

An Embodied Exploration of Authentic Movement from an Eastern Perspective Nourished by the Great Harmony to Embodying the Great Dao

东方视域下的真实动作具身探索：从饮太和到体大道

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Abstract

This article is grounded in the perspective of “harmony” and the tradition of “embodying the Dao” from classical Chinese philosophy and integrated with phenomenological body theory. It explores the intrinsic alignment between the traditional life cultivation theory of “imbibing the great harmony”¹ and modern embodied cognition theory, supported by practical case studies. Through the practice of authentic movement from foundational forms to the “breathing circle” in group settings, it addresses a series of critical issues concerning the relationship between body and space, consciousness and the subconscious, individual and collective, and non-verbal and verbal communication. The article proposes three practical dimensions of “realizing the Dao through movement”² in dance therapy: first, achieving perceptual reconstruction within the intentionality of movement to deconstruct the mind-body dualism; second, cultivating a state of “self-emptiness to respond to things” through non-judgmental movement awareness; and third, achieving holistic synergy of body and mind through the dialogue and balance between consciousness and the subconscious and between seeing and being seen.

Keywords: dance therapy, Authentic Movement practice, Chinese classical philosophy, embodied cognition, mind-body integration

摘要

本文基于中国古典哲学中的“和谐”观与“体道”传统，“饮太和”的生命修养论与现代具身认知理论的内在契合性，提出以“身心一如”为哲学根基，以“自我超越”为终极目标，以“修身养性”为实践方法，以“意象悟道”为诠释语言的跨文化疗愈具身化重构思路。并通过真实动作地基形式到团体实践的过程与真实案例，探讨重构实践中有关身体与空间，意识与潜意识，个人与集体，非言语与言语关系的一系列关键问

1 The phrase “Nourished by the Great Harmony” originates from Tang Dynasty poet Sikong Tu’s Twenty-Four Poetic Styles, where the original text reads: “In simplicity dwells silence, subtlety lies in the microcosm. Drink in the Great Harmony, soaring alone like a crane.” In Daoism, the Great Harmony Qi is regarded as the fundamental force nurturing all things and a crucial element sustaining cosmic harmony. It relates not only to the operational principles of nature but also to humanity’s pursuit and process of cultivating health and character.

2 “Embody the Great Dao”—the “Dao” is a concept proposed by Laozi in the Tao Te Ching, a profound and expansive idea in Chinese philosophical thought. Simply put, the “Dao” is the infinite energy within the void, the origin of all things in the world. Here, “embodying the Great Dao” refers to attaining a state of transcendence beyond the mundane through cultivation, realizing the Way, and becoming one with it.

题，植根东方智慧提出舞蹈治疗之真实动作“动中悟道”的三重实践维度：其一，在动作意向性中实现知觉重构，解构身心二元论认知模式；其二，通过非评判性动作觉察，培育“虚己应物”的主体状态；其三，在意识与潜意识、看见与被看见的对话与平衡中达成身心的整体协同。

关键词：舞蹈治疗，真实动作实践，中国古典哲学，具身认知，身心整合

Nourished by the Great Harmony to Embodying the Great Dao

Mary Whitehouse, founder of Depth Movement, was a modern dancer and dance teacher. Beginning in the 1950s and throughout her life, she explored how to better understand the interrelationship among body, mind, and spirit. By integrating Jung's theory of "active imagination," she developed a self-exploration method focused on the "unconsciousness." She termed this approach Depth Movement Therapy. In her classes and writings, she frequently likened the Depth Movement process to the body's Dao.³ Janet Adler continued exploring the Depth Movement practice she experienced in Whitehouse's studio, deepening her focus on personal super-energy and the relationship between mover and witness. In 1987, she formally adopted the term "Authentic Movement" to name this form of work. The two founders of Authentic Movement, Mary Whitehouse and Janet Adler, consistently integrated theoretical inquiry with practical application, accumulating a body of work that gradually developed unified practice norms and guidelines. This evolved into a more systematic embodied approach applicable across multiple fields.

Authentic Movement is grounded in the body, as the body serves as the vessel for the soul and energy. "The body is closer to a holistic awareness than the intellect. The intellect imposes limitations, fragmenting reality into parts to examine individually. The body, however, can directly engage with reality as a whole." The mover enters the void and the unknown with eyes closed, carrying bodily awareness, directly experiencing the present moment. Through the body's natural arrival, we access realms of consciousness beyond the reach of rational thought. "The external form of this work is simple: one person moves in the presence of another...The witness, seated at the edge of the movement space—especially in the beginning—assumes immense responsibility as the conscious presence. She does not merely 'watch' the moving person; she witnesses, she listens, bringing a specific quality of attention or presence to the mover's experience. The mover keeps eyes closed to deepen their listening experience, thereby intensifying the kinesthetic reality. Her task is to respond to a sensation, an inner impulse, an energy arising from the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious, or what Ken Wilber⁴

3 Mary Whitehouse. Paper presented at the Analytical Psychology Club of Los Angeles 1958, Previously published in D.H.

4 Ken Wilber (born January 31, 1949) is a prominent American psychologist and philosopher. A pioneer in integral psychology and integral politics, his transpersonal psychology is regarded as the "fourth force" following humanistic psychology.

refers to as the ‘superconscious’ experience. After the mover’s action, the mover and witness typically converse about the material that emerged during the movement, thereby bringing the prior unconscious process into consciousness.” From Adler’s description of the foundational structure of True Movement, it is evident that beyond the dancing segment—where the mover dances and the witness observes in place—there is also a segment of verbal communication and witnessing after the dance. The process of “stillness within movement” and “movement within stillness” constitutes the core belief of True Movement: the interaction between consciousness and the subconscious, developing the essential being of the “human” beneath the self.

The True is the Real, the Real is the True

Authentic Movement allows action to arise from the unknown, revealing deep consciousness through the body. As practice deepens, we are continually propelled toward the yet unknown boundaries, within the vessel of the body, where healing occurs, and direct experiences of the divine are realized. The “authenticity” in Authentic Movement encompasses not only the self but also the ineffable and the indescribable parts. Then, what are these ineffable and indescribable parts, and what is the true “authenticity”?

Question: “What is the Dao?” The Chan Master Fengxue Yanzhao replied, “Before the Five Phoenix Tower (Zezang,⁵ ca. 1135/2019, volume 7).”

Question: “What is the Dao?” The master said, “Outside the wall.” The questioner said, “I’m not asking about that.” The master said, “What Dao are you asking about?” The questioner said, “The Great Dao.” The master said, “The Great Dao leads to Chang’an (Chan Master Zhaozhou Congshen, as cited in Zezang, ca. 1135/2019, volume 12).”

Question: “What is the Dao?” The Chan Master Ruzhou Yexian Guangjiao Guisheng said, “The road to Chang’an is in front of every house” (Zezang, ca. 1135/2019, volume 23).

From the records in the “Ancient Masters’ Sayings,” a compilation of sayings by Zen monks from the Southern Song Dynasty, we can see that the disciples are asked about the abstract concept of the Dao (the Way), while the Zen masters responded with concrete images of roads. Why did the Zen masters choose imagery like roads to answer questions about the abstract Dao? Their intention was certainly not to discuss the relationship between the concrete and the abstract, nor to point to the roads of Chang’an as the location of the Dao, for the Dao is not found in any specific place, nor is it any “thing” at all. As Zen Buddhism teaches, “the true is the real, and the real is the true.” Underpinned by the Southern Zen philosophy of the “non-dual Dharma gate,” which emphasizes the idea that “discrimination is the realm of delusion,” it means that “the truth is found right where you stand, and realization occurs in the present moment.” There is no distant ethereal Western paradise, no lofty Buddha above, no abstract or

⁵ Throughout this paper, “Zezan” refers to the historical figure Zangzhu Zhuren [蹟藏主], a Song Dynasty monastic officer.

absolute spiritual essence, and no world that changes based on the attitudes, emotions, or consciousness of the “self.” In short, existence itself is meaning.

In fact, in the practice of Authentic Movement, we can never be certain whether what we discover is “real.” Just as the Zen masters avoided direct answers to questions about where the Dao is or what the Dao is, often responding with references to roads, the Dao “exists in the absence and is absent in the presence.” At the same time, it is said that “this very mind is Buddha, the mind itself is Buddha.” The “Dao” is both a metaphysical pursuit and embedded in the practical actions of daily life, guiding us return to experience, and focusing on the present moment. The work of Authentic Movement does not seek external validation; it resides within each person’s body. To approach “authenticity,” practitioners embark on a lengthy and unpredictable journey involving bodily awareness and emotional sensation, tracing processes, clarifying the meaning of imagery, and engaging in dialogue through verbal expression. This journey itself is a form of cultivation, and this journey is “authenticity.”

The Vessel of Trust

The Self as Vessel: Containment and Circulation of Internal Tension

In life, what we cannot see also includes the deep layers of consciousness that can be precisely defined as the psychological and physical processes of which we are unaware. If we turn our attention inward, toward a receptive space of listening, we can access different levels of awareness. In Jung’s exposition of the “transcendent function,” wisdom gained from his own low points, he proposed, “the encounter and interplay of the two opposing poles give birth to a dynamic tension and create a vivid third—not a logical stillbirth derived from the law of excluded middle, but a movement transcending the opposition, leading to the birth of a new level, a new state of being” (Jung, 1957, p. 189). “The transcendent function arises at the point where consciousness and the unconscious meet” (Jung, 1952, p. 131). “The source of the material for the transcendent function is the imagery of dreams and spontaneous imagination” (Jung, 1969a, pp. 419-519). He reminds us that the danger in understanding meaning lies in overvaluing content; once the content is intellectually analyzed and interpreted, it loses its essential symbolic quality.

We know that the process of Authentic Movement is one of continually bringing the unconscious into consciousness. At certain moments in the Authentic Movement process, the ego may present obstacles or defenses, which we can understand as defenses against the anxiety of tolerating uncertainty and the unknown. To escape intense tension, people may attempt to use decisive rational explanations. Although this might alleviate tension momentarily, it can cause us to overlook the essence of what is developing and needs to be understood and integrated. This intellectualization or rationalization ultimately prevents the unconscious from emerging. This raises the question: Under what circumstances can the ego develop the capacity to tolerate the inner tension arising from engaging with the unconscious, thereby allowing the unconscious to surface?

The Boundaries of the Container: Setting Up Ritual Space and its Limits

Fred Plaut, a renowned Jungian analyst in London, believed that Jung addressed this in a 1966 essay titled “Reflections about Not Being Able to Imagine”: The ability to form images and actively reorganize them into new patterns depends on an individual’s capacity for trust. Failure in this aspect leads to a loss of vitality in life. Therefore, careful transference analysis is needed to promote the development of ego functions, enabling one to trust both relationships and individual imagination (Plaut, 1966, p. 133).

The “container of trust” is a process through which a trusting relationship is gradually established. In the practice of Authentic Movement, it visually begins with all participants extending their arms to the sides, forming a circle that encloses an empty space. The mover then steps into this empty space, makes eye contact with the witness, and, upon hearing the starting bell, closes their eyes and begins to move. This setup naturally creates the individual’s personal “body” space and the physical space formed by the participants’ arms. The mover’s dance and verbal interactions inevitably generate psychological vibrations, giving rise to emotions and energy. The ritual of the mover and witness making eye contact before entering the circle establishes the witness as a “mother-like” archetype. The timing of the practice’s start and end, the language used during witnessing, and the formal process of witnessing may be seen as embodying the masculine element. The coexistence and fluid interplay of the body space, physical space, and psychological space resemble a familial setting of feminine and masculine elements, collectively creating the first layer of safety and trust within the Authentic Movement practice.

The Shield of Anonymity: Constructing the “Non-Dual” Field of Verbal Witnessing

The “breathing circle” shifts us from the foundation of the form of one-on-one or one-on-two into a group format. This new form is relatively more open and expansive, introducing more complex dynamics. In the verbal witnessing within the group, it is suggested to refer to “one mover” or “another mover” rather than using actual names. Adler believes that this directive to avoid naming is a protective measure for the movers and reminds verbal witnesses, “The character of the movement and the actual experience of the movement are distinct; this is a moment to protect the mover. Not being named or remaining anonymous reduces the sense of obligation to respond” (Adler, 2013, p. 136). Moreover, by not specifying which mover is being referred to, when hearing the content of the verbal witnessing, different movers in the group (as there are usually multiple movers in a group) can each receive the witnessing in their own unique way. During the experience, this instruction resonates more deeply than hearing “you” or a specific name. This depth arises from “centeredness,” as Zen says, the green mountains are themselves green mountains, the white clouds are themselves white clouds. The meaning of the green mountains and white clouds lies solely in their own existence. This instruction embodies the concept of “non-duality”—no separation, no distinction, “neither existence nor non-existence.” The mover’s direct experience is “self-existing,” not “other-existing,” nor does it exist due to “external causes,” and

its meaning is not derived from being “observed.” When verbal witnessing (both the actor and the witness typically employ the present tense when describing their actions or such expressions) brings the unconscious into conscious awareness, it enables every person present to re-experience the direct, visceral sensation. This renders the actor and the action process “void,” yet this is a void in the sense of *prajna* (which requires a relevant reference point), not a void at the level of existential attributes, nor a void at the level of the mind. It exists by its own essence, and truth is contained within this “void.” Simultaneously, a sense of trust gradually deepens within the atmosphere of “oneness.”

The Integration of the Self

From attachment theory, we know that the capacity for trust is closely related to early mother-child attachment patterns. The secure holding provided by the mother can facilitate the establishment of what Erich Neumann referred to as the secure and functional “ego-self axis.” In Authentic Movement, whether the roles are “mother,” “father,” or “other,” they all reflect our longing to be seen by the “perfect mother” and to become “her.” For example, within the circle, the two mentors represent different maternal archetypes for me: one mentor is the gentle and guiding mother, whereas the other mentor is the warm yet firm mother (where firmness implies a push toward growth). Their styles differ, but both serve as my anchors of safety and stability, allowing me to be “here” and to feel secure “here.” It is evident that the foundation of safety in Authentic Movement lies in non-judgmental, non-projective, and non-interpretive compassion. The work evolves through the exploration of the “person” and must ultimately return to the “person.”

As the practice progresses, through the exchange of roles between movers and witnesses, including silent witnesses, the transition from assigned witnessing to non-assigned witnessing, and eventually to freely choose to move or remain still, forms of the practice evolve. Although the mover’s practice continues as it did in the early stages—focusing on awareness, tracking, and concentration—the emphasis at this stage shifts from the relationship between “me and myself” and “me and others,” to the relationship between “me” and the group. The dynamics between the individual and the group reaffirms trust, bringing issues of permission and boundaries back into focus. recurring themes of permission and boundaries to the forefront.

The freedom of individual movement increases, but it is inevitably influenced by the presence of every participant. Movement here cannot be entirely unrestrained unless the movers, while keeping their eyes closed, remain aware of and respectful toward the presence of other movers and witnesses. Only then can they move freely (Adler, 2013, p. 165).

“I pushed myself out.”

“I don’t need witnessing for that experience just now.”

“I am a rocket...I see light, I am flying, I am flying...”

For me, these verbal shares from movers about their awareness during movement represent the freedom of self-expansion, moments of surrender to “being moved,”

together with the evolution of individual emotional regulation and mentalization capacities.

During a group practice in November 2024, as a mover, I was crawling continuously. When my hand touched a metal object (likely a prop near the edge of the studio), I realized I had reached the outer boundary of the circle. At that moment, I thought to myself, “Oh,” acknowledging the awareness, and continued crawling. Later, I touched other objects like barres and stool legs, still moving naturally...During the verbal sharing about this movement, a witness said, “She felt a bit worried. When she saw me crawling behind her and touching the stool legs, she extended her arm to protect me from hitting something hard.” Even though the witness’s verbal expression did not align with my experience as the mover (I did not feel worried or unsafe), the act of truly seeing had already created a connection. Moreover, the witnessing circle, through verbal sharing, made me (the mover) feel that every witness was present with me, ready to extend an arm or ring a bell to ensure my safety. The witness’s attentive presence and full engagement in listening to the mover’s experience became a response to the human need for safety, protection, and balance in Authentic Movement. Conversely, this experience and process likely emerged because I, as a mover, had developed a more inclusive inner witness and gradually deepened my trust in the presence of the outer witnesses. The container of my own trust became more stable through this interaction.

The Harmony of All

During a witnessing moment, a witness described what they saw as “brief, light contact,” whereas the mover felt “pain” and “anger.” This illustrates that the intensity and emotions of an experience can vary between the observer and the experiencer. As collective witnessing practices deepen, the presence of other witnesses in the group seems to reduce the witness’s concern about “missing a movement or a part of the movement process.” However, the responsibility of being present as a witness alongside the mover—including the uncertainty about one’s ability to truly “listen” and the anxiety over whether verbal expressions align with the mover’s experience—does not disappear. The story about the rose petals highlights a strategy for addressing this anxiety: to pay closer attention to the “fineness” of the witnessing process. The mentor described or related the following: “When I picked up the bouquet of roses and tried to remove a petal from one of the flowers, I noticed how delicate the petals were. My movements had to be extremely gentle to avoid damaging them.” This metaphor underscores the need for precision and care in witnessing, mirroring the delicate handling of the rose petals. It reminds us that the act of witnessing requires a similar level of sensitivity and attentiveness to fully honor the mover’s experience without imposing or distorting it.

The Dual Path of Witnessing “Delicacy”: from Perception to Expression

First, just as the mover must “let go” when stepping into the unknown space of the circle, the witness must also be truly “present” for what unfolds within the circle. What is seen, heard and felt, will resonate within the witness’s body and inner awareness. Authentic and sincere witnessing and interaction with the mover are essential and serve

as the primary way to address anxiety. Additionally, the relationship between the mover and witness can shift subtly based on how the witnessing is expressed. Faced with the more complex dynamics that arise within the breathing circle, “challenge” of “choosing what to say, how much to say, and how to say it” becomes a concrete experience of moving toward finer, more precise verbal interaction.

Focusing on the depth of emotional experience is one way to maintain sensitivity in this work. Reflecting on my own experiences as a mover, there were moments when I felt intense emotions and my psychological space felt overwhelmingly “full.” In those moments, I did not desire extensive feedback and even resisted witnessing at times. Therefore, in choosing what to say as a witness, it is crucial to train oneself to be as precise as a laser beam—focused and intentional. When the mover’s movements and emotions are intense, and verbal sharing includes “heavy” words or phrases, the witness can echo those key words or significant points. For example:

The witness says, “I heard: breathing, my fingers are breathing.”

Tracking and describing the movement itself, “I saw a mover suddenly lie down.”

Connecting to the rich inner experience, “I saw him leave quickly, knocking over a cup. I felt determination, no hesitation.”

Within the breathing circle, an individual’s movements are not isolated to their own but also become part of the group’s collective experience. Holding a sense of collective awareness can expand one’s perspective and inner sensitivity, allowing for more comprehensive verbal witnessing. For example:

“I noticed you standing at the edge of the circle, unmoving. I also saw another mover standing diagonally across from you, equally still.”

Witnessing “Subtle” Group Energy: From Verbal Power to Resonance

“Cognitive pragmatics” proposes that, during verbal interaction, the speaker exerts “speech force” on the listener. This abstract “speech force” can manifest in the listener’s mind, generating an abstract “force schema” that ultimately influences the listener. During collective witnessing, when someone in the group chooses to speak a particular word or phrase, others may be moved by hearing that word and to repeat it. These repetitions might be firm, joyful, sorrowful...sometimes rapid and continuous, other times fragmented and occasionally interspersed with responses of different content or tone. Through this echoing, a unique frequency often emerges, woven together by the sequence of time and the tones of voices. In these moments, I gain clarity about the witnessing process and feel the group energy shaped by the “force” of language, reminiscent of the “effort” qualities in Laban⁶ Movement Analysis. When certain

6 Rudolf Laban (1879–1958) is a Hungarian modern dance theorist and educator and is the founder of Labanotation and Laban Movement Analysis. Labanotation reveals the intrinsic laws of human movement, providing a system for both quantitative and qualitative research into bodily motion. Effort is a central concept in Laban’s movement theory, comprising eight fundamental qualities of motion derived from four factors: weight, space, time, and fluency.

words are offered and sincerely received, they begin to belong to the group, shaping and refining into a shared language. Shared words reflect a sense of belonging, while the language created in the presence of others also expresses a direct, conscious experience of belonging. Each circle discovers its own subtle, unique way of speaking together. Most practitioners of this work, even those from different countries speaking different languages, find that there is, in fact, one language—multiple narrative forms—that arises from the practice itself and is shared by all practitioners (Adler, 2013).

Non-action in Response: Balance and Resonance Witnessed in Movement

The practice of “the moving witness” during collective sessions is unique to group practice, where different movers dance together within the circle, interacting and influencing one another, thus becoming mutual witnesses in motion. Witnessing in movement involves the connection of various sensory channels (touch, hearing, kinesthetics). “One morning, as a mover, I entered the breathing circle. During the latter part of the movement, I stood and saw purple and orange intersecting before my eyes. I raised my hand to block the colors... When I lowered my hand, my left hand touched another mover’s sweater (likely near the shoulder), and she embraced me. At first, I didn’t move, feeling somewhat awkward and stiff, but she didn’t let go. We stayed like that for a while, and my head gradually leaned toward her shoulder and neck. I felt her arms tighten around me, very tightly, our chests pressed close together, and tears seemed to well up in my eyes. I hugged her back...” After the experience, I noticed that “other symbols” emerged in my own verbal narrative and the group’s witnessing: the inner sadness revealed through the embrace, a sadness that could not be concealed.

After the movement portion of the circle the witness of the woman who shouted said,

“I saw your process
 I watched you
 My chest opened
 The image in my mind was of a young woman
 I deeply desired to approach you
 I saw you far away
 Finally, seeing you made me feel more stable and grounded
 I heard your words, speaking of darkness
 I felt that too.”

The witness’s mention of the “young woman” brought me back from the dark fog to my “body.” The image of a body that appeared in my mind returned me to the present reality of my experience. As the duality of things deepens, so do the responses. As a therapist or teacher, offering authentic, balanced responses can help the mover distinguish between the conscious and unconscious aspects of Authentic Movement, as well as the boundaries between transcendent experiences and reality. Responding to the mover’s process with containing language is also a practice for the mover’s inner witnessing capacity. At the same time, the witness’s sharing of their experience of the sounds within the group deepened their dialogue with themselves and their relationships with others.

Non-Attachment and Integration: Transcending from “Individual Self” to “Collective Self”

In collective practice, the freedom of how to enter the circle changes, and the methods may vary. In my two experiences as a mover in group sessions, both began with a large circle alongside the witnesses. During the first session, I remained in place, moving forward and backward with my actions. In the second session, after entering the circle, I avoided contact with others, feeling a mix of entanglement, helplessness, and a subtle enjoyment in my consciousness. This deepened my awareness of the issue of “relationship” between myself and the group, and I realized that the group allowed me to see a deeper “me.” It was through seeing this issue that I truly began the transition from individual consciousness to collective consciousness in my practice. As the process of mutual interaction deepened, the inner witness of the mover and the inner witness of the witness formed, coexisting alongside the mover and the verbal witness. These two entities met, separated, met again, and separated again. In this intertwining and overlapping, resembling the infinity symbol (∞), new awareness and introspection became more pronounced. The boundaries between what is “theirs” and what is “mine” grew clearer for both the mover and the witness through conscious awareness. Of course, sharing and even expansion through sharing are also possible. The mover’s awareness in motion, the inner witness, and the individual’s capacity for empathy and self-integration gradually took shape and strengthened. In collective practice, the moments when each person becomes a silent witness increase. As the personal aspects gradually open and deepen, the silent witness becomes consciously aware of their impulses and restraints. Upon realizing “presence” and the boundaries between “me” and “them,” these impulses and restraints seem to be seen by oneself, no longer as impulses or restraints but as natural choices.

The Wondrous Realm of Suchness

The Zen master Qingyuan Weixin⁷ described his journey of meditation and enlightenment: “Thirty years ago, before I began practicing Zen, I saw mountains as mountains and waters as waters. Later, when I gained some insight, I saw that mountains were not mountains and waters were not waters. Now, having found a place of rest, I see mountains again as mountains and waters as waters” (Puji, 1252/1984).

The practice of Authentic Movement begins with the sensory perception of the body and moves toward cultivating a state of “emptying oneself to respond to things,”⁸ aiming for the unity of body and mind. This mirrors the three stages of realization described by Zen master Qingyuan Weixin in his meditation journey.

7 The Chan master Qingyuan Weixin [青原惟信] (?–1120), a Northern Song Dynasty monk renowned for his three-stage enlightenment teaching recorded in *Xu chuangdeng lu* [续传灯录].

8 “Emptying oneself to respond to things; forgive before acting.” From *Book of Jin*, volume 93, Biography of Wang Meng, Outer Kin, date unknown. “Empty oneself” signifies humility and receptivity, emptying one’s ego; “respond to things” means adapting to circumstances and interacting with others. This embodies an attitude of equality and reverence toward all beings, reflecting the wisdom of treating people and matters with humility, caution, benevolence, and generosity.

The first stage: In the relative realm, mountains and waters are seen as separate—one high, one low. The self and the external world are divided, and rational barriers exist between objects. What is seen are contradictory forms.

The second stage: What is seen are no longer mountains or waters. The distinctions of high and low are erased, creating equality and mutual integration, freeing the mind from contradictions.

The third stage: Mountains and waters are no longer conceptual or objects of rational observation, nor are they places for emotional release. The conflict between “self” and “object” is resolved, and one enters a state of seamless harmony and profound tranquility.

Authentic Movement is both the beginning and the result of *wuwei* (无为),⁹ which does not mean doing nothing, but is rather acting in accordance with the natural laws of things and the universe. The work of Authentic Movement provides the resources to open the heart, allowing the soul to be heard, seen, and acknowledged. It paves a path for the interconnection between consciousness and the unconscious, enabling the direct experience of personal history, emotions, and movement to be fully expressed.

As research into the “way of the body” advances into the new century, the Authentic Movement demonstrates remarkable vitality and adaptability. Practitioners adhere to its key elements while actively expanding its applications. It is utilized and practiced across various fields, including psychotherapy, education, artistic creation, performance, and spiritual development, often linked to significant cultural and political events (Lowell, 2007). However, regardless of the context or purpose, or the form it takes, trusting the authenticity of one’s inner life and exploring the objective laws governing the operation, development, and evolution of the universe remain arduous and long-term endeavors. In future explorations, rooted in the cultural soil of Chinese wisdom and compassion for self-cultivation, and through persistent practice and innovation, the essence of Authentic Movement will undoubtedly expand. It holds the potential to open broader horizons for the harmonious development of body and mind, offering profound contributions to humanity’s well-being.

About the Author

Liu Xin is an Associate Professor and the Director of the Chinese Dance Department at the College of Arts of Chengdu Sport University. Additionally, she serves as a member of several prestigious organizations, including being a member of the International Association for Creative Arts in Education and Therapy (IACAET), a textbook editorial committee member for the National Association of Arts Collaboration in Sports Colleges, and a council member of the Beijing Dance Academy Sichuan Alumni Association.

Liu Xin was awarded a scholarship by the Asian Cultural Council to participate in a research program at the American Dance Festival (ADF) in the United States, where she studied with several renowned dancers such as David Dorfman and received

⁹ The term *wuwei* originates from from Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 37, “The Tao is always doing nothing but doing nothing.”

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