

MOVEMENT NOTATION : PHENOMENON - LANGUAGE - NOTATION

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This paper is focussed on a specific system for notating movement of the *human* body, "THE ESHKOL-WACHMAN MOVEMENT NOTATION" (EWMN), conceived and developed in Israel by Noa Eshkol and Avraham Wachman. The subject is directly related to issues of ORDER-DISORDER in the broader context of Phenomenon - Language - Notation interrelations.

The paper is touching upon general problems of notating movement of the human body, and clarifying the difference between "Dance Notation" and Movement Notation". It is presenting the particular parameters and characteristics of the EWMN system.

The term "Language" is almost always aiming at a "Spoken language" and almost all notations are notations of SPOKEN LANGUAGES. These languages have been the most powerfully ORDERING TOOLS" which enabled Man to bring order into his perception and understanding of Phenomena around him, as well as to express his emotions, desires, etc., and share the experience with others.

A NOTATION, is a VISUAL REPRESENTATION of a LANGUAGE. By definition it is a MODEL OF ORDER. Notations of spoken languages ("verbal Notations" of all kinds and types) are powerful vehicles which have enhanced and revolutionized Man's use of language in all fields, like Speech ;Recording, performing and Communicating Information ;Inquiry into and Analysis of Phenomena towards building a Body of Knowledge (Science); creating Compositions (Art, Design), etc. All this entails a systematic treatment and development of the Language itself.

Although spoken languages existed long before the corresponding notations, it is hard to imagine the levels Human Civilizations arrived at without Notations.

As compared with notations of spoken languages, and even with Musical Notations, "Movement notation" is a very young branch on the "Notations Tree", tracing back (even if we include very primitive beginnings) only about five centuries (the reason why so late, should be discussed). Almost all attempts were actually "Dance Notations". A "Dance Notation" is representing only a specific choice of positions, gestures and steps which are being used in that specific style. A proper MOVEMENT NOTATION should enable, in principle, to write down (within the limits of the system) all that can be performed by the moving body. Actually, not only by a human body, but all which can be performed by a "linkage" which is constructed of rods and joints. thus it can be (and has been) applied in very different usages like Physical Training, Dance (Classical, Modern, Folk) Animal movement, Deaf and Mute language, Graphic Art, and more.

While in the Verbal Notations, the spoken text (the Language) existed before the writing (the Notation), one learns that with the Movement Notation, it is the Notation which provides for being able to SPEAK about the phenomenon. that means: Breaking down the complex

phenomenon of Movement so that the different parameters of this phenomenon are identified and systematically built up as a coherent system of representation, i.e a SYSTEM OF NOTATION, enables us, at last, to have a coherent language dealing with movement. This will be elaborated in the paper. In a nutshell: while with spoken languages the development sequential order is

Phenomenon > language > Coherent Notation

with Movement it is :

Phenomenon > Notation > Coherent language

This can also be said about the Musical Notation.

In comparing systems of Notation, the pragmatic purpose of a Notation provides us with criteria for assessing the accuracy, efficiency, flexibility and universality of the system.