

**INTRODUCTION:
PHILOSOPHICAL MOVEMENTS AND SCHOOLS
FOR SOMAESTHETICS**

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Significant philosophies always create a philosophical movement independently of the philosopher's intention. Nevertheless, in the present situation of philosophical pluralism (the modern and postmodern democracies allow the abundance of philosophical movements), it is worth establishing philosophical schools since otherwise, people cannot hear and recognize even the most important new ideas: one philosopher's voice sinks into the ocean of books and online journals as a drop in the sea. It also depends on personality. Richard Rorty never wanted to establish neither a philosophical movement nor a philosophical school. He was perhaps too shy to create and organize such social phenomena. As a founder of neopragmatism, he left this question on time. Contrary to him, Richard Shusterman, Rorty's disciple in the field of neopragmatism, is the person who likes to create and support philosophical schools. As a result of his efforts, there are plenty of philosophical schools, forums, and institutions all over the world, which deal with somaesthetics that was invented by him. It is beyond question that somaesthetics has become a philosophy and a movement. It has become a philosophy since Shusterman interprets philosophy as an ethical art of living and his pragmatist aesthetics plays a central role in it. However, it has also become an international, philosophical movement since somaesthetics covers already an interdisciplinary field. It is so "because the body – as our tool of tools and the central site of our experience -- is crucially related to the many disciplines that concern human flourishing: not only the arts but politics, education, historical and social sciences as well as health sciences and even technology."¹ It follows obviously from the situation that somaesthetics

embraces so many different tasks, which cannot be covered by one philosopher's time and energy. It needs a philosophical movement.

Following the successes of the conferences in 2014 ("Aesthetic Experience and Somaesthetics," Budapest, Hungary) and 2017 ("The Soma As the Core of Aesthetics, Ethics, and Politics," Szeged, Hungary), which drew over twenty participants in both cases from across the globe, we also organized a conference in 2018: "Somaesthetics: Between the Human Body and Beyond" (Szeged, Hungary). The conference of 2014 resulted in papers already published in our indexed journal, *Pragmatism Today* and others published in a volume with Brill.² Our new conference sought to broaden the conversation of somaesthetics by engaging not only aesthetics but also the other fields of culture. We invited not only aestheticians who deal with somaesthetics, but also experts, teachers, and researchers in the field of arts, philosophy, ethics, life sciences, social sciences, and politics. Hungarian participants established the *Hungarian Somaesthetic Forum* and connected their work to the above mentioned international, philosophical movement of somaesthetics.

The present issue of the *Pragmatism Today* delivers mostly the best papers of the Szeged conference of 2017. It starts with a keynote essay of Richard Shusterman followed by an interview with him (ch. I). Then we offer a selection of the papers connected to somaesthetics and given at the Szeged conference of 2017 (ch. II and III). Nevertheless, we also publish more general papers on pragmatism (ch. IV), among others from Richard J. Bernstein and Alan Malachowski, and we close our present issue by two interesting book reviews (ch. V.).

Shusterman's essay („Body Consciousness and the Excentric Self: Between Plessner and Somaesthetics") provides a newly developed argument against Merleau-Ponty's standpoint on the basis of Helmuth Plessner's philosophical anthropology. This rich, thoroughgoing

¹ „Richard Shusterman in Budapest. An Interview" In: *Pragmatism Today*. Volume 5, Issue 2, Winter 2014, p. 10.

² *Aesthetic Experience and Somaesthetics (Studies in Somaesthetics, Book 1)*. Brill Academic Publisher, 2018.

article investigates the question, „how one can know one’s body or somatic self”? After a short introduction to somaesthetics’ essence and purposes, Shusterman explains the German distinction between „Leib” („the lived, feeling body or the body as intentionality or subject”) and „Körper” („the physical body as object”). He makes it clear that not only Husserl with his concept of „Leibkörper,” but also Merleau-Ponty preserved the traditional philosophical dualism between subject and object, mind and body inherited from Plato and Descartes. Shusterman offers, on the one hand, an effective criticism both Husserl’s and Merleau-Ponty’s standpoint on the basis of Plessner’s „excentric positionality,” which overcomes this dualism, saying that we should not conceive „the positional center, the subject, as a fixed reality” but it is a socially and situationally determined, always changing position of „Leib sein” („being a Leib”) and “Körper haben” (“having a physical body”). On the other hand, Shusterman develops further his somaesthetics on the basis of this excentric positionality, which makes possible the smooth and rapid transitions not only between different social roles of an individual, but also the transitions between the spontaneous and the reflective self-consciousness. – László Kőszeghy collected very interesting questions in his interview, which helps us to understand Shusterman’s somaesthetics much better.

We can find the best lectures of the Szeged conference in 2017 in the next two chapters. In chapter II, „Soma, Politics, Ethics,” we might read the paper of Matthew Crippen („The Soma in City Life: Cultural, Political and Bodily Aesthetics of Mandalay’s Water Festival”) who shows „bodily perceptions and practices and their place in our experience” in the vein of Shusterman’s „analytic somaesthetics.” „Mandalay’s Water Festival is overwhelmingly a shared experience, but not just because it coordinates people into group celebration. It is also shared by virtue of supplying a kind bacchanal rupture that and erodes normal boundaries between self and other. This rupture relates to the political dimensions of the festival, which seems a pre-

reflective protest reaction that governing authorities attempt to control in order to keep the population in check.” Manuela Massa focuses in her paper („The Political Role of the Body”) on the question „How should we conceive of the female body in the context of a patriarchal society in which woman is dominated by male authority?” She explains to us Simone de Beauvoir’s solution in *The Second Sex* and shows its legal and political dimension. Elizabeth Kurian tries to explain in her paper (“From *Homo Sacer* to the Yogi: The Soma as the Awakened Sacred Body”) how „proper somatic training, as well as conditioning in mindful awareness, can foster inner self-discipline.” She also illustrates how somaesthetic practices can help us to improve not only our bodily but also our mental capacities, and what kind of ethical and political problems should be solved even by those people who understood that „there is nothing more beautiful or sacred than devoting one’s life for the wellbeing of fellow beings.” Éva Podlovics begins her experiment with re-constructing Heidegger’s ethics („The Role of Others to Become Ethical in Heideggerian Sense and its Relation to Pragmatism”), and then shows the similarities between his early philosophy and pragmatism.

In chapter III, “Soma, Art, Technology,” we can read somaesthetic analyses of dancing, singing, music, and technology. The first two papers deal with dance and its somaesthetic interpretation. Katalin Vermes (“Whose Body? The Phenomenology of Somatic Group Dynamics”) compares, on the one hand, the existential and intersubjective aspects of Shusterman’s somaesthetics and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological description. Having almost the same topic of Shusterman’s essay, it is worth reading the two texts together. On the other hand, Vermes shows us her specialty, the psychodynamic movement and dance therapy, which is a Hungarian psychotherapeutic method. Nóra Horváth (“As Close As Possible to the Ungraspable – Somaesthetical and Deleuzian Investigations on the Choreographical Work of Pál Frenák”) tries to work out the principles of a new dance philosophy. She would like to integrate Deleuze’s

sign theory with Shusterman's somaesthetics and use it as the basis of her new project. Anne Tarvainen and Stefano Marino wrote on singing and rock music. Tarvainen ("Democratizing Singing: Somaesthetic Reflections on Vocality, Deaf Voices, and Listening") explains to us the anti-democratic feature of our societies in connection with the somatic norms of singing. Presenting the case of a deaf popular music singer, she shows us astonishing situations how people reject the nonnormative voices and bodies. Marino („A Somaesthetic Approach to Rock Music: Some Observations and Remarks") defends popular art, especially rock music in the vein of Shusterman's somaesthetics against the charges of the philosophers, first of all, that of the Frankfurt School, who represent the view that there is an abyss between high culture and popular culture. Robert Smid ("Bodily Techniques of the Digital: Remarks on the Spoof of Immateriality and the Revolt of Somatic Gestures") shows and defends the bodily techniques of the digital "as an autonomous branch of cultural techniques." His text represents the best posthumanist arguments for our digital future.

In our next chapter (IV. "On Pragmatism") we are glad to publish Richard J. Bernstein article ("Ruth Anna Putnam: A Pragmatic Thinker for our Time") on Ruth Anna Putnam's pragmatist philosophy. As Bernstein says, his main aim is to show the originality of her imaginative and vital pragmatic thinking. Alan Malachowski offers a shaded version of Richard Rorty's Nietzsche-interpretation by the help of Bernd Magnus contribution. Martin Ejsing Christensen („Is John Dewey's Thinking about Social Inquiry a Historic Failure?") proves the positive features of Dewey's social philosophy against Isabelle Stengers, and Olivier Gaudin („Pragmatist Views of Urban Experience: Sensorial Perception in Urban Studies") shows „how classical pragmatist views of sensorial perception may contribute to current research on urban life."

Already from this short description of our issue, the interested reader can see the richness of topics and approaches related to pragmatism, especially to somaesthetics. As the editor of the present selection, I hope that transforming a little bit the meaning of the Latin phrase "Habent sua fata libelli," our articles will also find their understanding readers!