

## INTERPRETATION OF A TATTOED HUMAN BODY IN TERMS OF THE XX<sup>th</sup> CENTURY NEW PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS

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*The article is dedicated to the philosophical interpretation of the tattooed body and the practices of tattooing in present-day Western culture. It investigates tattoo regarding leading movements of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy - phenomenology and existentialism. It provides a survey of completely new attitude towards human body, which was formed in course of these movements, and explanation of practice of tattoo in terms phenomenology and existentialism. The article displays the wish of getting tattooed through the anthropological conception of human as an artificial being, which seeks standing out against the nature, in this way particularly. It also shows how tattoo styles can illustrate trends of contemporary philosophy and intellectual and spiritual search of western people.*

*Keywords: philosophy, tattoo art, human body, corporeity, phenomenology, styles of tattoo, symbols, the law of natural artificiality.*

*Ця стаття присвячена філософській інтерпретації татуюваного тіла та практиці татуювання у сучасній західній культурі. Татуювання досліджується у світлі таких філософських напрямів ХХ століття, як екзистенціалізм та феноменологія. В статті коротко оглядаються зміни у сприйнятті тілесності, що сформувалися в курсі цих течій, та пояснення практики татуювання в їх контексті. Показано, що бажання набивати татуювання пов'язано з природою людини як «штучного створіння», за антропологічною концепцією Х.Плеснера, як спосіб протистояти натуральності. Також, розглянуто, як стилі тату відображають світогляд та ілюструють ідеї сучасної філософії.*

*Ключові слова: філософія, татуювання, людське тіло, тілесність, феноменологія, стилі татуювання, символи, закон природної штучності.*

*Стаття посвячена філософській інтерпретації татуюваного тіла та практиці татуювання в сучасній західній культурі. Татуювання досліджується в контексті таких напрямів філософії ХХ століття, як екзистенціалізм та феноменологія. В статті поміщені огляди змін у сприйнятті тілесності, які сформувалися в рамках цих течій, та пояснення практики татуювання в їх світлі. Об'ясняється природа татуювання як способу протистояти натуральності з точки зору антропологічної концепції людини як «штучного» істотного.*

*Показано, як стилі татуювання відображають світогляд та ілюструють ідеї сучасної філософії.*

*Ключевые слова: философия, искусство татуировки, человеческое тело, телесность, феноменология, стили татуировки, символы, закон естественной искусственности.*

Tattoos were a symbol of exoticism for the leisure classes at the turn of the twentieth century; a source of pride and patriotism for military men serving in World War I and II; and a mark of differentiation and affiliation for prisoners, gang members, punks, and other socially and self-proclaimed deviants for over a hundred years. At the turn of the twenty-first century, tattoos are mainstream among all classes of Americans, Europeans and East-Europeans [2: 7].

So, the issue of tattooing is relevant for society today. It's also topical particularly for philosophers, as we will show below. We consider that some trends in culture can represent more general tendency of society development and processes therein. And the popularity of tattoo is also such trend, which indicates the changes in the understanding of body in XX century. From the philosophic point of view, it is interesting how people claim their worldview, calling it their "philosophy", through the permanent pictures on skin. The investigation of tattooed body may be a useful contribution to aesthetics and understanding of human corporeity, in the exploration of the archaic elements in modern human culture [5: 120].

The literature review. This investigation is based on the works of the philosophers of the XX century, who gave new rendering to the theory of the corporeality: M. Merleau-Ponty, J.P.Sartre and on the fundamental opus of Ukrainian scholar O.Homilko. Historical and cultural aspects of the tattoo practice were described by C. Levi-Strauss and I. Melnykov. M. Mednikova contributed anthropological research of tattoo. The issue of tattoo is much more often reviewed in historical essays of the investigators of Native American history and culture. So the subject of tattooed body is quite new and unexplored for philosophy.

The research aim is to interpret tattooed human body in terms of philosophy, considering new philosophical ideas of XX century. The subject is tattooed body.

It should be underlined that without the alterations of the vision of corporeity tattoo couldn't gain so much popularity in Europe and USA. This time can be called the time of redemption to human body. "Sinful flesh" was somewhat detracted by Christian doctrine. The tradition of Modern period, starting with Descartes, proclaimed mind an essential element of human being, more connected to Ego, to the person, and body was treated like a part of material world and like some external object. This position affects European's attitude towards the body by nowadays. But in the XX century this dualism was reconceived. First steps in this field was taken by H.Plessner, A.Helen, E.Husserl and M. Merleau-Ponty. H. Plessner made a requirement that human being should be viewed integrally, as a unity of soul and body. E. Husserl drew attention to the meaning of "my living body" as the source of experience.

M. Merleau-Ponty published a book “Phenomenology of Perception” that brought a marked change to the discourse of mind-body dualism. The philosopher argued that the significance of the body is too often underestimated and considered simply an object that a transcendent mind orders to perform some functions. Merleau-Ponty claims that one’s own body (le corps propre) is not just a thing, an outer object, but is also a necessary condition of experience. And it is an ontologically important part of human existence, a constituent of the perceptual openness to the world.

In the “Phenomenology of Perception” Merleau-Ponty wrote: “Insofar as I have hands, feet; a body, I sustain around me intentions which are not dependent on my decisions and which affect my surroundings in a way that I do not choose” [4: 511].

Body is like a bridge between consciousness and the world. “I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body” [4: 95].

Merleau-Ponty appreciates phenomena of mind, but he insists that thought and sensation as such occur only against a background of perceptual activity that we always already understand in bodily terms, and our body is engaged in it. As we concern body this way, we discover new meanings of tattoo. Tattoo is an imprint of person’s intentions on this “medium” with the world - his or her body, it is a capture of one’s experience. The act of tattooing has a purpose to embody, to incarnate one’s ideas, will, intentions.

The body has different modes of manifestation. The body manifests itself within experience in one way, and there is another quite different experience of the body given from the perspective of the other. Sartre distinguishes the body as it is “for me” or “for oneself and the body as it is “for others” or “for the other”. These dimensions are, Sartre claims, “incommunicable” [7: 18]. The second ontological dimension of the body refers to the manner in which my body is experienced and indeed utilized by the other. Sartre posits a third ontological dimension that is far more complicated; it is the manner in which “I exist for myself as a body known by the other”. This third dimension of the body includes the manner in which experience it under the gaze or “look” of the other. I experience how the other sees me, even in the physical absence of the other: “With the appearance of the Other’s look, I experience the revelation of my being-as-object” [8: 461].

Regarding this position, we see, that tattoo is an attempt of construction, creation of oneself under the stare of the Other and, hereafter, a new interpretation of a person for oneself. Making tattoo gives a possibility to create additional details in somebody’s vision of “Me”. And it is like an invitation to play a game with the denotation of this sign, what it means to the tattooed person, and how the spectator interprets it.

Human as an artificial being. Helmuth Plessner’s law of natural artificiality. In the work “The Levels of the Organic and Man” the anthropologist says that human being as a life form is incomplete and has not sufficient natural skills to survive [6: 98]. That’s why he claims human an artificial being, the production of culture, which moves away from nature. Man creates culture and carries it, and depends on it. Claude Levi-Strauss in his “Structural anthropology” describes tattoo practice in the Maori tribe. He points out that people of Maori reckon tattoo an important attribute of human being. The person without

tattoo is “stupid”, naked, unsocialized, just a biological individual.

We can see that now our life drifts apart from nature more and more, faster and faster. It is not strange, that this state influences our body too. Bright, unnatural, not normal for homo sapiens, colors on skin make us special. Even naked, a tattooed individual demonstrates his belonging to definite culture and certain worldview. Not only tattoo, but other body modification and plastic surgery show people’s interest to stand out against the nature.

As H.Plessner proved, human is an “eccentric being”, who always is in a process of becoming himself, but never stops, always tries to change and get more oneself that already is. And it is known, that a person, who begins making tattoo, can hardly stop. This person always wants more. There is a lot of postmodernism in a desire to construct oneself, to gather new image of quotations of favorite images and text.

Styles of tattoo. Styles of tattoo can illustrate some of the popular ideas and concepts of modern philosophy. There are such generally distinguished styles: Old School; New School; Tribal tattoos; Black-and-gray; Blackwork; Irezumi - traditional Japanese tattoo; Chinese character tattoos; Biomechanical Art tattoo.

Old School tattoo can be a representation of E.Cassirer statement that human is an “symbolic animal” which lives in the world of symbols and all his life produces them. The images of this style are highly conventional, they include strictly specified range of symbols, like the skull, the swallow, the dagger, roses and so on. Combining these symbols creates new connotations.

New school tattoo implies fairy-tale, fantastic, surrealist images and shows the importance of irrationalism and the new meaning, which became fantasies, dreams and myths due to Freud and Jung conceptions [1: 91].

Tribal tattoos are traditional and often used in mere aesthetic purposes. Blackwork is shocking style, when some area on the skin is covered in black ink. This is not a picture at all, just a fleck of paint. It is interesting, that some of people with such a tattoo explain it like: “It means Nothingness”. Quite often the tattoo of this style is used to cover other tattoos, no more wanted by owner. And they often explain too, that what was significant earlier, matters now Nothing.

Both Irezumi and Chinese character tattoos reveals the desire of ordinary people to find help, advice, sense of life in Eastern culture and philosophy [3: 56]. Zen Buddhism, Taoism as well as other eastern schools are popular.

And at last Biomechanical tattoo looks like some mechanism seen through the painted holes in skin. It is an illustration of taste for artificiality, mentioned above, but also of craving for some post-human, supernatural existence. This is the reason to worry about the future of human body and its perception. Maybe, we can expect a kind of “desomatization”, the loss or distortion of meaning of human corporeality and transferring it to the virtual world or a substitution for some artificial construction.

Conclusions. We examined human body in terms of philosophy. We made an overview of philosophical ideas of XX century that influenced the change of the attitude towards body and made possible further development and distribution of tattoo. We discovered how phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and existentialism of

J.P. Sartre helps to explain the phenomenon of tattoo. It is pointed out how the artificial and eccentric essence of human being, his will to stand out against the nature is represented in act of tattooing.

Also, we have made an assumption, that tattoo art can be an illustration of philosophical and anthropological concepts, such as a human as a "artificial being"(H.Plessner) "symbolic animal" (E.Cassirer), "homo ludens", it also reflects that eastern philosophy became fashionable among western people.

Important question of the future of human body and the meaning of the body modification industry is raised.

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