

# Moral Perspectives on the Sporting Body in Confucian Etiquette

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**Abstract:** With its powerful value integration function, culture radiates politics, education and other dimensions, and is a starting point of all social life. As an activity that involves strength and skills and is restricted by a set of rules or habits, sports combine the etiquette constraints and cultivation of Chinese Confucian culture with the strong physical practice of sports, presenting the moral spirit contained in Chinese rituals and etiquette. It is of enlightening significance to represent regional cultural features, rediscover the moral and spiritual value of sports and to build China into a major country with strong culture and sports.

**Keywords:** Confucianism; Sports etiquette; Morality

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How to “engage the movement in a mutually healing way, rather than in a solemn, stereotypical way that relies only on laws and rules”.<sup>[1]</sup>The Confucian culture centered on “benevolence, integrity, etiquette, righteousness” has a rationale for establishing a high-quality competition order and effective emotional communication through etiquette, in which outward expressions such as physical movements or techniques are accompanied by the intrinsic ethics and moral principles of etiquette.<sup>[2]</sup>In other words, the origin of etiquette is synchronized with the origin of morality<sup>[3]</sup>, the fusion of etiquette and the indoctrination of the body are also synchronous, i.e., integrate physical activity-based sports and Chinese Confucian etiquette culture into one sports etiquette is the physical indoctrination of the two in the sports field.

## 1. The Moral Connotation of the Sporting Body under the Confucian Etiquette

Apart from legal rules, etiquette specified as a general types of rule in a broader sense in people’s daily life<sup>[4]</sup>, evolving from the collective sacrificial rituals for ghosts and gods in the earliest period to the usual rituals and ceremonies conveying good moral character, trust, respect, and veneration individually or collectively. The word “morality” first came from the ancient Latin language “Morales”, and then extended to rules, norms, virtues, good and evil, and so on<sup>[5]</sup>. The earliest Chinese word “morality” appeared in Xunzi’s “Advice to Learning” in the sentence “Learning should come to an end at the rites; this is called the utmost limit of morality”, so learning to know propriety, righteousness, honesty and the sense of shame is to reach the peak of morality.

To sum up, “rule” is the commonality and general meaning of etiquette and morality, and “body” is the basic carrier of the two into the world. In contrast, etiquette is inclined to the external expression of the body, and morality is internalized in the behavioral choices of the body, i.e., sports etiquette is special for morality, which is the moral learning in the field of sports, and ultimately attributed to the moral expression of athletes’ body. The whole process is the moral indoctrination and functional radiation of athletes’ body from the general to the special, from the inside to the outside. As a result, based on the efforts of the former, the definition of sports etiquette has been expanded to include: the behavioral norms and guidelines that sports-related personnel in sports activities should follow, externally, it is mainly manifested as the norms of appearance and dress, etc.; internally, it is mainly moral cultivation

and cultural accomplishment, which runs through the whole process of sports.

## **2. The Relationship Between Sports Etiquette and Body Morality**

### **2.1 Sports Etiquette is a Field Expression of Confucian Body Morality**

From a spatial point of view, different sports etiquette applies for particular sports scenes, while morality permeates various scenes in society including sports etiquette. As an international activity with educational significance, the Olympics Games brings together athletes, spectators and etiquette cultures from all different countries, bringing a visual feast of human health to the people of various countries while experiencing the diverse cultural charms, communicating with their feelings, and promoting the prosperity of international culture. During the Olympics Games, as the host country, in addition to the basic etiquette, the athletes are the practitioners of the etiquette culture, reflecting the level of etiquette of the host country. John Locke once put it this way: “Etiquette is nothing but prudence and care, not to show the slightest insolence or disdain in the course of communication.”<sup>[6]</sup> In this situation, sports etiquette plays a representative role, and athletes of different countries reflect the degree of internalization of morality by their actual actions, showing the moral performance of their countries.

### **2.2 Sports Etiquette is the Value Enhancement of Confucian Body Morality**

The core concept of individual cultivation through physical education is that the body and the mind have the same nature, and the body is the starting point of life, on which moral education can play its role and leverage the “true meaning”<sup>[7]</sup>. As the Yueji of the Book of Rites said, “Rite signifies the order between heaven and earth”. From the form of Confucian culture, it warns us that sports etiquette should be based on the correct values, such as discipline, perseverance and resilience. Through these basic norms, so that the participants to express their body in a respectable, fair and moral way. Likewise, as the Quli of the Book of Rites said, “The course of duty, virtue, benevolence, and righteousness cannot be fully carried out without the rules of propriety”. From the thought system of Confucian culture, sports etiquette is a prerequisite for the expression of sports morality, and is a necessary path for transforming physical experience into higher-level moral and ethical behaviors. Accordingly, from the perspective of Confucian culture, the basic material values, such as practical value and the value of life for the human body, are interpreted to the fullest extent in sports, while the spiritual character of the individual is sublimated in sports etiquette.

## **3. Perspectives on Confucian Body Morality in Sports Etiquette**

### **3.1 Confucian Body Morality in Sportswear Etiquette**

There is a verse line in the Qin Songs of Zhongnan(The Book of Songs): “When a gentleman arrives, he is dressed in a brocade coat and fox fur. A gentleman’s face is like the color of red wine, and he is truly a gentleman<sup>[8]</sup>.” Confucius puts forward the dress culture with the core of “the beauty of harmony”, and reckons that “When a man’s good nature and his accomplishments are well balanced, he thus becomes a man of virtue”. He also thinks that the function and beauty of the dress are irrelevant, and the “etiquette” is the core of the dress culture.

As a part of etiquette culture, sportswear can best represent the characteristics of different sports and reflect the cultural meanings of different regions. In the Wushu competition, in addition to costume collocations regulated by the officials, such as Nanquan, Changquan, Tai Chi, there are also a lot of wushu costumes with strong local characteristics and ethnic minority styles. For instance, peonies, chrysanthemums, plum blossoms, etc., and a number of vibrant and beautiful natural plants and other works for the creation of the background pattern to express a spirit of admiration, which is the harmony between mankind and the natural environment embodied behind the scene<sup>[9]</sup>. From the perspective of Confucian culture, the ability of athletes to standardize their dress is the basic norm for the body to identify with the culture of etiquette, and it is the most direct and fundamental way to show the morality of the body.

### **3.2 Confucian Body Morality in Sports Behavior Etiquette**

Promoted by the Confucian culture, etiquette norms is the behavioral norms of interaction between people<sup>[10]</sup>. Specifically, in actual life, the body is the bearer of etiquette culture, what the body does and how to do is the representation of body morality. Etiquette is regarded as a necessity for human survival in China. For example, pitch-pot(touhu) was popular in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period of China, which is an integration of etiquette and sport. The ritual of pitch-pot and archery originated from the rites of archery, in that time, when the emperors and the lords hosted banquets to invite other guests, one of the common activities was to invite a guest to come and shoot arrows. For its fastidious procedures, the ritual gradually developed and evolved into the use of arrows and pitching pots instead. In accordance with the regulations, the one who throws in the most wins, and the one who loses drinks alcohol. The sport represents the culture of etiquette or sport that was born in the culture of etiquette. With

the analysis of body morality in this sport, the value of sports etiquette can be summarized: sports etiquette is the internalized fruition of body morality, and good body morality is the internal guarantee of the body for the correct practice of the culture.

## Conclusion:

Taking the Confucian culture of “ritual” as the core, from the perspective and value interpretation of body morality in sports etiquette, we can clearly see that it is not desirable to take a healthy body and good resistance to illness as the whole value of sports. Confucian culture emphasizes the unity of “virtue” and “practice”, interprets “virtue” with “practice”, and interprets moral value based upon practice. As a typical representative of physical practice, sports activity is a realistic combination of multiple dimensions, such as knowledge transfer, life realization, skill formation and moral norms cultivation, and is a practical activity in which the body and mind participate in the construction together<sup>[11]</sup>. Confucian culture not only gives a strong basis for the cultivation of human beings on the spiritual level, such as the neglect of sports etiquette culture and the burial of the moral value of the body, but also is an important driving force for the integration of Chinese excellent traditional culture and sports culture, and the realization of creative transformation and innovative development.

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