective desire to exercise political militancy through art, that is to say, through non-formal means, since none of the members of the group militates in any political party. Finally, the oldest members of the group point out the feeling of being part of a group with shared experiences based on collective trust and the seriousness of the performances, especially since the interventions imply body exposition. The collective expands the signification of the cueca sola as a resource, using it to work with memories previously denied, made invisible or dismissed. Building on the work of AFDD, which used cueca sola, as previously highlighted, to denounce human rights violations and the disappearance of their loved ones; the Collective opens the performance and intervenes in situations dances for people with whom they do not necessarily have blood ties. The members of the collective put their bodies at the disposal of whoever needs to be remembered, using, just like AFDD, but in a slightly different way, the cueca sola as a resource to counter identitarian and national hegemonic discourses. Instead of focusing solely on the disappearances during the dictatorial period, in its performances the collective several other human rights violations conduct by the state and the police in the years after the end of the dictatorship. In this sense, the collective substitutes the white handkerchiefs used by AFDD and opts by red, purple, and green ones, representing the colors of contemporary feminist movements and resistance. Cueca sola was essentially re-interpreted by the collective as a way to deprivatize memories, particularly the memory policies the state promoted in the passage to democracy. Additionally, by questioning the blood ties in the processes of memorialization, the collective opens the process to other human rights violations. (Navarrete, 2022)

It is certainly relevant to highlight their first performance, which, very similarly to AFDD, took place on the International Women's Day, in this case on the 8th of March of 2016. The Collective participated in the march, with the aim of highlighting the need for the de-privatization of memories, but also for showing that there was a connection between gender violence and State terrorism, highlighting and defending the several women victims of femicides and gender violence. The intervention during the march was very "democratic", in the sense that it showed that all kinds of bodies could dance the cueca sola, and eventually opened the road to the work of the collective, which is characterized by performances in both symbolic and counter-hegemonic spaces of memories. (Navarrete, 2022) In the same month, on the 24th, in the context of the remembrance of the 40th anniversary of the coup d'état in Argentina, during a match between Chile and Argentina for the qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, the collective performed outside the National Stadium in Chile, an intervention entitled "Cueca de los dos pañuelos". The performance was characterized by the use of red handkerchiefs in the hands of the performers and white on their heads, in order to establish a link with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. The goal of the performance was to dance in memory of all those detainees disappeared in the most recent Argentine dictatorship and victims of Operation Condor. The performance portrayed feelings of sadness, anguish, and suffering, reflecting a tendency at the time in Chile to use the body to fight for memory (remembering the disappeared) and justice in the context of the commemorations of dictatorship. (Verzero, 2021) Here we have a first example of instrumentalization of cueca sola by the Collective, in a key date for the human rights discourse, but in a different social, political, and historical context compared to the one of dictatorship. This points to effectiveness of cueca sola as a human rights tool and its transition and the different nuances of its instrumentalization on the hands of a different actor.

The Collective participated with several interventions in the Chilean Social Outburst of 2019, a period of high social and political unrest in the country. The Chilean Social Outburst emerged as a consequence of the increase in the public transport system fares of Santiago, a measure announced on October 6. High school students reacted abruptly, starting the protests by violating the entrance to the subway. In reality, the Social

Outburst had other profound causes, mainly the exclusion policies, inequality, violations of human rights, more specifically the right to health and education, that the country had been facing in the years of democracy. The slogan *"Its not 30 pesos, it's 30 years!"* is self-explanatory, pointing to a delusion with the road that the country was taking. As a result, massive demonstrations followed even after the State of Emergency declared by the neoliberal government of Sebastián Piñera on Saturday 19th (Verzero, 2021) Collective Cueca Sola was part of these demonstrations. This moment was one of the periods of highest revolt in Chile in the last decades and the neoliberal government of Piñera also conducted one of the most repressive reactions during the democratic period. The members of the collective, even if there was a generational heterogeneity in the group, felt that police violence revived old traumas, especially in the case of the members who had experienced the dictatorship. One of the members sustained that the collective's action and role was strongly determined by the human rights violations during the Social Outburst. (Navarrete, 2022) Additionally, on the 25th of October of 2019, the Collective performed cueca sola in the esplanade of the Gabriela Mistral Cultural Center (GAM), honoring the victims of repression of the former days. Here we see another type of instrumentalization of cueca sola: not only performed to remember the detainees disappeared, as in the case of AFDD, but to protest against human rights violations in the contemporary context of the country. The performers followed a semicircle in front of the wall of the GAM, and the performance was intensely characterized by fear, as there was a palpable risk in performing in a public place in the context of a State of Emergency and repression. In that day, there was a march going on, and the centrality of the GAM as a geographical position invited people passing by to observe the performance, even crying and singing along with the members of the collective. According to one of the members of the group, another motive for the fear in the performance was one of returning to a situation of dictatorship. The collective wanted to communicate the emotion of fear, which is not by itself necessarily paralyzing, and one of the members explained that, as it was a very collective feeling at the time, it would be very easy to connect. (Verzero, 2021) Another example of intervention of the Collective in the context of the Social Outburst was on the 10th of November 2019, outside the Baquedano subway station. Once more, the group remembered the victims that inspired the song and the dance of cueca sola. (Navarrete, 2022) In this example,

the performers and the public emerge as political subjects in an interaction based on equality between sensed and sensing bodies. The dancers protested against Piñera government's repression through cueca sola, progressively inviting people passing by to observe or even to join. Moreover, and most importantly, they do not simply use cueca sola as another tool to protest against human rights violations: in that moment, they affirm themselves as political subjects through it, establishing their equality with other speaking beings. Since we are talking about a collective composed by women and sexual dissidents, marginalized categories in society, this is more than an important detail: they have, through cueca sola performances, found a way to express their own political opinions in which concerns the processes of memorialization, gender violence, social justice, among others. In this context, experiences of self-transcendence can be highly relevant for the human rights discourse since we are talking about a period of intense political and social tension, and potentially change, a period where some parts of the population felt they had arrived at their limits. Even if the experience is characterized by a context different to the ones during the dictatorship, the conditions and the elements which characterize an experience of self-transcendence through dance (nature, music, space) are still present, and even enhanced by the emotional character of the performances.

The same elements can be found in one of the main spaces for the interventions of the Collective: the commemorations of the 11th of September regarding the military coup. We are once again confronted with important sic-sensuous moments catalysts of experiences of self-transcendence. Since we are talking about a date that in itself brings memories into dispute, reflecting different visions of the dictatorship by the population, the interventions of the Collective are able to shed some light on the views of a section of the population. The choice of venue by the Collective for these commemorations has generally been the downtown of Santiago, given its centrality and therefore possibility to reach a higher number of people; and where other political groups, collectives and street performers have shared their commemorative pieces. On the 4th of September, the group staged an intervention in front of the monument of Salvador Allende to commemorate the 46th anniversary of the Popular Unity, the party of Allende. There is a tension in the performance between the idea of celebrating a man and expanding and

ramifying what was the Popular Unity, both part of the memories of the Chilean left. The intervention links the commemoration of the anniversary with demands for justice for all the population, and at the same time questioning the undivided celebration of a man, bringing to the discussion the gender question. (Navarrete, 2022) Another important performance in the context of the commemorations of the 11th of September was the one of 2018, for the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the coup d'état. Performed in front of La Moneda, in the Plaza de la Constitución, the performance was entitled "45 years, 45 bodies", combining two human rights themes: the previous dictatorship, but also the contemporary stories of gender violence, disappearances, murders. Here, the element of space assumes particular relevance in the experience of self-transcendence, in the sense that we are talking about a very symbolic location, for a variety of reasons. La Moneda represents, at the same time, the Chilean government, and the police force in charge of the State; it is also a location associated with authoritarianism during the 1973 coup d'état that inaugurated a long period of dictatorship; and La Moneda is located in Plaza de la Constitución, where it is present the memorial of Salvador Allende, a place used for many human rights interventions and commemorations. The performance is strong precisely because of all these nuances: cueca sola is used here to contest hegemonic narratives and the very central location makes it easier for the public to observe and reflect. Essentially, the performance invites and opens the discourse to new ways of commemoration the date, combining them with instances and memories of human rights violations which are not necessarily related to the dictatorial context, highlighting the continuity of violence in the democratic period. (Navarrete, 2022)

Still in the context of the commemorations of the 11th of September, the Collective didn't pause its interventions during Covid-19 confinement. The group adapted its activities into the virtual space, proposing therefore a new way to rethink activism and artivism. For the occasion of the commemorations of the 11th of September, the collective created an audiovisual map from all Chile, with performers dancing cueca sola in several Chilean cities, but also in other foreign cities, for example San Luis in Argentina and Paris and Strasbourg in France. The result was therefore a cartography of Chile and the Chilean diaspora, celebrating the 11th of September, even if virtually, dancing live online

the cueca sola. (Verzero, 2021) The name of the intervention was “In this new territory and geography”, therefore suggesting, as underline above, a desire to locate a geography of the participants’ resistances and remembrances, and promoting a reflection on how the territory is home to several and heterogeneous movements of resistance to human rights violations. And at the same time, the fact that the resistance to human rights violations doesn’t concern only the more common state or police control, but also those related to the gender violence, living in a neoliberal system, etc. With this action, then, the collective promoted a de-centralization process of memorization, including different actors and inside and across borders. The use of social media here was beneficial, allowing for the performance to surpass ephemerality and also reach different audiences. (Navarrete, 2022) In this example, the collective ensured that people still felt as political subjects through cueca sola even during covid times, also reaching out to people outside Chile. Similarly to the example of cueca sola’s television slot during the “NO” Campaign of 1988, this experience of self-transcendence also includes another visual element, in this case, a contemporary one: the internet, the screen. This points to the potential of dance, as a cultural form, to adapt to the different political, social, and historical changes and remaining relevant as a tool for human rights advocacy. As said above, cueca sola is used not only to fight police control, but it is also used to protest against gender violence and the defaults of the neoliberal system in Chile, pointing to its adaptability inside the human rights discourse.

After the following analysis, one might reflect once more on the negative and positive instrumentalization of cueca, and reflect on how the actors, motivations, and modalities of its instrumentalization have a consequence on its social and political potential. In negative terms, the establishment of cueca as the national dance of Chile and its inclusion in military parades might have made it easier to alienate and manipulate people through cultural symbols and traditions. People might have had an experience of self-transcendence through an aesthetic and political experience controlled by the Pinochet regime. The creation of a collective experience of indoctrination in which arts, in this case dance, a national dance, served the regime, might have catalyzed an experience in which people stepped outside of their ego and a change occurred in their personalities. How is it possible for dictatorships and repressive regimes to manipulate people through

arts? This question has been posed before. In the case of Chile, as highlighted in the present subchapter, Pinochet was only interested that arts expressed the regime. On the contrary, in positive terms, intervention cuecas might have instigated people to reflect on the repression of the dictatorship and on human rights violations, producing a change in their social and political identity. In the case of cueca sola, the experience of self-transcendence is more evident, as the element of corporeal empathy is very present in the performance. The audience feels the pain of the mother, daughter, sister, or girlfriend who protests, a pain that, even if it has different nuances, is collective. If we follow this line of thought, both experiences of negative and positive instrumentalization of cueca, if considered as experiences of self-transcendence, are able to create moments in which values take root in the human personality. This would mean, in the first case, reinforcing the identification with an authoritarian regime, or, in the second case, reinforcing the identification with the human rights discourse (even if Chileans do not necessarily name it like that).

Additionally, the theory of Dana Mills on dance and politics, and most particularly, sic-sensuous moments, might be able to help us to understand and visualize how dance can be part of the human rights cause. When analyzing the three main actors, whether we are talking about negative or positive instrumentalization of cueca sola, the dancers and the spectators emerge as political subjects, and in both cases a relationship of equality is established between them. But all the scenarios explored are different: in the case of Pinochet's regime, the promotion of cueca sola as Chilean's national identity emphasizes structures of inequality promoted by the regime (even if the sic-sensuous moments create equality between Chileans who dance it), while in the cases of AFDD and Collective Cueca Sola the performances contribute to an interaction based on equality that is also aligned in terms of values with the human rights discourse. Nevertheless, the participants are all political subjects through dance.

2.3 German modern dance and Nazism: the illusion of freedom

For presenting a more heterogenous analysis on the social and political potential of dance in the human rights discourse, we now move to a different geographical location,

in order to embrace and expand the different nuances of this potential. It is important to highlight that my analysis of German modern dance is part of period much shorter when compared to the Chilean cueca: I only analyze the period between the last years of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. This choice stems from the decision to analyze German modern dance and its instrumentalization specifically during Nazism, as, given the relevance of the period in question to the human rights discourse, I believe this choice might offer a more interesting picture on dance's social and political potential.-

Before even exploring and conceptualizing what is German modern dance, one needs to ponder on a more general question. How did Nazis view art? Was there a Nazi art?

2.3.1 The concept of Nazi art

We start this exploration by underlining three important things: there is no consensus on the existence of Nazi art, its meaning, and on what Nazi ideology signifies.

This is a key element to keep in mind when navigating this second case study, as we will analyze together a dance form that although modern, was not labeled as “degenerate” by the Nazi administration, as it happened with many types of modern arts. Keeping this information in mind, what is important to underline is that arts, as highlighted in the beginning of this chapter, have a power in molding social reality, and sometimes are more effective in doing so than “pure” political propaganda. For some authors like Marion Kant, art is equal to ideology, the realization of ideological notions through aesthetic means, transforming them into sound, movement, poetry. According to her, arts play a key role in aesthetic structurization and the accessibility of *völkisch* ideologies to a wider public, allowing for their acceptance and comprehension. In the Nazi example, art was a key propaganda instrument in the expression of the German people, something understood by the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, who thoroughly explored this potential, placing art at the center of its cultural indoctrination strategies. Arts, represented by dance, music, literature, and others, emerge as a prerequisite for Nazism to formulate its ideology with specific aesthetic directions. (Kant, 2016)

Joseph Goebbels view on art, as one of the most relevant figures of the regime, might further enlighten our discourse. In 1933, he underlined that the only moment when an artist is allowed to identify himself as “unpolitical” is when there is still political confusion in a country. On the other hand, from the moment that this confusion dissipates, and a new world is born, a world where old values are being substituted by new ones, it is required from the artist that he adapts his art to the new political system. Goebbels also underlined that if the artist does not participate correctly in this new world of values and ignores the politics in arts, he should not be surprised if he misses opportunities or feels overlooked. (Kew, 1999)

When approaching the arts and Nazism, the “Degenerate art” Exhibition is an event impossible to leave out. Organized by the regime in an improvised gallery in Munich in the summer of 1937 and prolonged until the end of November of that year, it represented a key moment for the clarification of what did not constitute real German art. The “Degenerate Art” exhibition was presented in the same period of the “Great German Art” Exhibition in the House of German Art, located nearby. Organized in less than three weeks and registering more than 2 million visitors, more than the double of the “Great German Art” exposition, the exhibition, forbidden to minors, presented around 600 artworks labeled as “degenerate” and not representative of the German people. The artworks were placed deliberately in unappealing ways, and many were not appropriately framed or identified. Additionally, the walls were covered with quotes from Hitler and Goebbels, as well as with depreciative slogans. One can understand that there was a significant effort to depreciate these artworks, ensuring that the public clearly understood Nazi’s ideological views on art. After its period of display in Munich, the exhibition visited other German cities. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2020) This example is representative not only of how a dictatorship regime can, to a certain extent, control people’s perceptions of the arts, but also how arts do have a potential for instrumentalization, otherwise they wouldn’t be so threatening and would not require such regulation and manipulation. I highlight again that my use of the word “instrumentalization” is not necessarily positive or negative, it depends certainly on the context, the actors, the modalities, and the motivations of such an endeavor. In this case, one might view the “Degenerate Art” exhibition as a negative instrumentalization of art, but this might have also created the opposite effect: enticing peoples’ interest in this kind

of art, the forbidden art, which expressed sentiments and feelings which the Nazi regime deemed as unfitting the new German society. Eventually, the event reinforced the power of communication of these “degenerate” artworks.

In the Nazi case study I present, some artists, like Rudolf Laban and Mary Wigman, have collaborated with the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment and the regime, assuming a relevant role in the management and organization of cultural events. (Kant, 2016) The contribution of these visionary choreographers to the Nazi cultural scene is highly relevant. In my thesis, I do not intend to judge individual choices or political preferences/inclinations, Accordingly, with the previous comment I am not questioning Laban or Wigman’s ideologies, also since research can only unveil until a certain extent an artist’s career and personal experiences. However, acknowledging their great contribution to the Nazi cultural scene in the first years of the Third Reich opens up an important discourse: the discourse that, even if, as an artist, one is not fully agreeing with the ideals of a regime, one’s art can contribute immensely to an undemocratic cause, if there are elements in common between the artwork, the artist’s philosophy, and the repressive government. Oftentimes, these elements share some lines of ambiguity in which is difficult to place an artist’s intentions. The key point is that regardless of the intentions, arts, and in this case dance, possibly have a social and political potential in a given society and in a political system, sustaining it or criticizing it. Consequently, arts, and particularly dance, emerge as a theme inside the human rights discourse.

In this specific political, social, and cultural context, another key question emerges: what role did German Expressionist dance, or *Ausdrucksanz*, play in the Nazi regime? Firstly, we need clarification on the essence of this dance.

Modern dance is one of the 131 elements included in German Commission for UNESCO’s Nationwide Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage. With its origins in German-speaking countries in the start of the 20th century and particularly encouraged by the “*Lebensreform*” movement and artistic avant-gardes of the time, the ensemble of modern dance methods, formation customs and free dance movements that are brought

together in the category of “modern dance” have produced a worthwhile impact in the history of dance and remain a relevant contemporary dance practice. (German Commission for UNESCO, n.d.) Associated with freedom and expression, modern dance desired to represent a rupture from classical ballet. For a good understanding of German modern dance and its social and political potential, it is key to identify the motivations behind the dance: the goal is to perform expressively, the dance piece being a mirror to emotions and life experiences. Even today, it is a dance style and cultural activity associated with self-empowerment, a feeling of community and with a potential for developing social cohesion, fostering inclusion and integration. (UNESCO, n.d.-d) Some of the pioneers of modern dance include Rudolf von Laban, Mary Wigman, Rosalia Chladek, Gret Palucca, Kurt Jooss and Maja Lex, who during the Weimar Republic have developed diverse aesthetic styles part of the large spectrum of modern dance, searching for new and innovative ways of bodily expression. (German Commission for UNESCO, n.d.)

2.3.2 Analysis of German modern dance’s social and political potential in the Nazism period

German modern dance assumed relevance during the Nazi period, and although modern, it was not labeled as “degenerate” as many other kinds of arts. Some authors, like Marion Kant and Laura Guilbert, have tried to explore the intriguing relationship between the repressive regime and a dance style associated with freedom and expression. Both have contributed greatly to the discussion through two books: Kant’s *“Hitler’s Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich”* and Guilbert’s *“Danser avec le IIIe Reich: Les danseurs modernes et le nazisme”*.

Precisely, when all the other modern movements were labeled officially as “degenerate” by the Nazi administration in the beginning of the Third Reich, when several artists were forced to flee the country, dance, even if distressed, was able to endure and flourish. German modern dance, in particular, was not labelled as “degenerate”, and as a type of modern art, was welcomed and turned into official state art and an instrument and ideological weapon for the Nazi “blood-and-soil” project (even if not for the entire

period of the Third Reich). Ausdruckstanz was perceived by the regime as representing the dancing German individual. German modern dance as the medium, the tool, through which the German soul could be pulled out of the instructed body, a dance style instrumentalized in the holiday ceremonies and festivals, representing a new lifestyle in a renewed Germany. (Karina & Kant, 2004) By not labelling German modern dance as “degenerate”, further associating it with the German individual and promoting it in holiday ceremonies and festivals, the conditions for sic-sensuous moments, as theorized by Mills, were created. In these events, loaded with ideological symbolism, the dancers and the spectators could enter into a shared embodied space, promoted by these collective experiences and moments of popular socialization, establishing a line of communication between the participants and a sense of equality based on non-verbal communication. However, this does not necessarily mean a positive consequence for the human rights discourse: in the example mentioned above, Third Reich’s holiday ceremonies and festivals can then be perceived as catalysts of experiences of self-transcendence, experiences which were framed by a “blood-and-soil” project.

In these moments, participants (individuals and spectators) could simultaneously interact in a shared embodied space and have an outside-of-one’s ego experience that grounded in them Nazi values. In these events, dance represented simultaneously the framing and the experience of self-transcendence in itself. As outlined above, German modern dance was a medium through which one could pull the German soul out of the body. Even if figuratively speaking, this image has a very strong symbolism when framed through Hans Joas’ theory on self-transcendence, and further complemented with Dana Mills’ sic-sensuous: dance as the cause, the catalyst and the medium through which Nazi values could be grounded in the individuals.

From research it emerges that there were several actors who took part in the instrumentalization of German modern dance, which translated into different modalities and reflected specific motivations. Before proceeding with the discussion, it is vital to highlight that the regime was not a static entity, an element which adds complexity to the role of arts, particularly dance, in the context of Nazism cultural and political indoctrination.

My analysis of German modern dance's social and political potential in the human rights discourse by focuses on the most relevant actors. Even though there were many choreographers, dancers, and gymnasts who have participated in Third Reich's cultural scene, the two most relevant German modern dance protagonists were the choreographers Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman. A key actor was also the regime itself, represented by the Reich Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment and the Reich Ministry of Science, Education, and Culture, in which specific actors emerged, such as Otto Von Keudel and Joseph Goebbels.

In this analysis, there are two main points to highlight. Firstly, when considering the work of Laban and Wigman, and consequently the social and political of German modern dance in the human rights discourse, it is essential to reiterate again that the Nazi regime was never static, reflecting a fluctuant cultural policy and, consequently, a fluctuant dance policy and dance organizational structure. That is to say, even if Laban and Wigman's work was sponsored and privileged during the first years of the Third Reich, eventually they were also seen as "degenerate", as individual expression reduced with the progressively stricter co-ordination and homogenization of German society. (Kew, 2017). The fact that the Nazi regime, similarly to several other regimes, was not a static entity entails a fluctuation of the social and political potential of German modern dance throughout the Third Reich, as a result of the different motivations and modalities employed by the actors in question. Subsequently, one can also sustain that artistic expression and freedom are never safe in autocratic regimes, even if some artists are more skilled than others in navigating the political intricacies and changes, a task which might be easier if the artist's philosophy in itself finds elements of compatibility with the regime, as it was the case of Laban and Wigman. For the purposes of analyzing dance's potential in the human rights discourse, it is not possible to ignore this fact: using a specific type of dance in the first years of the Third Reich to promote the regime and some years later labelling it as "degenerate" is an example that dance does indeed have a social and political potential in the human rights discourse, otherwise it would not be necessary to forbid it. Controlling every aspect of society and culture (dance included)

ensures that people follow the rules. And the arts seem to be very powerful instruments in these kinds of scenarios.

At the same time, as Marion Kant's research underlines, there is a common misconception that these innovative and pioneer choreographers were persecuted by the Nazis, that not only themselves as individuals but also their art suffered from the repression. The author underlines that this was a false narrative developed by these artists in the aftermath of war, and that this account hid the compliance of German dance geniuses with the exclusion of non-Aryans, the acceptance and embracement of political supervision of their own art, and their identification with Nazi Weltanschauung (worldview). Kant goes even further, by saying that "*German dance chose the swastika before the state authorities had thought to raise it over their heads.*" (Karina & Kant, 2004)

2.3.2.1 The Nazi regime

The Nazi regime played a key role in the instrumentalization of German modern dance and, in the general, on the use of dance for cultural and political indoctrination. Some figures assumed particular prominence, which shows that even regarding a macro actor like the Nazi regime, the micro actors were able to greatly influence the course of dance during the Third Reich, whether their motivations stemmed from personal preferences or from ideological views, or both. Some of the figures who emerged as more prominent in this discourse were Otto von Keudell and Joseph Goebbels.

Otto von Keudell, in particular, was a Ministerial Councilor of the Third Reich, invited by Goebbels to join the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment and allocated to all the artistic, theater and dance matters. As a regime employee, he gave prominence, protagonism, relevance, and superiority to German modern dance, influenced by Laban's dance philosophy, as well as Wigman's. Given his power inside the Ministry, he was able to prioritize this specific type of dance, both in terms of funding, opportunities for modern dancers and eventually turning it into, at least for some years, into the favorite expression of dance within the state. The policies of Keudell reflected

Rudolf von Laban's ideas, who became the theorizer of dance strategy in the Third Reich until his failed choreographic work in the Olympic Games of 1936. In terms of modalities of German modern dance's instrumentalization, von Keudell adopted a series of measures: a July 1934 memorandum explaining the history and symbolism of Ausdruckstanz, labelling it as "German dance", as opposed to ballet, which was a foreign art and could not be so easily instrumentalized, given its high emphasis on technique as compared to spirit. Additionally, he approved other measures to be carried out by the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, such as directions for theatres to employ more German modern dancers and include them more in German ballet companies; a proposal to define a national framework for assessing and verifying the qualifications of German dancers; and to create a place, through the founding of a German Dance Theater in Berlin, where the exponents of German modern dance could create their works and demonstrate the potential of this dance genre, a "German" one. Keudell's proposal for the theater was approved administratively in August 1934, and the date symbolizes the officialization of the relationship between Laban, Wigman, and the Nazi regime. (Karina & Kant, 2004) The Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, through the figure of Otto Von Keudell, potentiated several sic-sensuous moments and possible experiences of self-transcendence through German modern dance among the German population. For example, the creation of German Dance Theater in Berlin possibly potentiated many sic sensuous moments between dancers and spectators, in a context where German Ausdruckstanz was valued by the regime. As we will see bellow, Laban and Wigman seemed to identify with some Nazi values. The fact that their dances expressed values or situations compatible with the regime means that, even if unintentionally, they communicated something to the German population, and that something might have had a negative potential for the human rights discourse. With this I am not saying that arts have always a straightforward and very clear effect on human rights. Sometimes that might be the case, and sometimes it might not. But the potential of a type of art, in this case dance, in the human rights discourse cannot be analyzed or acknowledged when only when boundaries between arts and society are perfectly clear. That will not always be the case. For example, the choreographer and dance pioneer Rudolf von Laban advocated for the development of a new dance movement of the white race. What kind of experience of self-transcendence might have had his dancers and the

spectators? Even if the participants appreciated the choreographic work only for its aesthetics and pure creative vision (which is something we will never be able to quantify), how can we be sure that there wasn't a shift or reinforcement, grounding, in values? And in this specific case, of values contrary to the human rights discourse? From the elements analyzed above, at least we can acknowledge that there was a clear intention by the regime in promoting German Ausdrucktanz and defending its "Germanity". Certainly, the personal interests of the actors involved had an influence in this decision, but this does not reduce per se the social and political potential of dance, in this case German modern dance; and secondly, it shows that this potential emerges if certain conditions are verified, mainly intentional actors, the right context and strategic modalities. What is essential is what is being communicated through dance: that is to say, one does not need to dance in Nazi military uniforms to share a message in favor of the regime. As it will be seen in the following paragraphs, there are many more subtle elements which have created a bridge between German modern dance and Nazism.

Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment himself, also played a role in dance's instrumentalization, first of all, because he allowed von Keudell to proceed with his dance policies, and second of all, because he represented a whole institution.

As a regime, the Third Reich glorified in its first years Ausdrucktanz, which was eventually named "German dance". Through the directive No.26 of the 29th of July of 1934, it was established that all dancers needed a state certification to be able to exercise their profession. Additionally, the eligibility for this state certification belonged only to those of Aryan origin who had reached the age of 18. The dancers had to present several documents, among them the proof of having studied for at least one year in a dance school endorsed by the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment and a certificate of good conduct issued by the police. In terms of dance propaganda, the Ministry funded large-scale dance festivals in Berlin between 1934-1936; it created a Central Institute for Dance in Berlin, which established the dance curriculum German dancers had to follow (this included folk dance, ballet, and Ausdrucktanz, now called "German dance") ; and included Ausdrucktanz, in the form of movement choir, in the Olympic Youth, the opening night performance of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. This

dance performance was very relevant, in the sense that through movement choir as mass propaganda, the boys and the girls exalted the figure of the Führer, present in the audience; and it also represented a moment of cooperation between the regime and some important German modern dance choreographers such as Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, and Harald Kreutzberg, as well as other modern dancers. (Manning & Benson, 1986)

2.3.2.2 Rudolf von Laban, the father of German Ausdrucktanz

To talk about German Ausdrucktanz and not to mention Rudolf von Laban is impossible. Most specifically, to talk about dance's instrumentalization in the context of the Nazi regime without mentioning Laban's role in Nazi cultural propaganda would mean a significantly reduced analysis of the present case study, and, consequently, a more superficial study of dance's social and political potential in the human rights discourse.

Often viewed as the most important individual in German modern dance, the creator not only of a visionary artistic and dance system, but also theorizer of a new worldview, Laban had no German background, as he was born in a provincial capital in the Habsburg Monarchy. His family had Imperial and Royal Catholic, military roots. These elements are interesting for our analysis, in the sense that we are talking about the founder of German modern dance, an individual who willingly chose Germany and German culture as the container to his visionary ideas. He specifically chose Germany. His identity is therefore sort of artificially fabricated, in the sense that, although having no German background, when he chose to be a German (a nationality granted to him only in 1935), he embraced a particular type of German, a specific sector of German culture. Why? There are some possibilities to why he might have identified more deeply with this particular type of German culture, stemming not only but also from his military training, which might be related to his emphasis on leadership, submission, and discipline. In his dance classes, he advocated for an atmosphere of military discipline combined with the occult and antirationality, referring to his dancers as "führende Tänzer," meaning leading dancers. The dancers would renounce to individuality and rationality and assign responsibility to a higher authority, in this case Laban, who coordinated and explored this quasi-military classroom structure. Laban's views on dance progressively developed

with the years into a lesser democratic approach in decision making inside his dance groups, a reflection of the antirationality and anti-enlightenment of his work. (Karina & Kant, 2004) Here we can clearly see the elements which allow for the creation of a bridge between Laban and Nazism. We can imagine and make the hypothesis that in his classroom, moments of sic-sensuous between his dancers established an embodied space, and consequently a relationship of equality between sensed bodies, a relationship which later would transpose and expand to include the spectators in his dance shows, the sensing bodies. Experiences of self-transcendence might have happened both in the classroom and in the venues of the performances. If those experiences have indeed happened, the dancer's experiences of being away from themselves and their own egos, of fixation on leadership, submission and discipline might have grounded in them some of these values, which might have created at the same time: some sympathy or at least agreement with the Nazi regime; and a familiarity and acceptance with indoctrination and the "leader" mentality, as well as with antirationality and anti-enlightenment. Transposed to Laban's dance performances, the embodied space between sensed and sensing bodies establishes another relationship of equality between non-verbal and verbal communicators, but this does not mean that this occurrence has a positive consequence for the human rights discourse. If indeed the spectators have also had an experience of self-transcendence through Laban's dance performances during the Third Reich, and taking into consideration the values promoted by Laban, one might make the hypothesis that the regime in itself, through this particular kind of dance, was reinforced.

Laban was a very prominent artistic figure during the Weimar Republic, and he managed to maintain this status in the first years of the Third Reich. Indeed, in 1934 Laban became the head of the Deutsche Tanzbühne. The continuity of his work between the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich might be explained by his philosophical ideas, which translated into his dance. One might identify Laban's identification with volkisch thought as one of the answers: volkisch thought, with its origins in Romanticism, consists in the idea that the individual is able to enter a higher reality, a reality free of materialism and frivolity, through a process of spiritual fusion. This spiritual fusion feeds individual creativity and consequently stimulates the wider Volk ("people" or nation) culture. This union between the individual and a higher reality is accomplished through a connection between time (the steadiness of Volk tradition) and space (the individual

merges with the nature and the cosmos), therefore metamorphizing the individual into a creative being. Laban was very inspired by *The Birth of Tragedy* by Friedrich Nietzsche, eventually making the idea of chorus dance (a way to reach collective ecstasy) central in his work, theory, and practice. At the basis of his dance practice were the elements of dance, sound, and words, which were part of a holistic education, molding and forming the individual, and consequently rebirthing the festive culture. Laban further explored this idea, advocating that the essence of *Festkultur* could only be recovered through dance. (Kew, 1999) There is a certain analogy between the characteristics of volkish thought and self-transcendence, which might enlighten us even more on the Laban's dance philosophy, and how indeed he advocate for these kinds of experiences in his classrooms and eventually during performances. What we read above as his dance philosophy finds representation in experiences of self-transcendence as theorized by Joas, although not evidently named as such. Not only there was the idea of entering into a higher reality, away from oneself, a sort of spiritual fusion, but this would also produce a change in the individual, an individual who would be formed and molded according to certain values. This experience of self-transcendence would be lived essentially through chorus dance, a type of dance Laban appreciated and that according to him would allow individuals to reach collective ecstasy. We see once again that Laban's dance philosophy represents and shows how dance can indeed have a social and political potential, if instrumentalized for specific social and political purposes. The fact that some artists, similarly to Laban, view dance as a way to produce individual changes that have effects on society already hints to this potential. One needs only to frame the actors' intentions in a given context.

It revealed useful to the Nazi administration to choose as the face of Nazi dance a man who viewed dance not only as an art, but also as a way of living, combining elements such as art, practice, theory, and spirituality. During his life, he conducted dance experiments in the volkisch community in Gleschendorf in the 1920s, and he has also published an autobiography which reassumes in its title his dance philosophy "*Ein Leben für den Tanz*" (*A Life for Dance*). Laban's complete devotion and surrender for dance were elements appreciated by the Nazi administration, as, similarly to the Nazi ideology, Laban advocated for a cult-like classroom and leadership. Laban advocated for a *Weltanschauung* in dance form, restoring oneself through the body in the image of

dance. On top of this, he and his pupil Wigman, who was funded by the regime until 1937, identified with the idea of anti-enlightenment, a current in modern art history, another element probably appreciated by the Nazis. (Karina & Kant, 2004) It is key that dance for Laban was a way to make the world a better place, of achieving a cultural and social transformation which would have consequences for the individual and the community. Here, we see dance being viewed as a quasi-religious experience, an almost extreme devotion and sacrifice which opened the door a spiritual revolution. It therefore revealed very useful for the Nazis to find a man with such philosophy, and the instrumentalization of German modern dance during the Third Reich became much easier. The common points between Laban's dance philosophy and the Nazi administration's ideological inclinations made this "relationship" possible, even if only for the first years of the regime. The promotion of a cult-like classroom and leadership meant that in the sic-sensuous moments shared between dancers-dancers and dancers-spectators, two things might have happened: firstly, the embodied space that is created, as theorized by Mills, for sure established a relationship of equality between the participants, in the sense that they have communicated through the language of dance. At the same time, these sic-sensuous moments were created and promoted in a specific context, one characterized by Laban's dance philosophy. As moments potentiators of experiences of self-transcendence, the conditions were created to establish a collective grounding in cult-like leadership values. Although it is most likely that this type of education is followed not only in some dance classes, but also in another artistic and non-artistic classrooms and settings, the fact that these experiences happened through dance in this specific period of German history is highly relevant to reveal dance's social and political potential in the human rights discourse. The values acquired through German modern dance found, at least to some extent, a representative outside the classroom in the Nazi regime. This leads to another observation: that dance, through the action of the dancers and choreographers, can produce an impact in the human rights discourse even if there is no complete adherence by the actors to a dictatorial regime. The most important detail is if they portray or not these commonalities in their dance works, rehearsals, and performances. That is to say, even if there is no complete adherence to an undemocratic reality, it is enough that the experiences and the moments generated through dance find resonance in the "outside" world, or better explained, that

dance reflects a certain kind of society. If that happens, an experience of self-transcendence through dance might produce a commitment to certain values in the human personality. In the Laban example, research allows us to hypothesize that this commitment to values might have been negative for the human rights discourse.

Speaking in more detail about Laban's Festkultur, which during Nazism became "community dance", this idea was developed during his youth and in his summer school in Ascona, where he advocated for festival commemorations of the spiritual life. For Laban, Festkultur was a way to reawaken the lost emblematic character of festivals, and dance was the way to do it. He was particularly interested in movement choirs, which represented an opportunity for people to have a ritual and cultic-like experience in their everyday life, merging collectively in a mystical activity. Again, we see the similarities between Laban's dance philosophy and the experience of self-transcendence, as he sustained and desired that through dance and movement choirs, one would achieve a state of ecstasy and enter into a reality free from superficiality, reaching an elevated state, and stepping outside his individuality. Although, according to Laban, this experience was free from ideology, the way he framed it ensured the continuity of his dance practices during the first years of the Nazi regime: choric dance was ideology free, but at the same time it should be part of a "*new folk-dance movement of the white race*", which evidently found resonance with Nazism. Additionally, Laban drew a line between his movement choir and all the other social dances characterized by foreign racial influences. Consequently, Laban's movement choir, even if not intentionally, found a place in Nazi ideology, as it was associated with volkisch movement and it displayed racist tendencies. A key detail is important for our analysis here: the fact that during the Third Reich, movement choirs became officially "community dance" (Gemeinschaftstanz), promoted as way for people of the cities to get in touch with nature and experience a merge with a reality outside of their ordinary daily experiences. Community dance was validated and promoted by the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment. (Kew, 1999) The human rights contradictions in Laban's dance philosophy reinforce the idea that the arts, and in this case dance, sometimes are found in ambiguous ideological lines, open to interpretation. In sic-sensuous moments and experiences of self-transcendence in which the framework of values isn't apparently evident, what subjects undergo, individually or collectively, sometimes might not be

completely clear even to themselves. To better interpret the impact and the consequences of these “danced” moments and experiences, one has to look deeper into how they are situated in a given social and political context. Certainly, one individual cannot be accused of being a Nazi simply because his dance practices and philosophies find a momentary place in Nazi ideology, as life, and arts as a reflection of life, are more nuanced than that. But it seems, from the analysis made above, that dance indeed has a social and political potential not to be ignored in the human rights discourse.

2.3.2.3 Mary Wigman, the mother of German Expressionism

Mary Wigman, Laban’s pupil, emerges as another the key protagonists of the German modern dance scene. Some of Wigman’s most famous works include “Hexentanz” and “Totentmal”, two pieces which can be analyzed through a social and political lens.

During the period in which Nazism approved modern dance and did not label it as “degenerate” as the other modern arts, Wigman was able to present and perform several of her works, among them the program of Tanzgesänge (Dance Songs) staged under Kraft durch Freude (Strength through Joy), a state-sponsored organization; and the performance in the famous Olympic Youth of 1936, the opening night show for the Berlin Olympic Games. (Kew, 2017) In 1937 the government stopped subsidizing Wigman’s work, nevertheless she proceeded with her solo tours until 1942. (Manning, 1989)

As a choreographer and dance educator, Wigman is associated with the expression of mysticism through her works, and she is, even nowadays, viewed as a dance pioneer. Her goal was to create a new dance form communicating both her deepest feelings and how she personally understood the spirit of her epoch. The concept of mysticism is identifiable in the process, intention, and substance of her pieces, and through it one can better and almost fully understand the essence of Wigman’s early work. Through her creations, which ranged from themes such as the dark dimension of the human soul, the blending between man and nature, and the use of spiritual and religious ideas, Wigman sought to create a dance language reflecting a universal connection to humankind, a new humankind, pushing the dancers beyond their egos, and finding an alignment with

something superior, a thread between the physical and the spiritual. This approach to dance encapsulates the mysticism of her work, which is present both in the act of choreographing and in the performance. The way Wigman viewed the symbolism of performance helps us to draw a line between dance and self-transcendence, as the moment of performance was for her one of complete merge with the dance and its concept, resembling a spiritual, almost religious experience. (Howe, 1987)

As explained in the first chapter, and as theorized by Hans Joas, an experience of self-transcendence is not achievable only through religion, as there are a myriad of scenarios and situations where such an experience can occur. Even if we do not view Wigman's dance philosophy as dance equaling religion, nevertheless the element which permits self-transcendence as theorized by Joas is present: moving beyond one's ego and entering into contact with a reality bigger than one's own. Additionally, her idea of a dance representative of a universal connection to humankind points to dance's potential in communicating universal values.

Wigman's alignment the Nazi ideology, centralized in the image of the Führer, emerges around 1930 and develops in the following years, as her dance works reveal a continuous static group and leader relationship. In her diaries, mainly around the period of conceptualization of "Hexentanz III", some sentences and passages refer both to an experience of self-transcendence through dance and to a possible service to a higher entity and cause. Her diaries talk of feelings of self-abandonment in the dance, particularly in chorus movements, in order to serve a cause not yet created which eliminates individual expression in favor of the collective, and that is accepted and desired by all. Her reflections underline that community surpasses the individual in favor of the cause. (Kolb, 2016) Of course, this does not necessarily mean that Mary Wigman was a Nazi or complied completely with the regime. Nevertheless, it somehow shows that her own vision of dance as an absolute language found a common ground, at least to some extent, with National Socialist ideology. In this scenario, one might wonder what is line which separates pure creative pursuits and the political instrumentalization of the arts. Even if Wigman did not publicly acknowledge support for the Nazis, aren't the common elements between her dance philosophy and Nazi ideology representative of German modern dance's social and political potential during the Third Reich? How

significant is culture in peoples' indoctrination and submission to authoritarianism? And for further reflection: do we talk enough about the role of culture in the human rights discourse?

Self-transcendence is present in the essence of mysticism in Wigman's work: mysticism precisely means the longing for a connection with someone or something outside one's inner self. Additionally, the social and political potential of German modern dance, here represented through Wigman, finds resonance in another element of her dance philosophy: her dance symbolizes the desire and the action of creating a new world and man, transformed and improved, a sort of improvement and salvation from the chaos of the present world. (Howe, 1987) As Laban's pupil, Wigman follows his steps in creating her own dance philosophy, a philosophy that, placed in the context of the Third Reich, illuminates very clearly the social and political potential of dance in the human rights discourse. What is interesting is that both Wigman and Laban view dance as an experience of self-transcendence, even if they do not name it exactly as Hans Joas. Connecting with someone or something outside one's inner self is equivalent as going beyond one's ego. When a dance visionary receives a decent amount of government funding, the possibilities of propagandization of her own ideas to her dancers and spectators (and eventually to other elements of society) acquire shape and relevance. Additionally, both Laban and Wigman viewed dance idealistically, as way to create a new world, which points to the connecting dots, as highlighted in the beginning of the present chapter, between arts and human rights. It seems that they might exist.

The social and political potential of Wigman's choreographic work finds a concrete example in "Hexentanz", a choreography performed and conceptualized in three diverse historical moments of Germany, the third one in 1934. Sponsored by the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment in July of the same year, "Hexentanz III" was the fifth section of her cycle "Frauentänze", Women's Dances, which included fifteen female dancers and Wigman as the ruler of the witches. During the winter of 1934, the cycle toured across Germany. The interesting element that has pushed for further research is the fact that the piece "Hexentanz", strongly associated with feminism, was accepted by the Nazi administration in its early years. One might wonder why, given Nazi's rejection of feminism. The answer might be that there were some elements in

Wigman's "Hexentanz", particularly witchcraft and witch persecutions, which were appreciated by the Nazis, in the sense that they could be representative of the regime's belief system and included in Kulturpolitik. Witch trials, perceived as an anti-Germanic plot conducted by Catholic and Jewish groups, were indeed a key theme in Nazi cultural propaganda, with its origins rooted in the late nineteenth century right-wing völkisch movement. In addition to mysticism, Wigman also mentioned pagan patterns in her work, a theme appreciated by the Nazis. (Kolb, 2016) Witch, pagan, and mystic elements merge in Wigman's Hexentanz, and consequently allow the dance work to be presented during the Third Reich. The fact that these themes appealed to the Nazis and were part of Kulturpolitik show that Wigman's work indeed had a social and political potential, because it could be framed and situated in a specific line of Nazi ideology. As underlined above, the main point of the analysis is not to criticize Wigman for having been a Nazi or not, but to unveil the potential in her work. And this potential seems undeniable: Hexentanz reinforced Nazi ideological preferences and might have reinforced in her dancers and spectators' adherence to certain values. Starting from the idea that the presentation of her work was indeed a sic-sensuous moment between the dancers and the spectators, the embodied space between them might have catalyzed an experience of self-transcendence, particularly emphasized and promoted by the spiritual, quasi-religious ambiance in Wigman's work, particularly identifiable in "Hexentanz III". Even if in "Hexentanz III" the connecting dots between her work and Nazism are not explicit, nevertheless it was an experience which possibly prompted the participants to step outside their own egos and merge with something outside of themselves. If they have found resonance in the pagan and in the mystic elements in Wigman's work, finding a narrative outside the spectacle which matched with these elements might have reinforced, at least to some extent, an adherence to Nazi ideology,

Similarly to the Chilean cueca case study, with its traditional folkloric roots seen by the regime as representing the national soul, here we find a common denominator: the idea of bringing back old traditions, reinforcing them, and associating them with the identity of a peoples to ensure cultural and political indoctrination. Even though with different nuances, the instrumentalization of dance finds another example in the German case study.

Here, the symbol of the witch, which finds itself as the central element in Wigman's "Hexentanz III", becomes useful to the Nazis. Following their desire to enhance and affirm the supremacy of the Aryan race, Nazis promoted discourses based on the resurgence of ancient spiritual traditions, which can be exemplified also by the choice of swastika as the symbol of the Aryans. The image of the witch in some völkisch groups was also associated with the concept of sexuality, as some of these völkisch groups sustained that witches had the function of producing Aryan offspring during the Sabbath. (Kolb, 2016)

Another Wigman performance which sheds light on the social and political of her work is "Totenmal" (Monument to the Dead), a multi-media performance which premiered in Munich in the summer of 1930, during the electoral campaign between socialists and nationalists, in collaboration with the poet Albert Talhoff. Although its premiere date was still during the Weimar Republic, there are certain elements in the piece which promoted the emergence of a National Socialist dramatic art, as the piece is heavily charged with ideologic matters, reflecting how cultural transformations, in this case, those who have accompanied the passage from Weimar to the Third Reich, find resonance and invade the theater. (Manning, 1989)

In "Totenmal", which reflects Wigman's progressive shift towards danced authoritarianism, one can identify the leader principle, the idea of the leader as capable of changing the crowd, of giving them a soul. In this piece, Wigman is the one who performs the role of leader, coordinating the dancers who portray the First World War soldiers, mothers, and girls, and leading them to an organic spiritual community in which they are no longer individuals, but "types". (InformaDanza, 2020) This information is essential to reiterate the social and political potential of Wigman's work. Wigman's approach to leadership finds resonance with Nazi ideology: complete faith on the leader, submission to the rules, and abandonment of individuality in favor of the collective. The fact that this artistic work was performed in the period of political transition between the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich adds even more depth to our discussion. Did Wigman dance's potential prompt the spectators to develop a certain type of ideologic tendencies and embrace certain values? Even if we do not have the certainty that this happened, arts can indeed be a powerful instrument in social and political movements,

as expressed in the beginning of this chapter. Dance (merged with theater and poetry) in “Totenmal” previews the development of a Nazi dramatic art, which confirms that dance might function as a reflection of society, of its political, social, and cultural changes. A key question is the following: what would symbolize an experience of self-transcendence in the context of “Totenmal”?

Both the script and the staging of “Totenmal” reveal an articulate ideological strategy, which can be themed as protofascist. Particularly, the staging shows two choirs, a male and a female one, representing the dead and the living, and Wigman functioning as the one who has the task of bringing the dead back to life, and in doing so, spending all her energies. She is not able to fulfill her task, so the staging, through images of sound and light, suggests that the fusion of the living and the dead is accomplished through imagination. Here we find a religious analogy: the merger of the living with the dead might resemble the one of the believers with Christ, a ceremony of Christian communion, reinforced by Wigman’s final dance portraying the picture of a cross. Another important element is represented by the speaking choir: by stating that Wigman has failed in her task to bring the dead soldiers back to life because no one in the living public sufficiently remembers them as human beings and that they have given their life to the nation, this might be interpreted by the public as the need to call the nation to seek revenge and redress the soldiers, defending the homeland, a key element of nationalist rhetoric. The idea, therefore, that the nation has backstabbed them, and someone now needs to participate in a new political project. The very own title of the piece plays a role in this debate, as it can be both associated with the words *Kainsmal* and *Denkmal*, meaning “Cain’s mark” and “monument/memorial”, respectively, and playing with the idea of guilt and memory simultaneously. The ambivalence of the spectacle in the context of the electoral campaign revealed useful to the public, representative of the middle class, who was not forced to choose between the extreme right or extreme left regarding theater, but which also reflected traditional politics. The way the staging was structured blurred the need of taking a decision. Consequently, there is the possibility of foreseeing in this piece the development of *Nazithingspiel*, which was heavily characterized by war remembrance and included both the elements of movement and speaking choir, two different types of choirs which had leftist and right-wing origins

inside the theater world, respectively. As a dance performance, “Totenmal” illustrates that the transition from democratic to dictatorial regimes happens gradually, and not necessarily abruptly. Transposing this idea to the case of dance and theater, this means that Weimar dramaturgy has adapted and reconfigured performances to fit the fascist narrative. In this case, most blatantly seen in the promotion of a *Gemeinschaft*, an organic community. (Manning, 1989) Dance and theater as a representative of the at-the-time political context of the country, giving the public a choice, which in reality was the possibility of not choosing. The sic-sensuous moment in question allowed the communication between dancers and the spectators that there was the need to avenge the dead soldiers. Experiences of self-transcendence in a scenario like the one of “Totenmal” and “Hexentanz” can both be placed in an ideological framework associated with nationalism and the creation of a new political project, and the fact that Wigman viewed dance as a way to create a new world adds depth to the acknowledgment of the social and political potential of her own German modern dance in the human rights discourse at the time.

2.4 Human rights choreographies

After a thorough analysis of the social and political potential of *Cueca* in Chile and *Ausdruckstanz* in Germany, we expand the debate by including as further case studies examples of human rights choreographies, which is to say, choreographies which include the theme of human rights, but are not necessarily a part of social and political movements. This is essential for the purposes of this thesis, to understand if dance’s social and political potential can also be found outside movements, or if it belongs to one sphere of the social and political spectrum.

Even though the world of arts and dance is very multifaceted and offers many instances of this potential, I choose to highlight three examples, reflecting once again geographical and cultural heterogeneity: protest ballets in Sweden, the work of Barro Rojo in Mexico, and the artistic vision of the English choreographer Botis Seva.

The Swedish case study enlightens us on how ballets can be an instrument of protest through the example of the Cullberg Ballet, with its ballets “Rapport” (1976) by Birgit Cullberg and “Soweto” (1977) by Mats Ek. The Cullberg Ballet was founded in 1974, in a specific political and cultural context in Sweden, a context in which the Swedish government had established a new cultural policy emphasizing the right to freedom of expression and the right to participate in the cultural life of the community through arts and cultural experiences. This new policy translated into extensive funding for theater, and benefited projects like the Cullberg Ballet, which adopted a political commitment to the arts, a reflection of the founder Birgit Cullberg’s engagement. Both “Rapport” and “Soweto” represent dance works which emerge as a response to deeply concerning international human rights situations: the military dictatorship in Chile and the Apartheid in South Africa, respectively. The choice of these themes to form the substance and essence of the choreographies opened up a debate on the human condition, and through their performances were able to speak to many spectators. In “Rapport”, Cullberg was inspired by the Chilean military dictatorship, and her ballet at the same time accuses the audience and prompts the spectators to develop empathy regarding conflict situations. The ballet is characterized by a meeting between two main groups: the Poor (which include the Poet, the Searcher, the Narrator, Two Men and a Dead Girl, the Woman and the Soldiers) and the Rich (a group formed by the Businessman, the Girl, Ladies, the Dictator, Officers, and Bureaucrats). The stage includes a white circle which represents the center for the main action of the performance: the Rich and the Poor dance and gather there, and this is an opportunity for the Poor to have a space to share their personal histories of human rights abuses. The way the Rich and the Poor move both represent certain socially recognized gestures: while the Poor use all the parts of the body when dancing, move together in different directions, and individualism emerges even inside the tight group; the Rich display a controlled dance, do not expand their movement and most often only dance in group, a group in which their individual identities is concealed, in order to show that they have lost their capacity for empathy, love and solidarity, as if they were dead or oblivious. The anonymity of the Rich, who seem emotionless and lack expression during the dance, is a way for Cullberg to show their egocentrism and present a different image of the Rich than we are normally used to see. Throughout the ballet, Cullberg approaches the audience and tries to draw out accountability from the

spectators in order to create, through dance, a human rights discussion which includes all, even the privileged. Dance, politics, and emotions merge in *Rapport*. The ending shows the Rich and the Poor leaving the stage together, as they walk towards an intense light in the background. The political conflict remains unresolved. “Soweto”, a dance work created by Cullberg’s son, Mats Ek, portrays another circumstance of human rights violations: the Apartheid in South Africa. One of the similarities between “Soweto” and “Rapport” is the fact that we are in front of a group who dances together, but in which individual stories emerge. In Mats Ek creation, the common denominator between the dancers’ characters is discrimination and subjugation, something they all experience and which eventually leads to violence between them. In the middle, the figure of Mother Earth emerges, performed by Birgit Cullberg, who functions as mediator, instigates the individuals to view themselves as subjects, to redirect their anger towards something which might be helpful and lead to a positive transformation in society. In this way, she stimulates their personal and social consciousness. All these ideas translate to the choreography: initially, the dancers move in different directions, to portray their solitude and they mimic bird gestures, lifting their arms, as if they were trying to escape their situation. In her role as mediator, Mother Earth represents all the possible experiences we might have as a consequence of oppression, and how oppression turns into fear of labelling injustices and seeking to change repressive situations. The ending of the performance represents a positive and utopian moment for human rights: letting her hair loose, Mother Earth dances her way to freedom towards a society in which human rights are respected and equality triumphs. (Olsson, 2008)

Cullberg Ballet was founded in a specific political and cultural context in Sweden, which reflects an institutional openness to the arts and to its potential, as well as respect for the human rights related to art. In this artistic-friendly context, the company has seized the opportunity to present socially and politically engaged dance works.

Both choreographies described above can be classified as “human rights choreographies”, a concept I choose to introduce in my thesis, and which describes choreographies which in its content are related to human rights. This does not necessarily mean that the artists and the choreographers always have the topic of human rights in

mind when creating, but nevertheless the topic emerges in their art. I emphasize this idea because while in “Rapport” and “Soweto” the aim to introduce human rights through dance is evident, in other case studies, such as the one on German modern dance and Nazism, this did not appear so clearly. The main idea is that the absence of a right-from-the-start endorsement or rejection of human rights does not reduce the social and political potential of a specific dance work in the human rights discourse. The potential is still there in other scenarios, even if more nuanced.

In “Rapport”, the moments of sic-sensuous can be identified both in the dance between the Rich and the Poor and between the ensemble of dancers and the public. The concept of sic-sensuous by Mills finds a very concrete example in Rapport: through dance, a line of communication is established between the Rich and the Poor, two sectors of society which normally are in unequal positions when it comes to verbal communication. This scenario of inequality is presented to an audience, which in that moment is able to reflect on the discriminations presented on stage, and possibly understand that themselves, as people who have the economic capacity of paying a theater ticket, are privileged like the Rich. An embodied space is created both on stage (the white circle) and between the stage and the audience, and the dance work is interesting also because it prompts a reflection on how we move, and how this is conditioned by our position in the social hierarchy. The fact that the conflict remains unresolved in the end is intriguing, and possibly hints to the necessity for dialogue in society, a dialogue which can’t be one-sided.

In “Soweto”, the figure of Mother Earth is essential in representing the utopia of the dance work, an utopia which finds resonance in the human rights discourse, which strives to create a world where everyone feels respected. Contrary to “Rapport”, where no apparent solution is presented, in “Soweto” we eventually enter a human-rights-based society, after many moments of dealing with oppression, discrimination and trauma. “Soweto” sends an important message: that negative human-rights experiences can be a theme for reflection and motivate positive actions in society.

As previously underlined, both “Rapport” and “Soweto” have created sic-sensuous moments between the dancers themselves and the dancers and the audience. The choreographies are essentially “human-rights choreographies”, which means that if these sic-sensuous moments have indeed catalyzed experiences of self-transcendence as theorized by Hans Joas, then a reinforcement of values compatible with the human rights discourse might have occurred. In both cases, the elements necessary for an experience of self-transcendence based on dance are present: nature, music, and space. The fact that the dance works embrace themes such as social inequality, oppression, and discrimination is key, as it is also essential that both are inspired by two situations of human rights violations in Chile and in South Africa. The experiences of self-transcendence might have occurred for the dancers and for the audience: stepping outside of one’s ego through dance can occur both to the one who dances and to the one who shares corporeal empathy with the dancer.

On the other side of the world, in Mexico, the work of Barro Rojo Arte Escénico (BRAE), founded in 1982 in Chilpancingo, assumes relevance as a consequence of the company’s will to use dance to address and shed light on human rights violations in Latin America. The context in which the company was created is important, as it unveils the social and political potential of their work: the company began as a project of the Autonomous University of Guerrero, in a period in which the university was funding projects with marginalized segments of the society. Some important dance works with social and political potential include “*El camino*”, “*Crujía H*”, “*Vientos de espera*”, “*Tierno abril nocturno (De la vida de los hombres infames)*”, “*Mujeres en luna creciente (La vida está en otra parte)*”, “*Del amor y otras perversiones*”, and “*Ajuste de cuentas (El recurso del miedo)*”. In “*El Camino*” (1982), their first work, which won the National Dance Prize, the company explored the fight for liberty of the population of El Salvador, and the performance combined audio, dance, and musical elements. Most specifically, the company included the recorded voices of Salvadorans survivors of the war, in which they described what they and their families have been through, and this functioned as a starting element for the dance in itself, which sees the dancers reproducing the moments of despair, vulnerability and aversion of those living in a war zone. A chorus of dancers is also part of the performance, and they further transpose

these feelings to the public by reproducing the behavior of the Salvadorans during the war: trying to flee bombs, jumping from one place to another in a terrified way, attempting to find a shelter. Regarding the location of the performance, it is important to highlight that Barro Rojo has performed "*El camino*" in non-traditional venues such as squares and on the streets. In "*Crujía H,*" (1987) the main theme was the phenomenon of political prisoners, which particularly affects Latin America, but also represents a universal theme. The artists managed to deeply touch the public by dancing the physical abuses, beatings, and torture that many prisoners all around the region faced, which eventually provoked in the audience an emotional response: tears and distorted faces were some of the reactions. In "*Vientos de espera,*" (1990) Barro Rojo embraced the universal feelings which accompany those exiled because of conflicts, a choice that makes it possible for the public to associate the dance work with diverse human rights situations, from Latin American dictatorships to the situation in Palestine. Similarly to "*Crujía H,*" the performers reproduced on stage danced moments of torture, as well as the feelings associated with the urgency to forcibly abandon the homeland, sometimes complementary feelings such as loneliness, nostalgia, but also fears associated with the adaptation to a new life and country. The dance performance relied on strong visual elements: one of the women dancers was "tortured" on stage by two men who dunked her head into a tub of water, and in another scene two naked bodies hanged from the ropes. In "*Ajuste de cuentas (El recurso del miedo)*" (1997), Barro Rojo embraces the general theme of violence, evoking through dance several human rights violations in the country: murders of human rights defenders, as the case of Digna Ochoa; homosexual raids in the Cuauhtémoc neighborhood; the Acteal massacre in Chiapas; Nellie Campobello's kidnapping, among others. The choice of violence as the main theme of the performance reveals a desire to show to the public the constraints which permeate our daily life because of wars, corrupt systems, inequalities. The theme of violence was performed by nine dancers who have also used containers and oil drums as prompts throughout the choreography, and on stage the dancers represented those who annihilate the world around us, the bodies massacred by rape and the notions of sacrifice as punishment. The performance, being very "raw", put the spectator in an uncomfortable position, and the ending, which shows the villain of the story killing the angel and then

suiciding himself, opens a reflection on the possible future for our world, if there is still hope or not. (Delgado Martínez, 2008)

The choreographic work of Barro Rojo Arte Escénico (BRAE) reveals a commitment to human rights in its most varied themes: the fight for liberty, the struggles of political prisoners, the forcibly displaced people, violence, among others. The fact that a dance company willingly decides to embrace human rights themes in their work reveals that human rights can be both the pre-condition for artistic expression and the content of the artistic expression in itself. The possibility of expressing political and social commitment through dance finds another concrete example. ´

Emotional reactions by the public to BRAE's performances hint to an effective line of communication established between the dancers and the spectators. Although it is impossible to sustain that an experience of self-transcendence has certainly occurred to the participants, as that would entail interviewing them and prompt a reflection on the performances (as with all the other case studies analyzed until now), one might argue that at least an embodied space was created and that if one was indeed immersed in the performance, that this pushed for a moment outside of one's ego. That is to say, the topics mentioned above have both a strong emotional, political, and social resonance, so if one is able to have a moment of corporeal empathy, it is unlikely that one was focused on one's ego all the time. At least some degree of reflection on the performance has probably occurred.

In her theory, Mills sustains that sic-sensuous moments are unescapably generated by dance, creating communication between groups do not match in equality when it comes to verbal language. That dance allows the creation of an embodied space, a dialogue between sensed and sensing bodies, and that this moment establishes equality between them. It might be interesting to think that dance is able to generate sic-sensuous moments between all of us, and not only when there is inequality in verbal language, as the dimensions of inequality are immense and not only limited to one sphere of communication. When applied to BRAE's work, this means that in the moments of performance, even if between dancers-dancers and dancers-spectators the contrast in

equality was not that high, the performance possibly had an effect on them at another level. In other words, even if the participants were to some extent privileged (privileged to dance or to pay a ticket to watch someone dance), a change might have occurred within them. What I mean to say is that we do not need extreme situations of inequality as a pre-condition for an experience of self-transcendence through dance. That is only one of the possibilities. Sometimes human rights topics will emerge in privileged contexts. In fact, it is important for that to happen, as no real change will occur if experiences of self-transcendence (whether through dance or other non-artistic activities) only occur within a limited sector of society. The collective grounding of common human rights values in the individual personalities leads to more consistent results if there is an ensemble of shared experiences of self-transcendence.

An even more contemporary example of the social and political potential of dance is the work of the English dancer and choreographer Botis Seva. Seva is an award-winning artist with a background in hip hop, contemporary dance, and physical theatre. At the age of 19, he has founded his own dance company “Far From the Norm”, merging all his artistic interests in the realm of dance. The company, which has created eclectic types of artworks such as outdoor shows, film, theater performances, and engaging experiences, embraces social and political themes in its work, reflecting social concerns and the desire to understand the contemporary world. (Seva, n.d.) Founded in May 2009 in a youth club in Dagenham, United Kingdom, the dance company sought to explore creativity in a new way, a way of moving considered far from the norm. While in its first years the dance company has mostly worked through talent development programs in community sceneries, today it tours nationally and internationally, presenting its hip hop dance theatre creations to a wide public. In exploring hip-hop movement in non-conventional ways, this collective of artists intends to empower marginalized people and further debate on social and political matters. (Far From the Norm, n.d.-a) In an interview with the Italian newspaper *Avvenire*, Seva has shared that human rights themes such as racism will always be visible in his work, even though he underlines that he does not intend to approach them in every single instance of his choreographies. The fact that they are noticeable means that his dance is inevitably influenced by movements such as Black Lives Matters and these themes find resonance in his work, as he intends to portray

social change in his dance. While acknowledging that hip hop is a genre with its roots in the “streets”, Botis Seva underlines that he became acquainted with it in a community classroom in London. He emphasizes that his dance emerges from personal stories and that he combines hip hop and contemporary dance in order to create a dimension that touches the spectators and communicates with them. For him, dance was and is a way to escape the chaos of our world and heal, and he sustains that he has found freedom in it. (Calvini, 2023)

A work by Botis Seva which is relevant for showing that dance has indeed a social and political potential in the human rights discourse is “BLKDOG” (2021), a choreography evoking strong emotions and portraying extreme human interactions. “BLKDOG” was inspired by the book “Shoot the Damn Dog” by Sally Brampton and includes the participation of seven hooded dancers. Seva’s goal with this performance was to engage the spectator in a process of reflection regarding the uncomfortable past that one normally seeks to avoid. That is to say, his main goal was not to “change the world” with the choreography, but to provoke thought within the audience. (La Biennale di Venezia, n.d.) These seven hooded dancers portray the feelings that accompany depression and how society in general is affected by mental health issues: the dance ranges from moments of restlessness, beatings, sexual interactions, childhood memories. During the performance, two voices accompany the dance: one of a child, and the other of a therapist. Brutality accompanies all the performance, both in its physical and psychological dimensions. (Roy, 2021) The fact that “BLKDOG” toured several national and international venues adds relevance to the social and political potential of Seva’s work: he has presented this dance work in countries such as Belgium, Greece, China, Singapore, Germany, Italy, Australia, in important artistic venues with international projection such as La Biennale di Venezia, the Singapore International Festival of the Arts, the Shanghai International Dance Center, the Düsseldorf Festival, among others. (Far From the Norm, n.d.-b)

In Botis Seva’s “BLKDOG”, the right to health emerges as one of the main human rights topics, adding another nuance to our debate. It is interesting to see that dance’s social and political potential in the human rights discourse can also be identified in our

contemporary world, that its potential emerges in very different geographical and cultural contexts.

Another important element is that Seva's own vision of dance already includes the idea of an embodied space between the dancers and the spectators. This is key, as it reveals that his performances reflect this interaction and possibly open up a space of communication between the participants. Additionally, the rawness and brutality in "BLKDOG" introduce an element of strong stimulation of the senses and corporeal empathy, which might make it even easier to catalyze an experience of self-transcendence as theorized by Joas. That is to say, people are stimulated to the extreme when viewing these tremendous human interactions as a consequence of poor mental health, and this might lead them to understand how limited they are as human beings: the dance is performed in a way to make the public feel that they could also be in the position of the dancers, that they can easily reach a poor mental health state if triggered by negative life events (some of them socially created).

It is equally fundamental that Seva has been presenting his work in several international venues, as this emphasizes the potential of dance in transmitting universal messages. In a globalized world in which almost all of us use social media, information on dance events and socially engaged choreographies can be easily accessed and shared. What is the meaning of this for human rights?

In the following and last chapter of this thesis, the potential role of dance in the human rights discourse will be explored, and possibly some of the proposals will open a further the debate on the matter, as well as on the wider connection between arts and human rights.

Chapter Three - A POSSIBLE ROLE FOR DANCE IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE

3.1 Unveiling the social and political potential of dance

The present chapter constitutes a moment to reflect on two key ideas: first of all, on the social and political potential of dance, if it exists, where does it manifest, how, by whom, as well as the variables of this potential; and second, on how this potential translates to a possible role for dance in the human rights discourse. This analysis will conceivably have positive implications for the human rights discourse, as it would “open the door” to a more thorough reflection on the place and significance of dance, and consequently all the other arts, for this field of study.

Throughout the second chapter “*A performing art with social and political potential*”, the case studies have shown that dance emerges as part of the socialization process, a tool for the transmission of memory, and an instrument of advocacy, three elements which can be located in the human rights discourse and further explored. The analysis of the case studies has also shown that the social and political potential of dance emerges in eclectic contexts, with diverse geographical, cultural, political, and social nuances, hinting to the universality of dance in transmitting human rights messages.

To better grasp these ideas, the present chapter will follow the ensuing structure: an analysis of how the case studies unveiled the potential of dance as socialization, transmission of memory, and advocacy; a reflection on the connection between dance and the gentrification of human rights, and how dance might be an efficient strategy ~~and~~ ~~tool~~ to tackle this problematic; ~~and~~ finally, a reflection on the possibility of acknowledging a human right to dance and to enjoy dance, and the implications this would have for the human rights discourse.

3.1.1 Dance as socialization

Socialization is a pre-condition for the transmission of values, ideas, and identity. In all the case studies analysed, dance represented moments of socialization, moments which

have occurred simultaneously between the dancers themselves and between the dancers and the spectators, who shared different roles in the societies in question.

To view and acknowledge dance as socialization sheds light on an important element that was previously touched upon in the subchapter “1.4 *Dance through the lens of sociology*”. Even though authors’ opinions on the sociology of the body vary, it emerged from our analysis that dance, because it is a performing art which uses the body as its main instrument, somehow reflects society, its dynamics, its values, and its ideas. This symbolism is highly relevant, as it shows that the potential of dance can be located in more than one sphere and is potentially universal: all human beings share the body as a commonality, which means that, even if in different ways, we might decide to use the language of dance to communicate between ourselves through the body. This socialization can then occur in many moments of dance, which the second chapter “*A performing art with social and political potential*” has thoroughly underlined and explored.

In the case study of the Chilean *cueca*, all the actors have generated instances of socialization, all of them intentionally, and eventually have engaged other actors in several “danced” moments.

Particularly, the institutionalization of *cueca* by Pinochet’s regime through the Decree Law No.23 of the 18th of September of 1979, which identified it as “*the most genuine expression of the national soul*” promoted moments of socialization based on dance and music: socialization through *cueca* was seen in official events like military parades, in educational settings that embraced the teaching of *cueca*, and in the annual contest of *cueca* in the month of September, envisioned for basic, secondary, and high school education students. How do these moments of socialization generated by the regime reveal the social and political potential of *cueca* dance? First of all, the regime specifically created and promoted moments of socialization based on the dance and music of *cueca*, because it had identified its potential and significance in the context of the Chilean society. This is key: this potential and significance of *cueca* were already present, they were simply unveiled and explored by the regime. Additionally, these

occurrences promoted the classic gender relations and the traditional figures of the huaso and the china, which possibly made cultural indoctrination and compliance with the regime easier.

In the case of AFDD, several were the moments of socialization created by the families of the “detenidos desaparecidos”. This is an evident ascertainment, in the sense that associations most inevitably created instances of this kind. Particularly, AFDD’s instances of socialization are based on a counter narrative the group desired to promote, based on justice, equality, identity, and memory of the political collectivity. Among the many human rights tools and strategies used by AFDD, the cueca, particularly the cueca sola, emerged as one of them, as part of their public demonstrations, which in themselves constitute socialization. While using dance as a human rights advocacy tool, a theme which will be explored more deeply one of the following subchapters, the group has simultaneously created/generated several occurrences of socialization with an impact in the human rights discourse. These instances of socialization through dance occurred in public places with historical meaning, which possibly made participants associate the cueca sola with the social and political themes, especially because AFDD’s demonstrations were performed during Pinochet’s dictatorship.

Socialization through cueca sola was generated in many moments: on the 8th of March of 1978, in Teatro Caupolicán, in the context of the International Women’s Day, where cueca sola was danced for the first time and provoked strong reactions in the public; on the 12th of March of 1990, in the National Stadium “Chile, Chile again”, therefore we can identify a socialization framed by the post-dictatorship period and the need to still find the “detenidos desaparecidos” and to have societal and political changes in Chile; on the same year, on the 12th and 13th of October, Amnesty International’s international concert “Desde Chile...un abrazo a la Esperanza” constituted an instance of socialization, englobing essentially music, but a moment in which dance was included. The relevance of this example lies in the fact that it was a moment of socialization based on cueca which somehow acknowledged cueca sola as a human rights tool, and this happened in the context of an event with great international projection, and consequently emphasizing dance’s social and political potential in the human rights discourse; and the

presence of AFDD at the commemorations of the dictatorship, for example the one of 2023, which represented the 50th anniversary of the military coup. Regarding its relevance, this instance of socialization in the context of dictatorship commemorations reveals once again the social and political potential of dance, in the sense that socialization here is framed by the language of dance, the cueca sola, and people choose to engage and identify with it.

Regarding the Collective Cueca Sola, the moments of socialization were characterized by demonstrations included in the “action art” category, which were part of a context of significant social mobilizations as highlighted in the second chapter, “*A performing art with social and political potential*”. Socialization here is generated as part of public demands, human rights demands, with cueca sola as its main language. The relevance of the socialization generated by the Collective Cueca Sola is that it shows that the social and political potential of a specific dance style can remain contemporary and be used in different human rights scenarios. People in Chile have continued to socialize through cueca sola throughout the years, even after the end of the dictatorship, which, if one thinks more widely, reveals not only cueca sola’s, but in general dance’s capacity, as a language, to “mold” itself to historical, social, and political changes and remain relevant in each society.

The socialization that is created by the Collective Cueca Sola reflects a heterogeneous group: women and sexual dissidents between 15 and 60 years old. At the same time, people outside the group are invited to participate in the interventions through open calls. Several actors are invited to perform, actors of different walks of life, with different bodies and personal histories. The socialization promoted by the Collective through cueca sola appears to be very democratic, in the sense that it does not simply focus on those elements of the group who have experienced the loss of a loved one during the dictatorship. It is a socialization which uses a national symbol with which Chileans are acquainted to open a public debate, a “danced” debate, on human rights issues. These human rights themes concern more than the dictatorship, they also embrace the human rights violations conducted by the state and the police in the years after the end of Pinochet’s regime. Socialization happens here because the members of the group desire

to exercise political militancy through art and because the feeling of being part of a group reassures them in their work of memorialization, a work which is focused on the deprivatization of memories.

Some relevant moments of socialization by the Collective include: their first performance on the 8th of March of 2016, to commemorate the International Women's Day; the 24th of March of 2016, when the members have performed outside the National Stadium in Chile, to remember the 40th anniversary of the coup d'état in Argentina, during a match between the country and Chile for the qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup in Russia (this is an instance of socialization which transmits a feeling of solidarity with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo); the socialization pursued by the Collective was also key during the Chilean Social Outburst of 2019, as the Collective participated in a collective moment of demonstrations revolt, and non-conformism with the at-the-time neoliberal government. During this period, some of the significant moments of socialization included the performance in the Gabriela Mistral Cultural Center (GAM), honouring the victims of repression of the former days. This was an instance of socialization which grew larger, because some of the people were taking part in a march that day and eventually passed by the GAM, with some of them joining the members of the group. Another relevant moment of socialization was the performance outside the Baquedano subway station, which potentiated a very wide experience of socialization between the members of the Collective and the passersby, who had the opportunity to simply observe or to join. The choice of the venue is also key, as it symbolized the reason for the beginning of the protests. Through cueca sola, a moment of interaction emerges between the individuals in the subway station. Socialization through dance is also visible when the Collective participates in the annual commemorations of the military coup of the 11th of September. This day has a strong symbolism in Chilean cultural and is intersected with the process of memorialization. The Collective usually participates in the commemorations in the downtown of Santiago, usually where most Chileans are present and other collectives and groups gather. The public places chosen, as highlighted in the second chapter "*A performing art with social and political potential*" are key: for example, the commemorations in front of the monument of Salvador Allende, or the one in front of La Moneda, a venue representing the Chilean government and the police force

in charge of the State. Even when the Collective has created a virtual initiative to commemorate this date during the Covid-19 confinement, we are still in the presence of an important moment of socialization based on *cueca sola*. Dance seems to transcend physical barriers and maintain its social and political potential even in the virtual sphere.

In the case study on German modern dance and Nazism, the regime has promoted moments of socialization grounded in German modern dance by giving more funding and opportunities to modern dancers, by establishing that theatres had to employ more German modern dancers, and by proposing the creation of a German Dance Theatre in Berlin, where the exponents of German modern dance could create their work. Institutional support for a specific type of art can indeed result in a socialization controlled by the state, especially in a context such as Nazism. This institutional choice has an impact not only on the dancers and on the choreographers, but also on the public, who starts to become acquainted with this type of dance and possibly with the values it promotes, even if these values aren't explicitly clear.

Additionally, socialization of dancers was conditioned by the directive No.26 of the 29th of July of 1934, which required dancers of Aryan origin to present proof of having studied for at least one year in a dance school approved by the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment. A measure like this one immensely shapes socialization through dance. First of all, non-Aryan dancers are excluded from performing; secondly, even if of Aryan origin, their education was still restricted, as they had to learn how to dance in a regime-sponsored school, if they desired to ever become dance professionals. Dance, similarly to the other arts, was framed inside a social, political, and cultural project. The fact that the regime intended to control the socialization generated by dance partially unveils its social and political potential. For the human rights discourse, this represented a moment of reduced freedom of expression and opinion, discrimination and also restriction of the right to education.

Furthermore, the large-scale dance festivals in 1934, 1935, and 1936 were also great opportunities to instrumentalize German modern dance's social and political potential, as well as the massive event of the Olympic Youth of 1936, which included

Ausdrucktanz in the form of movement choir. These popular events were key moments of socialization during the regime, the latter with the presence of Hitler. German modern dance was an integral part of the socialization between dancers, the regime, and the people, reinforcing values and shaping identities in public settings, and possibly producing an impact on the individuals, individuals who had to embrace their “germanity”.

Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman were also responsible for a particular type of socialization in their classrooms, a socialization which resonated with some Nazi values. In the case of Laban, his military training influenced his teaching style, which focused on leadership, submission, and discipline, combined with the idea of antirationality and the occult. The fact that he identified his dancers as the “führende Tänzer” seems to clearly show how he viewed and created the dynamics of socialization in his classroom, and consequently how dance’s potential in building identity and reinforcing common values was explored. Renouncing to individuality and embracing the guidance of a higher authority, in this case Laban, is a step in the socialization process which found resonance with Nazism and also with other dictatorial regimes. The analogy between the type of socialization promoted by the Nazis and the one developed by Laban with his pupils seems to illustrate a strong connection and resemblance.

One of Laban’s goals in his model of holistic dance education was reaching collective ecstasy through dance, which, as highlighted in the second chapter, can be linked with the experience of self-transcendence as theorized by Joas. Socialization in this context can possibly have important consequences for the human rights discourse, for several reasons: first of all, because Laban was envisioning in his classroom a specific type of socialization based on the ideas described in the paragraphs above, that is to say, while he was engaging in socialization with his students, he took on a very active role in controlling the interaction and molding it into what he considered to be desirable. One can frame his efforts in the social and political context at the time. Socialization in Laban’s classroom found resonance with the way Nazi embraced a cult-like classroom and leadership. Second, even if at first indirectly, it appears that by giving relevance and institutional support to an individual like Laban, with this specific view on dance and

dance education (dance as a way of living, a way of generating changes in the individual), this can contribute to the understanding that dance as socialization has indeed a potential for the human rights discourse. Here, it appears to have been a negative one, as it contributed to a certain cultural indoctrination. His vision of Festkultur, “community dance”, generated a myriad of instances of socialization, popular instances of socialization that pushed the collectivity to step outside one’s individuality. Even though this experience was, according to what he promoted, free from ideology, he nevertheless desired to distinguish his dance form from the other social dances which shared foreign racial influences. One cannot say precisely that he promoted a racist socialization, but there seems to have been some racist undertones in his creations and in his educational approach.

Wigman shared with Laban several elements which point to a similar style of socialization in her classroom, especially since she was one of his former students. Again, the socialization promoted through her dance focused on the idea of feeling a universal connection to humankind and reaching a state of transcendence. A static group and leader relationship frames this moment of danced socialization between her dancers, and later between the dancers and the public. Wigman’s idea that community is above the individual is essential here, as well as that through dance, one might create a new world. What might be the impact on the individual of a socialization situated in this framework? And what might be the impact for the human rights discourse?

Some of her most famous choreographies, such as “Hexentanz” and “Totenmal” are important moments of socialization before and during the Third Reich. As dance performances, they were played in theatres, which constitute spaces of socialization where people from different walks of life meet and engage in artistic experiences. Socialization here was framed by the social and political context at the time, the venue of the performances, and by the themes portrayed and shared with the public, which seemed to fit into the Nazi Kulturpolitik: witch motives, mysticism, paganism, surrender to a higher entity, the envision of a new world, following a leader, and preference for the collective instead of the individual. Regarding the venues of socialization, these included the classroom, theaters, and official events by the regime, such as the famous

Olympic Youth of 1936. The historical period is also relevant when analyzing this potential: particularly the fact that “Hexentanz” was presented in different historical stages of Germany history, adopting to the different social and political contexts and being part of different instances of socialization; or that ”Totenmal” was an instance of socialization through dance framed in the political context of the electoral campaign between socialists and nationalists in 1930.

In the case studies on human rights choreographies, all are instances of socialization and almost all of them have as main venue a theater, but they are also performed in non-traditional venues, such as squares and on the streets (in the case of BRAE), youth clubs and community classrooms, as in the case study of Botis Seva’s work. All of the examples of human rights choreographies can be framed as examples of socialization in the HR discourse, and maybe some of them also in social and political movements, if one desires to adopt a more inclusive approach. However, the point is that these human rights choreographies seem to keep and exercise their potential even if they are performed and framed independently of a movement. As underlined in the second chapter, the fact that these case studies can be framed by Dana Mills’ concept of *sic-sensuous* and Hans Joas’ theory on self-transcendence sheds immense light on their potential for the human rights discourse. Of course, we might have to acknowledge that when human rights goals are framed inside a movement, these will possibly have a wider impact in the human rights discourse and reach more people, as a result of a more organized plan of action and communication. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean (and should not mean) that single choreographies should be ignored in this discussion. That would maybe be the equivalent of saying that, for example, a book on human rights does not have the potential of triggering a change in the personality of an individual. And even if we are not talking about a very deep change, a book, a choreography, a film, an album, a painting, among other examples, can still raise awareness on certain matters. It is up to the individual to further explore the theme or not.

Following this line of thought, one might wonder if being a spectator of a dance performance implies a passive or an active role. Are we passive when observing? How can we illuminate and contest this passivity?

The idea of the “emancipated spectator” developed by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière might provide some insights on the matter: in his book, it is key the refusal that the spectator is a passive actor. In fact, for Rancière the spectator can never be passive, because the act in itself is a synonym of participating. For the philosopher, the passivity of the spectator is an illusion. Furthermore, he questions the art that intends to abolish this gap between performers and the public and therefore put the public in an active position. According to him, this type of art in reality conditions the experience of the audience and subjects it to another type of authority. He sustains that equality is present in the experience of the audience, because when people observe a performance, in that specific moment they are watching the same thing equally. This is why the spectators are never passive: in observing the same thing equally, each spectator attributes the meaning it desires to the experience through an internal process of reflection. The fact that this process is internal, and reflexive might be one of the reasons at the heart of the common idea that spectators are passive. As a result of this theoretical approach, art in all its forms appears then as something autonomous, subject to the interpretations of the audience, and these new perspectives might possibly generate new outlooks on the predominant political and social orders. (Taylor, n.d.)

As underlined in the first chapter, Mills and several other dance scholars rely on Rancière’s theories to formulate a theoretical framework to dance and politics. Her concept of *sic-sensuous* is particularly influenced by Rancière, and when read with the concept of emancipated spectator in mind, unveils immensely the potential of single human rights choreographies for the human rights discourse. We might not be in the presence of pieces of art which change laws and modify the structure of the political system, but the potential of dance might still be there even if it “only” triggers a process of reflection in the spectators. Of course, quantifying the impact of these moments of socialization and interaction in the grounding of values in the individuals and their future

inclinations to engage in human rights would entail more research, and possibly interviewing the spectators on the artistic experience.

Taking into consideration the analysis conducted above, it appears that dance as socialization has a social and political in the human rights discourse based on a series of reasons: firstly, this potential can be identified both inside social and political movements, such as the case study on the Chilean cueca and German modern dance and Nazism; and outside these movements, such as in the case studies of human rights choreographies; secondly, it appears that sometimes this socialization is evidently framed by the theme of human rights, in the sense that the human rights goal behind the socialization is acknowledged by the actors (for example, when AFDD and the Collective Cueca Sola promote instances of socialization through cueca sola to ask for justice for the “detenidos desaparecidos” and to denounce contemporary human rights abuses); however, sometimes this is not the case, as sometimes the actors aren’t aware that their motivation is part of the human rights discourse (as in the case of Laban’s and Wigman’s modern dance choreographies). Nevertheless, it does not appear to be the case that the potential of dance as an activity of socialization is reduced when the actors aren’t aware that their choreographies, their support for certain kinds of dance, or their participation as dancers or spectators are part of it. In other words, the intent of the performance does not need to be directly related to human rights to have a potential inside the HR discourse.

Accordingly, to identify the potential of dance as socialization for the HR discourse, one need to look at the following elements: intent (awareness of the intent’s consequences for the HR discourse might not always be a necessary element); the venues/sites of the socialization; the social and political context at the time of socialization; who are the main actors in this socialization (whether we are talking about the active participants, but also those who finance these occurrences, give institutional support, etc.); and the essence of the performance (what is being communicated).

Further thinking how relevant the socialization through the arts is to the human rights discourse, and in the context of this thesis, dance, might contribute widely to the field in

itself. The interdependency and indivisibility of human rights could be better protected and more easily understood by engaging in further research on how socialization is both an intrinsic part and a factor which influences human rights, the relationship between them, and how individuals and groups emerge as key actors in this setting. The idea to add arts, and specifically dance, to the conversation remains relevant as one cannot ignore cultural rights when defending the whole human rights framework. The human rights discourse could only benefit from exploring throughout other languages other than the traditional verbal one, as well as delving even deeper in the notion of cultural rights. The language of dance allows then moments of socialization to develop between different actors in a given society, moments which can be used to maintain or disrupt social order, promote cultural and political indoctrination, or raise triggering questions.

Building on this idea of socialization through dance, one might pose another question: is it also possible that this socialization through dance might also figure as transmission of memory?

3.1.2 Dance as transmission of memory

What is memory? How has memory been conceptualized and why might it be relevant from a social, political, and cultural point of view? And most importantly: how can dance figure as a tool to convey memories, and does this have any potential for the human rights discourse?

Memory can be seen across two spectrums: as a personal and an extra-personal ability, hinting to both an individual and a social dimension. The second dimension tells us that collective memory is a result of the interaction between people. A pioneering author on this thematic is Maurice Halbwachs, who sustained that it is not possible to dissociate personal from collective memory, in the sense that the personal memory is always a part of the collective memory, the latter being a pre-condition of the former. At the same time, because it has the function of supporting the needs and interests of a group, collective memory can't be strictly static, and it is instead part of a continuous and changeable group process of analysing the past and reconstructing and re-claiming its

meaning. The difference between collective and historical memory might also be relevant to our discussion, in the sense that while the first one is circumscribed to a group, the second is presently mostly in texts and it is theorized as universal, with history being a sort of “outsider” in relation to groups. Another essential remark is the link between memory and trauma, a theme which has gained projection in the latest decades, particularly in the fields of psychology and in cultural studies. Most specifically, negative and painful events seem to be more powerful in transmitting memories, as their negative character usually has a universal appeal to everyone. People give meaning to it, and when reinterpreting it, they attribute a moral value to it, which in the future will be the basis for their own judgment and analysis, and at the same time alters their view on the past. When learning about the suffering and the trauma of others, we consequently also learn about our vulnerabilities and human condition. Memory represents then an opportunity to learn from past traumatic experiences, and also for a group’s internal perspective on its culture, significance, and history. When thinking about scenarios of human rights violations, it seems even more necessary to analyse the memories which have provoked traumatic experiences, such as the memories of gender violence, oppression, slavery, and repressive regimes. (Nikulin, 2015)

Even though the idea of dance as way to transmit and re-elaborate memories emerges more directly in the case study of the Chilean cueca, it cannot be ignored in the other case studies: in German modern dance’s revival of *völkisch* ideologies and pagan mysticism; in the way protest ballets in Sweden have re-elaborated the experience of Chilean dictatorship and the apartheid in South Africa; how BRAE has recalled several universal human rights themes in their works, which speak to mostly Latin American history but which hint to a certain universality; and how Botis Seva and Far From the Norm reflect on childhood memories and mental health.

In these case studies, the connection between dance and memory reveals several nuances and another layer of dance’s potential for the human rights discourse.

The first observation is that dance can be a tool to potentiate a collective or individual reflection on traumatic memories. It is possible that not all people might have

participated in the traumatic experience of human rights violations in question, or that they may or may not share the same cultural background, but I hypothesize that since human beings share a common humanity, we can all be part of the process of reflection.

This process of reflection on collective memory can be situated in the theoretical framework which was used throughout this thesis: dance is an instance of socialization, a socialization that consists in the generation of an embodied space between sensed bodies and between sensed and sensing bodies, the so called sic-sensuous moment as theorized by Mills. This sic-sensuous moment establishes a line of communication between the participants, and this communication can involve the theme of collective memories and trauma. It is not necessary that the whole communication conducted in this generated embodied space is strictly centred on this theme, this can also be a secondary theme in the interaction. For example, the sic-sensuous moments generated by AFDD and Collective Cueca Sola were clearly centred in the re-elaboration and reconstruction of collective memories, but they were not simply that, as the cueca sola was and still is used as a tool for human rights advocacy. That is to say, at the same time that they work on collective memories, they still advocate for justice and the protection of human rights. Both dimensions of dance's potential can coexist in the same instance of socialization. At the same time, in the case study on German modern dance and Nazism, neither the theme of collective memories nor advocacy appear so evidently, since we are not talking about purely organized activism (at least on the choreographers' side), and it might seem that we are in front of a merely aesthetic moment of socialization based on dance. But memories and advocacy are still being communicated, and people could have indeed engaged in a process of reflection.

This leads us to a second observation: that in this process of reflection on memories and traumas using dance as the main instrument of communication, it is possible that people engage in it purposely and intentionally, in a structured way (through activism, for example), or that this process gains shape more spontaneously, with participants engaging in this process since they were stimulated inside this generated embodied space. That is to say, they might not be aware of being part of this process right from the start, and this can be seen across all the case studies.

In this generated embodied space, the experiences of self-transcendence which might have occurred might have made the individuals and the groups re-elaborate their collective experiences of human rights violations; or if they were not completely aware of this collectively, to acknowledge them. Even if some of the participants in this generated embodied space were not part of the past collective memories, their common humanity, rooted both in vulnerability and potential, allows them to empathize with the situation and the collective memories of other peoples. Additionally, kinesthetic empathy plays a key role in this experience, as this empathy possibly makes it easier for the individuals to step outside their own egos and realize the impact of collective memories and life experiences.

Working on what was previously mentioned, a more in-depth idea which could be explored in further research is the following: is dance simply able to transmit memories (individual and/or collective), as acknowledged in the previous analysis of the case studies? Or can it also be the catalyzer of an afterwards process of reflection with potential for the human rights discourse? And does this process of reflection happen only during the dance moment, or also subsequently?

While we aren't able to neither exactly quantify the experiences or their quality, this thesis at least seems to unveil that a process of reflection on collective memories had a high probability of occurring, both if we read it through the theoretical framework used throughout the thesis, or if we choose to simply acknowledge that kinaesthetic empathy and the democracy of looking, in Rancièrian terms suggests, imply a certain proactivity by the spectator, a proactivity which can lead to a very personal interpretation of art and its message. If we agree with Rancièrè, and the spectator is not passive simply because he is observing, reflecting on (in addition to transmitting) individual and collective memories through dance appears as a very plausible scenario: in BRAE's pieces, in Botis Seva's work, in Swedish protest ballets, in cueca sola's instrumentalization, and in German modern dance's nuanced ideology, participants had the possibility to engage in reflection concerning several human rights topics, such as violence, repression, gender inequality, apartheid, tradition, cultural diversity, health, justice, and so on. Both

reflecting on a memory that is specifically ours (as an individual or a group) or that is strange to us, in the sense that it was experienced by a specific group or culture, seems to be a process rooted in a shared humanity which allows us to realize many things about ourselves and the world around us.

This reflection added another piece to the constellation of dance's social and political potential in the human rights discourse. From the analysis conducted from the beginning of the chapter until now, we can hypothesize that dance can be identified as an instance of socialization, which in turn may be centered on a diversity of themes and serve the purposes of different groups and/or individuals. That is to say, a process of reflection (collective or individual) on memories related to human rights would be one of the possible instances of socialization based on dance. Of course, it is important to underline that people can have individual experiences of self-transcendence, as theorized by Joas, but it is also important to remember the reader that the case studies explored in this thesis have all focused-on dance performed in places where people usually gather, like theatres, squares, streets, military parades, etc. Additionally, we are all social beings, so the experience of self-transcendence based on dance would always include a certain degree of socialization, even if not involving a high number of participants.

3.1.3 Dance as human rights advocacy

The present subchapter explores the idea that dance might have a potential for advocacy in the human rights discourse. In fact, if we reflect on the matter, we might realize that dance emerges as a tool for advocacy in all the case studies, whether the motivation is contrary or in favour of the human rights discourse (the first is also a very realistic possibility which should not be neglected).

Before exploring this connection, it might be necessary to initially think about the relevance of effectively communicating human rights. What makes human rights communication effective? Is this topic sufficiently discussed in the human rights discourse? Or is it slightly neglected? And is there such a thing as reverse or abusive human rights communication? And how is dance, as an artistic expression with communication at its core, included in the debate?

A relevant document for this discussion is FRA's 2018 report "*10 keys to effectively communicate human rights*", the result of the work elaborated in FRA's expert meetings, focus groups and practitioners' seminars between the years of 2017 and 2018. The document was updated in 2022 into a more concise version.

The 10 keys identified are the following: "1. Tell a human story", "2. Identify issues of broader interest to the general public", "3. Trigger people's core values", "4. Cut a long story short", "5. Get visual", "6. Embrace positivity", "7. Give your message an authentic voice", "8. Strengthen communication with media", "9. Diversify communication strategies to address different audiences" and "10. Ensure sufficient resources for you communication work." Can we locate dance in some of these 10 keys?

Telling a human story is a common element in all the case studies. In the case studies on human rights choreographies, "Rapport" and "Soweto" by the Cullberg ballet represent the stories of those who lived the military dictatorship in Chile and Apartheid in South Africa, exploring concepts such as social hierarchy; as an artist and choreographer, Botis Seva focuses on social and political themes, themes which assume relevance potentially to all of us. Understanding the contemporary world is a challenge possibly all societies face, and his focus on personal stories with the intent to empower marginalized people add a touch of humanity to his work. In "BLKDOG", the theme of mental health is particularly strong and evocative, a contemporary concern which resonates with several types of publics, from different walks of life and cultural, social, and political backgrounds; in the case of BRAE, several of the company's works portray numerous human rights violations in Latin America, which, even though speaking to the history of a specific world region, might also be comparable to similar situations all around the world, as they touch upon themes which many people might identify with, such as the fight for liberty, the phenomenon of political prisoners, exile because of conflicts, and violence. In Germany, Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman told a human story when they viewed dance as a way of life and transposed this idea to their creations and their educational approach, since when doing this, they touched upon the somehow universal theme of full dedication to one's craft and profession. Furthermore, they embraced the themes of the leader principle, submission and discipline, themes which resonated with many of the participants in the dance moments, either in positive or negative terms,

depending on one's experience; and in the first years of the Third Reich, the Nazi administration associated Ausdrucksanz with the idea of "germanity". Dance was one of the ways of telling the story of a peoples, the German people. In Chile, AFDD, in their fight for finding the "detenidos desaparecidos", loved ones and family members who have "disappeared" during the Chilean dictatorship, told the stories of families who have been torn apart because of repression and several human right violations. Additionally, it also tells the story of women who have used limited resources at their disposal, one of them being the music and the dance of cueca, to seek justice and to conduct a process of remembrance. The phenomenon of disappearances and the ensuing process of grieving, which often happens in the absence of a body, it is something common not only in repressive regimes, but also in conflict and wars, situations of natural disasters, and other human rights violations. In other words, the story presented by AFDD is one which can resonate with many, Chilean or not. Similarly, but with an even more encompassing approach, the example on the use of cueca sola by Collective Cueca Sola not only tells the story of "detenidos desaparecidos", but also the story of women rights abuses suffered in contemporary Chile, as well as social injustices present in the country; finally, the Pinochet regime told the human story of a nation, a peoples, when it establishes cueca as a dance and music representative of the Chilean soul. It is a narrative which might have resonated with many Chileans, as it focused on a tradition present in the country since the 19th century. Consequently, we are in the presence of instrumentalization of dance heavily moulded by a communication strategy which, even though relying on universal feelings resonating with Chileans, results in negative consequences for the human rights discourse. The story is "human" because it speaks directly to the roots of a peoples, to a custom which is known by most of the population.

The ability of telling a human story might be explained by the intent of the performers and the choreographers (an intent which in some cases was from the start framed by human rights and sometimes not), but not necessarily. One might argue that as a language using his body as its main instrument, dance might be able to speak to a wide audience, so the idea would be that dance almost always speaks about human story. We might identify our humanity in dance because we share kinaesthetic empathy with the subject who dances, and in this sense, we are able to read a human story which sheds light both on our potential and on our limitations as human beings.

Additionally, the performances described in the case studies, in one way or another, reflect themes of general interest to the societies in question: in Chile, probably the first reason explaining why the communication is engaging is because cueca is a national symbol, and many Chileans feel represented when watching, singing and dancing it. The same can be said if we think about the more subversive and contemporary uses of cueca, which denounce the human rights violations occurred during dictatorship and those already in the democratic period. Additionally, the case studies on human rights choreographies, which, although very heterogeneous, reveal a myriad of topics of interest to the common public in these societies, but potentially even to a wider public. Very often dance companies tour across countries, as the case of Botis Seva and Far From the Norm, and this hints to the possibility of art in communicating to diverse audiences topics of general interest, a general interest based on a common humanity. One can see this also in the German case study, as the themes explored by the choreographers found resonance with the German public and with the Nazi administration, as many times they could be linked with both certain German traditions, such as witch and pagan stories and myths, and with certain values apparently desirable in this new society.

In identifying issues of interest to the public, it might also be easier to trigger people's core values, an idea which illuminates the correlation between these two keys. In effect, we can relate this idea to the theoretical framework used throughout this thesis and use these two dimensions to illuminate dance's potential for human rights advocacy. As seen, dance performances, as embodied spaces of communication, can be catalysers of experiences of self-transcendence which might expose the individual to the adherence to certain values. In addition, if these experiences include in its "substance" issues of interest to the participants involved, it will possibly be easier to catalyse an experience of self-transcendence, in the sense that: the elements that are part of an experience of self-transcendence based on dance are present, such as nature, music, and space; additionally, one could feel more engaged if the performance's themes are of one's interest. Consequently, it could also be more likely that the dance triggers one's core values.

Being concise is, according to FRA, a key requirement for effective human rights communication. Human rights stories can be very complex, including historical, social, cultural, political elements, and it is not always easy to be successful in transmitting this complexity and relevance to a wide range of audiences, often with different backgrounds. Consequently, as underlined by FRA, it is important to not dwell too much on very long stories, as the message might get lost in translation. How is dance part of the picture? Is it able to cut a long story short? One might have to adopt a more critical approach here. On the one hand, dance performances aren't extraordinarily long in length, at least not when compared to a standard theatre play, movie, or concert. On the other hand, and this is an argument which can be very valid, not everyone will have the time to consistently engage in artistic experiences, especially since these kinds of experiences are normally associated with leisure and entertainment (additionally, many times they require a certain economic availability). Immediate and instant communication seem to be the norm, and this is an important element when discussing the social and political potential of dance in the human rights discourse. In other words, for some people a one hour- length dance performance might not seem very long, but others might view it as time constraining. Nevertheless, it is important to note that not all dance shows are standard and performed in theatres; dance can also be performed in the streets and squares and have a shorter duration and no costs associated. Furthermore, it is also possible that not everyone might appreciate the art of dance and might feel more inclined to engage with other types of art, but I find it premature to assume that this means that this element might reduce the potential of dance in the human rights discourse.

Regarding the visual requirement, dance inevitably fulfils this key. On the other hand, the key on "embracing positivity" is a little bit more subjective and complex when analysed with dance, in the sense that it is the task of the artist to decide how human rights are communicated throughout the choreography. Not always will human rights messages be joyful, many times they share traumatic individual and collective experiences, or, if not traumatic, nevertheless negative feelings and events emerge. It is not always possible to speak in a positive tone, as BRAE's human rights choreographies show. That is to say, what is communicated through dance can be very raw and even

disturb the audience, and some artists desire specifically that: to provoke an uncomfortable and a discomfort reaction in the spectator to force him to reflect. Nevertheless, a message of hope, as underlined by FRA, is many times necessary in human rights, to highlight that even in moments of despair, there are still some positive future possibilities. This can be seen on the case studies “Rapport” and “Soweto” by the Cullberg Ballet, and by AFDD in Chile.

One might also ask the following question: how can we communicate a human rights message authentically through dance? Several elements need to be considered and enter play here, and many of them were already addressed throughout this thesis. First, we have underlined that: dance is a performative art, and at the same time, a language. Additionally, dance represents an instance of socialization which can fulfil several functions, such as leisure and recreation, but can also be an important tool in the transmission of memories and in the sharing of important social and political messages. Dance generates an embodied space between sensed bodies and sensed and sensing bodies, a space where these bodies can communicate, even if they are not equal in verbal language; this embodied space of communication can catalyse experiences of self-transcendence in which the participants are stimulated by diverse elements, such as nature, music and space. The strength of dance in communicating human rights messages can be explained by the elements above, but one might have further reflect on the society in question: are people somehow acquainted with the type of dance which is being performed? Even if it is not a traditional national dance? Certainly, a foreign dance doesn't prevent people from receiving and understanding the message and feel kinaesthetic empathy, as the body is a common humanity, but it is possible that perhaps the interpretation of the message might be stronger, in the sense that it might feel more personal, if people are very acquainted with the dance. This matter would require further research. Key number 9, “Diversify communication strategies to address difference audiences” might help to clarify, at least partially, the argument developed above, and to reflect on possible strategies and solutions. Even when relying on the universality of the body and on human emotions, it might be difficult to measure the impact of a dance performance on the public, before and after the performance. However, even if it is difficult to quantify the potential and the impact of the performance, shaping the

communication based on the audience and ensuring that the language chosen might speak to the public (at least in a certain way) is relevant. If one decides to communicate human rights through dance, this is a question one should pose oneself. Which dance will resonate more with my audience? What theme is more relevant for them now?

Throughout the analysis of the case studies, we have seen dance emerge as human rights advocacy when Pinochet's regime declares cueca as an identity symbol of the Chileans, to better sustain their adherence to the regime, and on the other hand, when AFDD uses cueca sola to denounce the situation of "detenidos desaparecidos", and Collective Cueca Sola uses it to accuse other contemporary human rights violations. In Germany, dance emerges as tool for advocacy since the regime has tried to associate Ausdruckstanz with the idea of the "German individual", and choreographers such as Mary Wigman and Rudolf von Laban were possibly responsible for generating experiences of self-transcendence based on cult-leadership, submission, the "new dance of the white race", and other elements compatible (at least temporarily) with the Nazi regime. Additionally, throughout the subchapter on human rights choreographies, dance is also a synonym of advocacy: sometimes the theme/situation is very specific, sometimes it is not. Nevertheless, it always touches on universal matters that speak to the human rights discourse.

What kind of reflection should further research explore when it comes to dance and human rights advocacy? Besides the case studies analysed in the second chapter, are there other examples of dance as a tool for human rights advocacy?

Some contemporary examples of human rights advocacy through dance further enlighten and strengthen the argument of this thesis. Two relevant examples are the 2024 UNESCO campaign "*#DanceForEducation*" and the 2020 campaign "*When The World Pauses, Music And Dance Continue*", created by the former UN Human Rights Minority Fellow Mostafa Betaree and the NGO Spotlight Team International Art (STIA), sustained by the informal network of UN Human Rights Minority Fellows.

The 2024 UNESCO social media campaign *#DanceForEducation* was created with the purpose of promoting African Union's celebration of the year 2024 as the Year of Education. Promoting and further spreading the worldwide movement for education in Africa and all around the world, as well as the accomplishment of SDG4

“Quality Education”, the campaign envisions active online participation, specifically through TikTok and Instagram. To participate in this human rights advocacy campaign, one needs to follow 3 simple steps: record oneself, alone or in a group, dancing to the official song of the campaign “Education in the Air”, by the Ivorian band Magic System, and publish it on social media using the hashtag #DanceForEducation and tagging UNESCO. (UNESCO, n.d.-b)

Four years ago, the 2020 social media campaign “When the World Pauses, Music and Dance Continue” explores the power of dance and music in celebrating solidarity, human connection and bringing joy to people during the pandemic. Building on his engagement with art from the time he was in a refugee camp in his first year in the Netherlands, when he created the group Spotlight to explore humanitarian art, Betaree chose dance and music as main tools in the social media campaign given the essence of these two languages. When interpellated on the matter, Betaree emphasized how relevant and serious human rights issues can be portrayed and embraced by music and dance, as way to make complex things, like the refugee issue, straightforward and accessible to the audience. Music and dance were then used in the campaign as vehicles to spread hope and for people from different backgrounds around the world to share their cultures and traditions. (OHCHR, n.d.)

3.2 Dance and the gentrification of human rights

How can dance help avoiding the gentrification of human rights?

The gentrification of human rights is a relatively new concept, introduced by Andrew Fagan in his paper “*The Gentrification of Human Rights*”, a concept I lightly touched upon in the introduction. As underlined in his paper, it is a thought-provoking argument which might not be welcomed by all in the human rights community, since, as Fagan explains, the human rights community has some difficulty in accepting criticism, as critics to the system are normally interpreted as direct critics to human rights themselves. I believe it is important to challenge this limiting narrative and argue that the human

rights discourse and community should continuously develop a positive inner critical voice, especially to ensure the effectiveness of human rights communication.

As I view it, Fagan is not pointlessly criticizing the human rights system and not even neglecting the importance of international human rights law. International human rights law remains an essential element in the human rights discourse, and it is a crucial framework to ensure human rights are effectively protected and promoted, an idea acknowledged and widely supported inside the field.

Building on this idea, one could, at the same time one relies on human rights legal frameworks, explore how other disciplines approach the theme of human rights and how they can all converge in the task of promoting them. Interdisciplinarity is a key characteristic of this thesis, and in chapter 1, “*An interdisciplinary perspective with a human rights focus*”, the encompassing analysis on dance through the lens of international human rights law, politics and sociology has set the tone for the current reflection on how dance can be a tool to challenge the gentrification of human rights. Precisely, interdisciplinarity might help us immensely to propose new ideas in the human rights field, new ideas which avoid élite narratives with the potential of undermining and preventing important work and positive developments in the human rights field.

My proposal is that, on relevant occasions, evidently depending on the context, dance could be a part of a bottom-up approach to human rights, which would hopefully contribute to the reduction of the current trend of gentrification of human rights. Certainly, other arts aren't excluded by this proposal. As key elements in many cultures all around the world, several types of arts might have a potential for human rights.

One example outside the dance world is “Theatre of the Oppressed”, envisioned by the Brazilian dramaturg August Boal and inspired by Paulo Freire's “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”. Boal was recognized globally for his contributions and was eventually a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008. The method in question is based, among other elements, in the participation of the public, the Joker system (the “Joker” acting as

a mediator between the participants) and the forum theatre, which stimulates problem-solving and spontaneous interventions. (Boal, 2008)

Consequently, with my thesis I am not stating that dance is the only art that has a social and political potential in the human rights discourse, or the art that most efficiently communicates human rights. Most specifically, the research question of this thesis emerged as I have identified a phenomenon in the case studies in chapter 2 “*A performing art with social and political potential*”, which revealed a potential topic for the human rights discourse.

With the analysis of the case studies in the second chapter, this thesis was able to unveil that the social and political potential of dance in the human rights discourse emerges at least in three dimensions: dance as socialization; dance as transmission of memories; and dance as a tool for human rights advocacy, which appear as a solid base to discuss including and embracing dance in a human rights bottom-up approach.

In this section, I essentially reflect on the reasons that place dance in a position to counteract the gentrification of human rights.

Firstly, dance is most often an instance of socialization which happens most of the time independently of legal frameworks, in the sense that it is a social experience which has been occurring in societies across the centuries until nowadays, as it was highlighted in the subchapter “*Dance: a performing art*”. Its double dimension as a social and artistic experience adds complexity to a possible experience of self-transcendence as theorized by Hans Joas: the fact that we are in the presence of an experience with two different dimensions reveals the existence of several stimuli in the individuals who engage in these experiences, stimulated both by the socialization with people with similar or diverse backgrounds and by the artistic elements which normally accompany a dance moment: nature, music, space. This reveals another nuance to the possibility of dance in counteracting the gentrification of human rights, as the utopic dimension of art, able to inspire and imagine another world, could enhance even more our social experiences.

This double dimension, both social and artistic, is also identifiable when considering other types of arts: music, theatre, literature, among others.

Not only an instance of socialization, but dance is also a widespread and relevant performative art present in many cultures, with some nations and cultures identifying dance as important national element, such as the cueca in Chile or modern dance in Germany, as underlined by the German Commission for UNESCO. The fact that many peoples are already acquainted with certain genres of dance, because it is constitutive element of their culture, makes it easier for a bottom-up approach to include dance and in doing so, be successful in making people feel heard. As explored above, kinaesthetic empathy can occur even in contexts where people are not acquainted with a certain genre of dance, and across the world we can find examples of moments of socialization between different cultures anchored on dance, musical and interculturality. In Italy, for example, a 30-year-old festival on rhythms and dances of the world happens yearly in the province of Treviso, in the Veneto region, an initiative born from a home for asylum seekers in Giavera, engaging different sectors of the society. The “Giavera festival”, organized by the association “Ritmi e danze dal mondo”, includes not only dance, musical, and theatrical performances, but also debates and meetings on migration, sustainable development, geopolitics, among other themes, promoting the exchange between people of different cultures. (Ritmi e danze dal mondo, n.d.) Consequently, the main idea is that we cannot sustain that the social and political potential of dance is reduced if we are in the presence of a foreign dance. However, if the dance performance somehow resonates with one’s own culture, it is possible that the communication of human rights through dance might be more effective. This matter would also need further research. An additional element to be considered is that, besides from its social and cultural dimensions, there is a psychological dimension in dance which promotes well-being in people, and this dimension can be explored in relation to human rights. In fact, dance can positively affect human beings in different ways: cognitively, emotionally, socially, and physically. (Wargo, 2021)

Thinking on the theoretical framework used throughout the thesis, dance generates a shared embodied space between participants, as theorized by Mills, which suppresses

inequality present in “traditional” verbal language, oral and written, and creates a line of communication between sensed and sensing bodies (and in my opinion, also between sensed bodies). In other words, even if, for example, people do not share the same legal rights, they are still able to communicate in a way that establishes the democracy and equality of the bodies. Again, this is not to say that international human rights law should be neglected, not at all. However, it is necessary to explore the possibility of people having rights even when they are not yet established and stipulated on paper. In other words: which human rights instruments are already available to communities across the world, before international human rights law comes into play? The generation of a shared embodied space between participants might emerge as a powerful tool in counteracting and challenging social disparities between people and inequality. Of course, with this affirmation I am not stating that the human rights discourse should solely rely on the arts to ensure the protection of promotion of human rights. Arts emerge as a tool for social change but aren’t the only dimension that needs to be considered. As an interdisciplinary field, human rights flourish when there is cooperation not only between the different disciplines through which one might analyse human rights, but also when all dimensions of human rights are considered: culture, society, politics, geography, language, etc.

After this analysis, one can more easily make the hypothesis (which of course would need even further exploration and research) that dance can be a human rights tool in many societies, whether we are talking about traditional dance genres which communities are already acquainted with, or new experiences people take part in. Given the current gentrification of human rights and populist tendencies in liberal societies, one could further explore the role of culture, which of course includes dance, in counteracting this tendency, and following this line of thought, embracing new and non-traditional human rights promotion tools.

A good example of dance as a human rights tool is the case of a new method of human rights education (HRE) explored in a three-day workshop in the Kathmandu’s Taragaon Museum in Nepal in November 2022, where officials of both the NGO Advocacy Forum, Nepal’s Network of Disabled Conflict Victims (NNDVC) and the music school

NAAD Sangeet Pathshale met and took part in a workshop combining human rights advocacy and education with inclusive (“mixed-able”) dance. This workshop was part of a wider project entitled “Performing/Informing rights”, a project conducted in Sri Lanka and Nepal with the goal of giving people with disabilities the possibility of asserting their rights, mainly through the Right to Information (RTI). Instead of debating verbally on the Right to Information (RTI), participants had to improvise through dance. The results of the workshop revealed that Dana Mills’ concept of sic-sensuous finds relevance in practical examples. Given the heterogeneity of the participants, including lawyers and non-lawyers, the reactions of the participants revealed that the language and the art of dance made it easier to communicate a complex topic, especially to someone not acquainted with legal concepts. (Waldorf et al., 2024) During the workshop, the existing hierarchy between lawyers and non-lawyers was temporarily in pause, something which seems to confirm Mills theory on the sic-sensuous and the potential of dance in establishing equality between participants, even if such an equality is not to be found in verbal language.

3.3 The human right to dance and to enjoy dance

Considering all the analysis conducted in the subsequent chapters, my final proposal would be for the academic community to consider the existence of a human right to dance and to enjoy dance, and to reflect on the implications of acknowledging this human right. With this, I am not stating with complete certainty that such a right exists, but that this idea should be further explored, given the social and political potential of dance unveiled throughout this thesis.

In the following paragraphs I explore how one could frame dance as a human right from an international human rights law, political and sociological point of view, following in this way the interdisciplinarity line of thought which has characterized this thesis.

International human rights law lens

According to the human rights framework, the main argument to sustain such an idea would be the need protect the individuals who dance, as the individual is at the centre of the human rights discourse.

As highlighted in the first chapter, several are the human rights connected to dance, such as the right to the realization of cultural rights and the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community, freedom of opinion and expression, and the freedom of peaceful assembly, as well as the right to strike, the right to education and the rights of human rights defenders. At the same time, this could be complemented with other international human rights legal instruments which intend to protect culture, such as the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which sustains that culture is the “*common heritage of humanity*” and the 2007 Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights. ’

More precisely, when proposing a human right to dance and to enjoy dance, one can clearly see dance emerging as a cultural right, as well as an element of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which UNESCO defines in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage as:

“The “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.(...) “(UNESCO, n.d.-c) In fact, dance can be found in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of many countries, which further strengthens this argument.

Nevertheless, I believe it could be interesting to further consider other rights, such as the right to peaceful assembly, the right to strike, and freedom of opinion and expression, as they have emerged directly from the case studies' analysis. In all of them we have seen how dance is able to communicate opinions and expression, as well being the motivator and/or the tool for peaceful assembly, an assembly which can occur in many scenarios: in theatres, in squares, in the streets. Additionally, in some of the examples the individuals who danced emerged as human rights defenders, such as the members of AFDD and Collective Cueca Sola in Chile, but also the creators of human rights choreographies who have decided to use the art of dance to communicate human rights.

Political lens

In political terms, dance could be recognized as a human right because, as theorized by Dana Mills, dance is able to create an embodied space of communication between the participants, whether we are talking about the relationship between dancer-dancer or dancer-spectator (as I have highlighted in the first chapter, I believe it is also possible to include the dimension dancer-dancer), establishing equality between the participants and revealing a political dimension of dance. An important detail in this framework would be that “dancer” would not only be associated with the idea of “professional dancer”, but it would also include people who engage in the activity very sporadically or amatorially, and consequently, be more inclusive.

Throughout the first chapter, one was able to identify that dance has a place in politics, and this political potential found practical examples in the second chapter, in several moments: when cueca sola was part of a television slot in the “NO” political campaign for 1988 Chilean elections; when modern dance was instrumentalized in the Olympic Youth, the opening night performance of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games to represent the essence of the German people; or when the Cullberg Ballet decided to explore the themes of Apartheid in South Africa and the Chilean dictatorship in their shows: these were all political choices, maybe even more than artistic. Essentially, they were all political statements.

Consequently, it might be interesting to further analyse this political dimension of dance, particularly in terms of the potential of dance for human rights advocacy. In other words, we would be looking simultaneously at new ways of viewing politics, expanding its traditional sense, as proposed by Mills, and considering possible new ways of advocating for human rights.

Sociological lens

Sociologically speaking, dance could be recognized as a human right because it allows individuals to engage in several instances of socialization, instances which can catalyse experiences of self-transcendence as theorized by Hans Joas: experiences which generate moments when commitments to values take root in the human personality.

As explored in the first chapter, a sociology of dance does not yet exist. Nevertheless, the analysis reveals that there might be a relevance in the existence of this discipline, as dance, as an instance of socialization, can be both a reflection and produce an impact in society. A sociology of dance would explore both dimensions: how dance is able to express values, cultural and social messages, and identities; as well as the effect society might have on the body and the way people across the world dance.

Precisely, the body, as a common humanity, can communicate through the language of dance a myriad of messages to be decided by the individual or the group. Consequently, as we have seen, the body is also able to communicate human rights through dance. This realization opens a myriad of interpretations and reflections on the role of dance in society, as well as the relevance of culture in the human rights discourse, which, although widely acknowledged, could be further explored.

Merging the three perspectives

Proposing a human right to dance and to enjoy dance finds relevance in all the three perspectives. The proposal is supported theoretically by the international human rights law framework, which functions as the frame of the proposal. Inside this frame, one can find the combination of Dana Mills' sic-sensuous and Hans Joas' self-transcendence,

which reveal how dance might have an impact on the human rights discourse. When a relationship is established between dancer-dancer and/or dancer-spectator, an embodied space is created, which prompts communication between the participants, a communication based on the equality of speaking beings, even if they do not find equality in verbal language. These “sic-sensuous” moments, on the other hand, can catalyse experiences of self-transcendence, in which individuals go beyond their own egos and realize both their potential and vulnerabilities as human beings. Such experiences can produce changes in the individuals, mainly in terms of value commitment.

Consequently, the human rights discourse could further explore this potential. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that this thesis is not the first time that dance as a performative art has been acknowledged in the human rights discourse.

As underlined above, there is a very wide number of dances which figure as UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage. The database is very extensive, and some examples include: *dabkeh*, a traditional dance in Palestine; the music and dance of the merengue in the Dominican Republic; Fest-Noz, a festive meeting grounded on the collective practice of traditional Breton dances in France; the royal ballet of Cambodia; the music and dance of tango in Argentina; the Kalela dance in Zambia, among others. (UNESCO, n.d.-a)

Additionally, the International Dance Council (CID), an umbrella organisation and official partner of UNESCO operating in Paris, acknowledges the universal character of dance both as a means of education, as an artistic expression, and as a research theme. The organisation, embracing all forms of dance and founded in 1973, includes a very wide membership, which ranges from around 2,000 associations, schools, federations, companies, and around 10,000 individuals (educators, choreographers, historians, etc) across over 170 countries, and cooperates with an eclectic type of entities, such as international organizations and institutions and national and local governments. (The International Dance Council CID, n.d.-b) Some of CID’s permanent programs include the celebration of Dance Day on the 29th of April; the online database Global Dance Directory; the implementation of projects financed by UNESCO and cooperation with NGOs partners of UNESCO; the organization of a dance research congress and

international conferences; a certification of dance studies, among other initiatives. (The International Dance Council CID, n.d.-a)

Keeping in mind that the theme of dance is not new in the human rights discourse, it just seems to remain widely unexplored, this thesis proposes that this performative art, both as an artistic and social expression, be further considered in the debate.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework used throughout the thesis, combining Mills' sic-sensuous and Joas self-transcendence, might become an inspiration for further research on dance and human rights, as well the connection between human rights and other arts, particularly how engagement with the arts, either from a professional or non-professional perspective, might lead to commitment to values consistent with or contrary to the human rights discourse.

Debating on and potentially acknowledging a human right to dance and to enjoy dance could further enrich this analysis, and consequently lead to several implications for the human rights discourse.

Firstly, it could enhance the relevance of culture in the human rights discourse by embracing non-traditional theoretical approaches coming from cultural studies, politics and sociology, which could be part of a more holistic approach to human rights. Secondly, recognising the human right to dance and to enjoy dance would probably imply the recognition of the human right to other arts, such as music, theatre, art, etc. Only recognizing the human right to dance and to enjoy dance would promote an élite approach to the arts, which would possibly translate into a reinforced gentrification of human rights. Nevertheless, research would need to thoroughly explore the social and political potential of other arts to the human rights discourse. Thirdly, if one considers the acknowledgment of a human right to dance and to enjoy dance, a possible consequence could be a higher funding for dance, and generally speaking to the arts. Additionally, it could also mean more economic availability for human rights programs having dance and arts at its core, for example educational programs; as well as viewing dance both as a tool and as the main theme in human rights advocacy campaigns.

Conclusion

This thesis investigated the connection between dance and human rights, most specifically, if dance has a social and political potential in the human rights discourse. The analysis has revealed that yes, this potential indeed exists, even if it remains widely unexplored. Most specifically, this potential might be characterized by positive or negative nuances, depending on the actors, motivations, modalities, and context where a connection between dance and human rights is established.

The subchapter “*Dance: a performing art*” part of the first chapter “*An interdisciplinary perspective with a human rights focus*” has revealed that the performing art of dance has a multifaceted character: perceived as an activity which communicates an idea or a feeling, as an aesthetic product generated by the individual through human motion and a way for humanity to establish a pattern of movement, the insights of several authors were taken into consideration when proposing a comprehensive (but inevitably incomplete) definition of dance. In addition to the elements presented above, dance was also defined as a non-verbal method of communication, as a well as a practice inside a group, a social behaviour, and a method of collective cohesion. All these elements have converged in the idea that the very own universality of dance as a non-verbal language allows the proposal of dance as a tool to efficiently communicate human rights.

The subsequent subchapters of the first chapter have explored the link between dance and international human rights law, politics, and sociology, to provide an interdisciplinary analysis in line with the essence of the human rights discourse.

In the subchapter “*Dance through the lens of international human rights law*”, this thesis unveiled and identified the human rights most evidently connected to dance, such as the right to the realization of cultural rights and the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful assembly. Other rights have also emerged, such as the right to strike, the right to cultural diversity, the right to education and the rights of human rights defenders (HRDs), which reveals that dance is robustly protected by the human rights’ legal

framework. In the subchapter “*Dance through the lens of politics*”, the connection between dance and politics revealed that the most relevant theory on the matter was envisioned by Dana Mills, and that many other dance scholars have also approached this theme and gave their contributions. On the other hand, the subchapter “*Dance through the lens of sociology*” revealed that, even if the body has been studied by sociology, sociological approaches to dance are practically inexistent, and one cannot yet talk about a sociology of dance. As underlined in the first chapter, one of the proposals of this thesis is the development of a sociology of dance, a discipline which would study the reciprocal relationship between dance and society, with more emphasis on how dance conveys values, messages and identities.

Given this information, there was more academic freedom in the choice of a theoretical framework to analyse dance’s social and political potential. The idea explored in this thesis was to combine Dana Mills’ concept of sic-sensuous, an idea which postulates that dance creates an embodied space of communication between sensed and sensing bodies (to which I have added the dimension sensed-sensed bodies), establishing equality between participants, and Hans Joas’ theory on self-transcendence, which was applied to dance, instead of religion. Accordingly, the case studies were analysed through a theoretical framework that suggests that the sic-sensuous moments generated in and by dance function as catalysts of experiences of self-transcendence which, because they force the individual to go beyond the boundaries of his ego, might reinforce the grounding of certain values. These values might be in concordance or contrary to the human rights discourse, depending on the actors, motivations, modalities, and context observed in each specific situation.

The second chapter “*A performing art with social and political potential*” began with a brief introduction identifying and analysing the connecting dots between arts and human rights. It revealed that arts may serve many purposes in social and political movements, helping with the movement’s definition and conceptualisation, giving a shape to the drivers of the movement, as well as consisting in a powerful tool of communication both to insiders and outsiders. Additionally, arts can also be a part of practice movements, a concept introduced by Julia Eckert, movements which embody social change in a less structured/organized way. This very brief introduction has also highlighted that very few

research has been conducted on how human rights are put together by social movements, and even less research on how arts are part of the picture. The introduction has also explored how perhaps the connecting dot between arts and human rights is idealism, in the sense that arts can provide a picture of how the world might be or could have been. Consequently, they emerge as a language able to communicate a multiplicity of messages.

After this overview, the main essence of the second chapter consisted in the analysis of five case studies: two main case studies, Chile's national dance, cueca, through different social and political contexts and German modern dance and its relationship with Nazism; and three minor case studies, focusing on human rights choreographies: the work of Cullberg Ballet in Sweden, Barro Rojo Arte Escénico (BRAE) in Mexico, and the creations of the English choreographer Botis Seva and his company Far From the Norm. The choice of these case studies stemmed from an ensemble of reasons: the need for social, cultural, and political heterogeneity; the desire to understand if dance's social and political potential is identifiable only inside social and political movements, or if it can also be found in other contexts; and the requirement to understand if dance's social and political potential might be positive or negative for the human rights discourse.

The case studies have revealed that the social and political of dance for the human rights discourse indeed emerges, both inside and outside social and political movements. Additionally, this potential can be either positive or negative. The potential of dance and its consequences for the human rights discourse are dependent on a series of variables, mainly the actors involved, the motivations, the modalities, and the context. Nevertheless, the fact that this potential was identified in different geographical, cultural, social and political scenarios is a synonym of a potential which transcends barriers.

From the second chapter it emerged that dance can be both a tool for indoctrination, if instrumentalized to support values contrary to human rights, such as those promoted by repressive regimes, or a tool for human rights advocacy. The first possibility was identified in the actions of the Pinochet regime and the Nazi administration, nevertheless dance's negative potential can be identified even if the actors' intentions are not explicitly clear, as it was explored in the analysis of Rudolf von Laban and Mary

Wigman. The second possibility also emerged, mainly in the work of AFDD and Collective Cueca Sola in Chile, as well as in all the three case studies on human rights choreographies. Additionally, the potential of dance seems even more powerful when the citizens of the culture in question are somehow acquainted with the specific type of dance being performed, whether because the dance is an element already part of their culture or because it evokes roots and traditions which resonate with people.

Additionally, whether this potential is identifiable in all the arts remains a matter for further inquiry. Research could possibly delve into Hans Joas' theory on self-transcendence, and combine it with other political theories, given that Mills' theory focuses solely on dance. Nevertheless, it also might be interesting to understand if Mills' concept of *sic-sensuous* can also be applied to other arts, as the idea of establishing a line of communication between participants and generating an embodied space based on equality seems plausible even when we think of music, theatre, etc.

Even though research suggest that the potential of dance is present, this thesis faced some limitations, which in a way reduces the impact of the proposals. There were three main limitations in this thesis: firstly, it is impossible to prove precisely if from Chile to Sweden people had an experience of self-transcendence through dance. One might only make a hypothesis based on the actors, the motivations, and the modalities involved in case studies analysed throughout the second chapter. Eventually, only the individuals would be able to answer this question, and further research should probably include interviews to spectators and dancers. Secondly, even if in some of the case studies we have information on the actors, we still do not fully know what relationships and social hierarchies between them were, and if they viewed dance as a tool for advocacy or not. Nevertheless, this information does not undermine dance's social and political potential in the human rights discourse: the potential is still there even if actors are not completely aware of it, and even if they do not make a reflection on their own intentions. Thirdly, it was not possible in all the case studies to understand why people engaged in these dance performances and if they identified the links between the performance and human rights. Were they able to see the connection? This is a relevant question for further discussion, in the sense that even if dance's social and political potential exists, for it to be explored and developed actors needs to be aware of it.

The third chapter “*A possible role for dance in the human rights discourse*” has tried to draw an analysis from the case studies, eventually identifying three dimensions in which dance appears to have a social and political potential for the human rights discourse: dance can be an instance of socialization, a way of transmitting memories, and a human rights advocacy tool. In the third chapter, this thesis has tried to read the case studies through all these lenses, and it proposed that dance could be part of a bottom-up approach to human rights, to avoid its current trend of gentrification, as identified by Andrew Fagan.

The hypothesis on why dance could be a good element part of a bigger strategy of tackling the gentrification of human rights relied on several ideas. First, that dance is most often an instance of socialization which happens independently of legal frameworks, and that its double dimension as a social and artistic experience presents individuals and groups with a series of stimuli. These stimuli, mainly nature, music, and space, can therefore lead to experiences of self-transcendence as theorized by Hans Joas. Secondly, dance is a widespread and relevant performative art present in many cultures, with some nations and cultures identifying dance as an important cultural and national element. Additionally, there is also a psychological dimension in dance which promotes well-being in people, and this dimension can be explored in relation to human rights. Furthermore, as Mills theorized, dance generates an embodied space between participants, which can suppress inequality present in traditional verbal language, oral and written.

Drawing on this idea, the third chapter ended with another proposal for the academic community: to consider the existence of a human right to dance and to enjoy dance, a proposal framed by international human rights law, politics and sociology, respecting in this way the interdisciplinary structure of this thesis. The proposal assumes relevance given that, although dance is not a new theme in the human rights discourse, it remains widely unexplored, even when a considerable number of dances figure in UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Suggesting a human right to dance and to enjoy dance would potentially result in a series of implications, particularly, enhancing even more the role of culture in the human rights discourse and contributing to an even more holistic approach to human rights.

Additionally, it would probably lead to the recognition of the human right to other arts, such as music and theatre, and consequently advance the research on the social and political potential of arts for the human rights discourse. Another domino effect would probably be higher funding for human rights programs centred around dance, for example education programs, as well as using dance, and consequently other arts, as a central tool in human rights advocacy campaigns.

The final question for the reader therefore remains: is there a human right to dance and to enjoy dance?

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