

# PHENOMENOLOGY IN ACTION: DANCE IN SUMER:

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Unfortunately, in sport research circles, philosophy and history have become separate intradisciplinary approaches. History, on the whole, has limited itself to examining the developmental occurrences and the influences of sporting activity on the human experience. On the other hand, human movement philosophy has concerned itself with such ultimate questions as the purpose, conduct, and character of man in sport. The two approaches have evolved into highly organized intradisciplinary areas with different foci, separate research organizations and different goals. This bifurcation is unfortunate since fundamentally the two are complementary in revealing the essential place of sport in human life. Sport philosophy and history are intimately connected and research needs to concern itself with both in order to understand sport's development.

The purpose of this paper is exactly that: a phenomenological attempt to describe dance in Western Civilization's most ancient culture. Specifically, the author attempted to become immersed in Sumerian culture and depict through discussion, dress, and action Sumerian Dance. Within this portrayal was a review of Sumerian musicology, mythology, history, culture and dance through work at the London British Museum and the University of Chicago Oriental Institute. Reference was made to work by Woolley, Kramer, Frankfort, Jacobson, and Kang.

Phenomenological reference was through the use of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophic description of intentionality, the lived-experience, and subjectivity. According to Merleau-Ponty, the historian must not be the dispassionate observer in the stands watching the historical milieu, rather, the historian must become an active participant. The historian must become at-one with the contest in order to appreciate and understand the spectacle as it actually is. In this sense, it is obvious that we drag our existence with us, but we can attempt to return to that time if we understand our own bias and prejudice. Hence, this paper is such an attempt: to rediscover dance as it was performed and appreciated at that time and that place.

The dance, the music, the movement, and the chant were described and analyzed as to their content form and meaning. The piece de resistance was the actual dance presented with harp and chant accompaniment. Slides were offered as the presentation was given to prepare the listener for the phenomenological experience. The difficulty of this presentation was the phenomenological experience for the spectators since they were not actually participating in the dance.



Sharon Stoll performed an ancient Sumerian dance titled "de resistance."