



COMMENT ON “THE EMBODIMENT OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT IN CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE PERFORMANCE”


Qianwen Li

Researcher Assistant (Qianwen Li), College of Music and dance, Xihua University, Chengdu, 610000-China.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7118-2680> |  xhlqw06@163.com

Commented article: LONG, X. The embodiment of Confucian thought in Chinese classical dance performance. **Trans/Form/Ação**: Unesp journal of philosophy, v. 47, n. 5, e02400241, 2024.
Available at: <https://revistas.marilia.unesp.br/index.php/transformacao/article/view/15886>.

Submission: 28/09/2024 | Decision: 05/10/2024 | Revision: 09/10/2024 | Publication: 20/10/2024

 <https://doi.org/10.1590/0101-3173.2024.v47.n5.e02400310>



This is an article published in open access under a Creative Commons license

COMMENT ON “THE EMBODIMENT OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT IN CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE PERFORMANCE”

*Qianwen Li*¹

Commented article: LONG, X. The embodiment of Confucian thought in Chinese classical dance performance. **Trans/Form/Ação**: Unesp journal of philosophy, v. 47, n. 5, e02400241, 2024. Available at: <https://revistas.marilia.unesp.br/index.php/transformacao/article/view/15886>.

The article “The embodiment of Confucian thought in Chinese classical dance performance”, explores the importance of Confucian thought and work in classical Chinese dance, with the aim of showing a syncretism that links practical aspects and bodily balance, with moral and aesthetic aspects aimed at perfecting stylistic issues (Long, 2024,).

The article basically contains two parts. In the first, the philosophical ideals of Confucius based on filial piety, benevolence and harmony of human relations are taken up again, to explain how a regulative ideal of “orientation towards the people” based on the intangible value of its ethos as a bearer of moral principles, influences the tangible value of dance and its empirical verification in expressions such as beauty and harmony expressed by its dancers.

Based on the fact that the “form” of dance, like any other cultural product, is literature, in this first part, the article delves into the importance that nature plays in these matters, establishing a line of continuity with the role played by philosophers to justify the need for harmonious coexistence with it. In this sense, it is argued that during the Han and Tang dynasties, the philosophy of Confucius and Lao-Tse contributed to prefiguring body rhythm in classical Chinese dance (Hae; Sansa, 2021, p. 237). Then, in the second part, the article explores the influence of Confucian philosophy on the idea of representation of artistic forms. In this case, the regulative ideals of Confucian philosophy are taken up to

¹ Researcher Assistant (Qianwen Li), College of Music and dance, Xihua University, Chengdu, 610000-China. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7118-2680>. Email: xhlqw06@163.com.

illustrate how folk dancers simultaneously express the redemption of nature celebrated in its agricultural connotations and respect for traditional values such as family and society. In this regard, the importance of the Confucian ideal of the “golden mean” as a regulation of artistic choreographies dedicated to expressing the symmetry between the concepts of benevolence and righteousness is revalued, and even, highlighting the importance of this principle of Confucian philosophy in architecture, where it seeks to identify artistic expression with the “basic” or “simple” characteristics that things have in the perception of artists.

In this journey of ideas, the interaction that artistic expressions cause in the “public” that contemplates them is highlighted, pointing out features of harmony and stability in relation. In scenic terms, it is argued that gestures and static expressions help the public to understand the emotions transmitted, which is why the “form” of this scenic initiative depends on the aesthetic creativity of the editor to make the public understand the degree of knowledge he has about Confucianism (Zhao; Yue, 2022). By virtue of this possibility, the decline produced by modernity around the cultural heritage of Confucianism as a national identity is highlighted, which is why it is urged that the power that the collective subconscious fulfills in classical Chinese dance can function as a transmission and continuation of traditions to produce their adaptability with modern dance, in order to amplify their horizons of meaning and attract broader audiences.

Finally, Confucianism is taken up again to emphasize the importance of the “group self” as the preservation of individual values in society, since the expressiveness and moral and interpersonal communicability have the purpose of guaranteeing a “chivalrous” stylistic state, whose “elegant” and “gentle” expressiveness must contribute to preserving the “common good”, through manifestations that, in forms of dance, manage to educate individual people as well as groups of people in the profound positive value towards life.

Although the article has explored in great detail the impact of Confucianism on Eastern culture and especially on classical Chinese dance, a comparative analysis is missing that reflects the importance of the subject matter in modernity from a more defined historical framework that would make the ecumenical conceptions that the article seeks to deepen and substantiate more complex. In this sense, although the importance of Confucianism in emancipating the social tensions of the landowning class with the peasants in the cultural framework of classical Chinese dance is pointed out, it is also possible to review these tensions in light of the cultural confrontations that arose between Mao Zedong’s People’s Revolution and the weight of the Confucian tradition, in order to reconstruct a more updated perspective of the reception of Confucianism in recent modernity, as suggested by the following analysis.

The rise of Chinese nationalism in the 20th century was largely built in opposition to the classical Chinese world, which was based on Confucian thought. For example, one of the most critical intellectuals of classical Chinese thought was Lu Xun (鲁迅), who published

a satire in the magazine *New Youth* entitled “Diary of a Madman” in which he denounced the hypocrisy and emptiness of human relations in the Chinese world. Lu pointed out that the accounts of Chinese history were filled with words like justice and moral virtues, but that these words actually covered up a miserable reality (Chang, 2001). The communist government headed by Mao Zedong (毛泽东) considered that Confucianism had been the ideological pillar that had kept China under the shadow of obscurantism and had perpetuated social inequality generation after generation. Confucianism had been a worldview that, by justifying the hierarchical order of social relations, had favored the small group of the landed aristocracy and had condemned China to its own downfall. Particularly, during the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism was seen as the burden that prevented the final modernization that China had to experience (Lemus Delgado, 2014).

Furthermore, to amplify the ecumenical cultural exchange that the article proposes, we can mention a parallel between the ideal of the “golden mean” with which Confucius symbolized harmony and artistic-moral balance, and the regulative ideal of the “middle ground” that Aristotelian philosophy projected to preserve the values of Western culture. Indeed, this regulative ideal argues that virtue is not a passion of the soul but a habit in which good must be produced through its practice (Aristotle, 2005) and, as such, it inspires noble actions that reflect its parallelism with the “chivalrous” ideal of Confucius. From strictly literary points of view, this regulative ideal found resonance even in the work of Nietzsche, who highlighted precisely its function in the tensions and conjugations that German and French culture experienced with the advent of modernity, where the artist’s moderation is what preserves the balance of tradition.

In light of these considerations, the article is extremely interesting for testing ecumenical proposals aimed at stimulating interculturalism and the pairing of traditions, where the regulative ideal of the “just term” functions as a dialogical instance to exalt that neither morality nor artistic faculties remain abstracted or separated from society, but rather constitute it under the aegis of traditional values and appreciations that are functional to stimulate a positive attitude towards modern existence.

REFERENCES

HAE, L. S.; SANSA, Y. D. Korean Neo-Confucian Academies, Historic Villages of Korea, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea. **The Review of Korean Studies**, v. 24, p. 237-258, 2021.

LEMUS DELGADO, D. Confucianismo como humanidad: claves para complementar la modernidad. **México y la Cuenca del Pacífico**, v. 3 n. 9, p. 77-104, 2014.

LONG, X. The embodiment of Confucian thought in Chinese classical dance performance. **Trans/Form/Ação: Unesp journal of philosophy**, v. 47, n. 5, e02400241, 2024. Available at: <https://revistas.marilia.unesp.br/index.php/transformacao/article/view/15886>.

ZHAO, Y.Q.; YUE, W. Meanings of Traditional Chinese Leisure: Perspectives from Etymology, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. **Journal of Leisure Research**, v. 53, p. 669-686, 2022.