



An Analysis and Study of Ta'zieh from the Perspective of the Philosophy of Theatre

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Abstract

Ta'zieh is a national and religious performance that has, in a way, transformed into a ritual in our culture. This performance is inherently rich in elements that demand contemplation regarding their dramatic weight and significance. Ta'zieh is a fully theatrical scene; that is, the staging of a Ta'zieh possesses dramatic characteristics that can be examined from the perspective of the philosophy of theatre, which generally addresses the concepts of performance and staging. Therefore, this article seeks to discuss Ta'zieh from a philosophical perspective, analyzing its different facets and its similarities to and differences from what we commonly call theatre or drama. We aim to analyze Ta'zieh within a new framework, revealing its capacities in light of new theoretical discussions on theatre. In other words, in this article, we are looking for the intersection point of Ta'zieh and the philosophy of theatre, discussions that have largely been neglected in our research literature, all without reducing either domain—Ta'zieh or modern drama—to the other.

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Keywords

Ta'zieh, Theatre, Philosophy of Theatre, Drama, Stage, Narration

Introduction

Generally, the philosophy of theatre and philosophical discussions surrounding it are not very well-known in Iran. This becomes even more apparent when we consider the vast number of studies conducted on, for instance, the philosophy of art, the philosophy of cinema, and literary criticism. The philosophy of theatre encompasses discussions centered on the nature of drama, the characteristics of theatrical performance, the presence of actors on stage, and theatre's capacity to present concepts that have always been a concern for philosophers. From this perspective, Ta'zieh can serve as an excellent case study in this field. Consequently, philosophical and theoretical discussions on this topic can offer a broader picture of the Ta'zieh phenomenon.

We primarily view Ta'zieh as a ritualistic and religious ceremony, often overlooking its semantic, dramatic, and semiotic aspects. Our intention is to examine and analyze Ta'zieh as an independent and significant performing art from the perspective of theatre studies. In this paper, we will first delve into the concept of Ta'zieh, highlighting aspects that aren't immediately apparent or captivating to a casual observer. Then, we will explore the philosophical and theoretical dimensions of the art of theatre in general, discussing the differences and similarities between Ta'zieh and theatre. As we will see, by following this path, Ta'zieh will encompass a broader scope, seemingly revealing its capacities and potentials more than ever before. This will be made possible through a comparison of Ta'zieh and drama (theatre).

Ta'zieh and Its Dimensions

Contrary to popular belief, the subject matter of a Ta'zieh performance is not solely limited to the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and

the events of Ashura. In Ta'zieh, we witness a chain of themes and topics that seem to trace a specific historical and dramatic path for the audience, ultimately culminating in the Day of Ashura. According to researchers in this field, Ta'zieh encompasses several main themes, each interconnected. These themes include: Gabriel descending to inform the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) of the martyrdom of his grandsons, Imam Hassan (PBUH) and Imam Hussein (PBUH); the secret invitation from the people of Kufa to Imam Hussein (PBUH) to assume the caliphate, after which the Imam's household will encounter Yazid's army at an intersection – this meeting point being the Plains of Karbala. In this desert, everyone abandons the Imam (PBUH), leaving only 72 of his companions, who are also martyred. Another theme is the defense of the Imam (PBUH) by a character named Ilchi Farang (the European Envoy), a non-Muslim, in Yazid's court, which leads to his death. There is also Mukhtar Thaqafi's revenge, four years after the Ashura event, against those who played a role in it. The final theme concerns the Imamate of Imam Hussein's (PBUH) son and the story of his life and hardships (Shahla, 2020, p. 11).

Besides these events, a noteworthy point is how deeply semiotic components and elements are woven into the dramatic fabric of Ta'zieh. For instance, some researchers believe that during a Ta'zieh performance, the peak of *Shabih-khani* (the reenactment) isn't the physical death of Imam Hussein (PBUH), but rather the moment he's dressed in his shroud. Thus, Ta'zieh and *Shabih-khani*, more than focusing on character transformation and development, are concerned with symbolic visual signs (Taqian, 2002, pp. 53-54). All these elements elevate Ta'zieh beyond a simple, unsophisticated performance merely intended to connect with less-educated segments of society. Despite its seemingly simple and obvious exterior, Ta'zieh possesses a rich set of codes and signs, allowing for diverse

interpretations. These interpretations, in turn, deepen and make our understanding of Ta'zieh more serious.

Some of the semiotic signs in Ta'zieh that possess expressive qualities and drive the dramatic structure forward include:

A) Paralinguistic signs as opposed to referential language. An example of this is the chest-beating of the spectators mirroring that of the *shabih-khans* (performers). b) Symbolic signs: The juxtaposition of green and red colors to re-create good and evil, or an action like scattering straw on one's head, which is a sign of profound grief. c) Formulaic and clichéd signs: Such as Shimir (a character) putting his finger to his lips as a sign of astonishment and bewilderment. d) Indexical and clichéd signs: Like a handkerchief used for weeping on stage, or a goblet or waterskin signifying thirst and lack of water (Shahla, 2020, p. 10).

The presence of a sacred aura, devotional themes, and religious teachings in the performances of Ta'zieh actors, and their deep roots in daily life, generate responsive actions in the *shabih-khans* (performers). This causes audiences to react to opposing or supporting *shabih-khans* long after the performance. It's interesting to note that actors must constantly detach themselves from their roles and remind themselves of the role-playing aspect. This rootedness in people's lives and beliefs, and their internal integration with external issues and aspects—especially those related to the principles of theatrical execution—transforms Ta'zieh into a distinct and unique stage. In essence, in this type of performance, the spectators are actors themselves, or at least they are an integral part of the performance process and actively participate in the play (Shahla, 2020, p. 122).

Another characteristic of Ta'zieh is the complete harmony

between the text embedded in the dramatic compositions and the actors' actions. This means that the demeanor, method, and behavior of the *Ta'zieh-khan* (performer) align with what is being expressed in the text. For example, when a performer wants to convey a message to the other person, they use hand gestures and facial expressions to impart the concept more effectively (Shahla, 2020, p. 36). The primary language of Ta'zieh is typically poetry and poetic expression, which is adapted from eulogies. Poetry also has a greater impact on the audience, engaging their emotions and feelings more profoundly than ordinary speech (Shahla, 2020, p. 36). It's also plausible that the rhythmic and fluid pace of a Ta'zieh performance is connected to its poetic language. If we view Ta'zieh as a coherent and integrated whole, affirming this point is not far-fetched.

Naturally, the text of Ta'zieh has become more professional and dramatic over time. Writers in this field gradually composed literary and professional texts for Ta'zieh drama, strengthening certain parts of the drama by borrowing from classical poets. However, even in its more dramatic and professional state, the language of these texts remained the language of the people, devoid of excessive artistic embellishments, such that ordinary people fully understood the play, and the text often left a lasting impression on them. During performances, characters acted very naturally, and spectators felt every injury and death with their whole being, as if it were happening to them at that very moment (Floor, 2017, p. 169).

Dialogue is inherently the dialectic of theatre itself—that is, the continuous conflict and tension between good and evil. Ghotboddin Sadeghi, a theatre instructor and researcher, describes one of the functions of dialogue as follows:

"In drama, humans reveal their inner world and transform it into a dramatic presence. And because psychology and characterization

are the ultimate goals in Ta'zieh, the necessity of a narrator's presence is evident in every respect—to explain different times, describe various locations, and justify the status of individuals and the issues between them. Therefore, the narrator exists in various forms throughout the religious plays of the East. The narrator is simultaneously inside and outside. They speak both as their character type and occasionally address the audience as a narrator" (Sadeghi, 1993, p. 24).

Moreover, it's crucial to remember that, from a technical standpoint, performing Ta'zieh requires precise and accurate direction. This means the actors' movements, their positioning, and the manner of delivering dialogue must be determined with specific delicacy according to the demands of each scene. Sometimes, to advance a point and convey a concept, the *shabih-khan* (performer) must resort to poetry and eulogizing, while at other times, they simply need to transmit the intended meaning to the audience through behavior and movements.

A General Look at Theatre from a Philosophical Perspective

When we consider a very broad concept of theatre, any space can become a stage. Typically, when the term "theatrical" or "dramatic" is used in a negative sense, it conjures notions of artificiality and pretense. However, within theoretical studies, there's a concept called theatricality (the theatrical aspect/theatric-ness/being-theatre). This concept explores what transforms an event or phenomenon into theatre, or what characteristics theatricality possesses (Sauter, 2017, p. 20). The concept of theatricality isn't necessarily limited to theatre as a specific performing art; it can carry a broader implication.

For theatricality to exist, the simultaneous presence of both performer and spectator is essential. However, this is a necessary but

not sufficient condition. The actions of the performer, and reciprocally the reactions of the spectator, only emerge within the flow of a theatrical event. It is this "eventness" of theatre as a whole—the interaction between performer and spectator—that makes theatricality possible (Sauter, 2017, p. 37). The principle of interaction plays a significant and vital role in shaping the theatrical event, or theatricality itself. As long as this action and reaction, this dynamism, isn't established, we cannot speak of something as theatre or elevate it to the state of "being-theatre." Therefore, it is entirely possible to have a rich experience of a theatrical event without necessarily understanding its referential system; in other words, one can grasp the performative aspect of a play regardless of understanding all its details and references.

One aspect of this broad concept is its metaphorical side, according to which theatre is considered a metaphor for social behavior. That is, theatre, as a phenomenon that is a form of display of life and social interactions (Sauter, 2017, p. 21), serves as a stage or platform that enables the reciprocal behaviors and actions of individuals.

Indeed, appearing on stage is, in itself, an action and a deed, even if the actor does nothing in particular. Although the actor seemingly performs no specific act, the act of exhibiting themselves is still ongoing (Sauter, 2017, p. 25). Some theorists refer to these as exhibitory actions, meaning the fundamental part of an actor's manifestation on stage. Such actions aren't solely related to the actor's physical characteristics but also encompass their mental and emotional states, both upon initial entrance and throughout the performance. An actor present on stage might feel calm and confident, or they might experience anxiety and stage fright. Even if the actor attempts to conceal these distracting emotions from the audience, they will undoubtedly influence their behaviors and movements (Sauter, 2017, p. 25).

An emotional process normally begins with a stimulus and ultimately transforms into an appropriate conscious feeling or action. During a theatre performance, multiple chain reactions of this kind can be observed. The most common emotions present in theatre include pleasure, empathy, understanding, and identification (Sauter, 2017, p. 31). However, we must differentiate between everyday life and acting. It's important to note that in performing arts, both the spectator and the actor are aware of this distinction. The expressive elements on stage are nothing but artistic means of expression and are understood as such by the audience (Sauter, 2017, p. 34).

Theatre, by blending visual, auditory, olfactory, and even tactile stimuli, cannot be understood solely from an external perspective. Because in theatre we see, hear, smell, or feel ourselves in relation to the events unfolding on stage, we participate in the experience of perception rather than simply registering a form of awareness of something objectively connected to our subjectivity. Therefore, that experience or reception cannot be fully grasped unless it is reciprocally understood in an objective relationship with our subjectivity (Walker, 2018, p. 53). Given this fundamental interaction, it can be said that theatre, with its ability to place us within a perhaps imaginary story and beyond the confines of a stage, has a unique capacity to push us back and forth between two perspectives: the subjective and the objective (Walker, 2018, p. 53).

Some scholars assert that the concept of the theatre stage and theatricality can be generalized to encompass the entire world and its history. Consequently, grand philosophical teachings like Hegel's dialectic or Platonic dialogues transform into platforms for thought. For example, what Bert, a theatre researcher and theorist, inherited from Hegel is an understanding of history as a drama-driven process. Hegel's philosophy of history begins by emphasizing that world

history seems to unfold in a theatre, and by contemplating the history of the spirit in various forms, the theatrical performance concludes. Thus, world history aligns with theatre, and the different stages and scenes of world history are, in fact, changes in theatrical scenes and characters (Puchner, 2018, p. 70).

Generally, theatre is not obligated to reproduce reality on stage; rather, it should achieve a reality unique to itself. That is, theatre is not necessarily an imitator of reality and can establish a world with its own logic and structure. Of course, this can also be true for the entire spectrum of art. In the world of performance and on stage, movements, behaviors, and actions all progress in a direction beyond their literal objective realization. In this situation—which clearly includes Ta'zieh performances—it seems a truth is intended that emerges from the synthesis of stage actions, without necessarily being identical to these actions themselves.

The Relationship Between Ta'zieh and Theatre (Drama)

A. Distinctions

If we wish to view Ta'zieh as a "performance" and differentiate it from "theatre" as an art form that developed in the West, one crucial point to consider is that performance has a deeper and broader connection with rituals, and given its inherent and essential ties, it is also linked to myth. According to some theatre and performing arts critics, the most significant difference between "performance" and "theatre" lies in their ultimate goal. Performance is executed with the intention of the human being dissolving into the totality of existence and reaching the truth of being. In this process, there's practically no distinction or separation between the performance and the spectator. Both engage in the performance to achieve a singular goal: to lose oneself and dissolve into the absolute essence of existence. This is similar to Ta'zieh, where both the performers and the audience come to the

performance arena with the aim of gaining spiritual reward and perhaps with the intention of worship. In this type of performance, instead of any form of individualism, the focus is on dissolving into the collective unconscious and joining the spiritual essence of the ritual (Amjad, 1999, p. 13).

In contrast, theatre is more worldly and human-centered. In theatre, the performer, with a specific intention and goal, strives to convey a meaning, atmosphere, mood, or message to the audience. This audience, in turn, comes to the theatre as if in the position of a critic or analyst, with the purpose of watching, enjoying, becoming aware of a subject, or connecting with a human artistic work.

"Performance returns all subtle differences in individuals, the temporal and spatial subjects of each story, and the tools and apparatus of each staging towards a whole, an origin, a primal form of the unity of all world components, and an archetypal image of the poles of good and evil in the universe. Theatre, on the contrary, moves towards defining, differentiating, and giving distinct identity to each part of the seemingly undefinable and inexpressible totality of existence" (Amjad, 1999, p. 14).

Generally, this philosophical distinction can be said to stem from the ontology or metaphysics underlying each of these phenomena. One, by divine grace and for the performance of a spiritual ritual, seemingly invokes the celestial realm onto the stage, placing humanity before the mystery of existence. The other, in contrast, showcases human relationships that primarily have an earthly and mundane foundation.

A long time passed from the modern era, a period that emphasized detailed approaches and the principles of empirical science over holism, until Western theatre shifted its focus from

myths, gods, and demigods to human beings and their tangible, concrete characteristics, reflecting these aspects in various works. In contrast to ritualistic performance, which aims to connect humans with God and the mystery of existence, Western theatre strives for humans to secure a stable and reliable position for themselves within the world (Shahla, 2020, p. 125).

The truth that a Western individual, especially in the modern sense of the word, seeks usually has an objective, practical, and attainable direction. This individual establishes principles through observation and analysis, and organizes their life according to them. The central focus of all these endeavors is human imagination and its position within this very life, and these are what give identity and meaning to the world (Shahla, 2020, p. 128). From Bahram Beyzaie's perspective, the goal in both Western and Eastern forms of performance is to manifest truth on stage. The difference lies in how they do this: Western performance narrates the details of human life and position, while Eastern performance embodies the universe, of which humanity is a part (Beyzaie, 2009, p. 4).

In Eastern performances (especially Ta'zieh here), the characters representing good and evil are clear from the very beginning of the story. The audience either quickly grasps this or is even aware of it beforehand. In these performances, the ultimate triumph of good is also known. However, if a conflict between good and evil, or truth and falsehood, occurs, it's due to the inherent structure of the drama and performance itself, which requires a beginning, conflict, climax, and resolution—not because of audience surprise or ignorance of the story. The heroes of this type of performance (Ta'zieh) achieve transcendence and salvation through their battle with evil forces. For this reason, Ta'zieh, in its most authentic form, signifies the dominance of good and truth, even if it comes at the cost of the heroes' martyrdom (Beyzaie, 2009, pp. 5-6).

In traditional and ancient ritualistic performances, like Ta'zieh, people experienced a devotional and spiritual connection while watching the work. One could even argue that their reactions to the performance manifested this spiritual relationship. Consequently, these types of performances rarely aimed for character development in the modern sense. In modern drama, characters possess independence and individuality. All of them, or at least the pivotal and central characters, have depth and enjoy psychological and internal coherence, and the flow of the drama progresses based on a deep and meticulous analysis.

According to some researchers in theatre studies, the reason for this is that the structure of traditional ritualistic performances (such as Ta'zieh) isn't based on the internal motivations of human individuals. Instead, its foundation relies on moral, spiritual, and devotional teachings. Traditional and ritualistic theatre achieved this through meticulous attention to all aspects of performance: language, plot, characterization, stage props, costumes, and the overall staging process. Creating a cohesive whole built on a moral and spiritual foundation was part of the dominant culture of that era (Nelhaus, 2018, p. 100).

The inherent conflict in Ta'zieh, unlike modern Western drama which is based on a relatively objective logic, is entirely subjective. Dialogue and conversation in Ta'zieh do not function like those in modern Western drama to establish connections between characters and their inner worlds. In addition to the symbols, mysteries, and conventions that delineate the two opposing factions in Ta'zieh, an irreconcilable relationship exists between them. Here, no contact or exchange suggesting the possibility of compromise or rapprochement can be imagined (Sadeghi, 1993, p. 24). This means that while the possibility of dialogue between the two sides of a conflict is one of the

conventional prerequisites for creating drama, this seemingly obvious possibility has no place in Ta'zieh.

B. Similarities and Points of Convergence

One of the defining characteristics of an aesthetic experience is its immediacy—that is, its capacity for direct and unmediated communication that transcends language (Dougan, 2017, p. 60). The phrase "beyond language," which defines the aesthetic experience, is particularly crucial for our discussion when it pertains to the experience of art. If we pay close attention to the Ta'zieh performance process, it becomes clearly evident that a significant part of its impact occurs precisely outside the framework of language. That is, the relationships and interactions that constitute a Ta'zieh performance are not entirely realized through speech and language-based expression. This crucial aspect is connected to the audience's cultural and belief background, and there's no need to rely on language to establish a connection or influence the audience. Instead, creating an atmosphere where the spectator feels immediate and direct engagement is sufficient. In short, it's as if this immediacy somehow also guarantees the authenticity of the work.

Bahram Beyzaie, as one of Iran's most prominent artists in the field of Ta'zieh and national and ritualistic performances, says the following about this performing art:

"What is fascinating for me in Ta'zieh is the very ancient magic present within it. A magic that, in the best Ta'ziehs, relates to the primal fears and anxieties of humanity, and this, in my opinion, is the essence that exists in all good performances worldwide, whether ancient or contemporary" (Ghoukasian, 1992, p. 152).

Given this definition, Ta'zieh is viewed not only as a national and ritualistic performance enacted within a specific cultural sphere

but also as a drama possessing a character similar to the world's best plays. From a philosophical and psychological standpoint, it connects us to existential concerns. During a Ta'zieh performance and the actions arising from it, individuals confront their deep existential fears and anxieties. This is a universal characteristic that can be extended to the entirety of human culture and thought. From this perspective, we can also refer to the approach of some 20th-century philosophers towards performance. Philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus considered the medium of theatre, and art in general, a suitable framework for expressing their ideas. The emphasis on existential concerns is also evident in the work of these philosophers, whether they were theists and believers, like Gabriel Marcel, or considered atheists, like Camus, Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. This description further highlights the universal characteristic mentioned earlier. It means that addressing humanity's existential concerns through theatre, Ta'zieh, or performance in general, doesn't necessarily have a strong dependency on the specific cultural and belief system of each of these thinkers. Each can approach these common existential issues in accordance with their own philosophies.

As expected, narration in Ta'zieh also possesses dramatic elements, sometimes even resembling structures found in modern drama. For instance, in some Ta'zieh performances, the *shahadat-khan* (martyrdom reciter), while lamenting and chest-beating, invites the audience to join in the chest-beating. Gradually, the performance transcends its scripted stage directions, and all present begin to participate in the chest-beating as one unified group (Shahla, 2020, p. 35). This aspect brings Ta'zieh closer to Brechtian theatre, specifically when the spectator is directly involved in the performance and becomes aware of its theatricality. In these situations, a form of distanciation occurs; the audience suddenly realizes that the scene

before them is merely a performance, and this creates a conscious distance between them and the act.

Brechtian distanciation is a theatrical school that directors worldwide often utilize depending on their work. Distanciation means the separation of the actor from the role they are playing. An actor or Ta'zieh *shabih-khan* (performer)—for example, the actor playing Shimr—at the end of the performance, detaches from the role and personally, as a believing and faithful audience member, weeps and mourns for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH). This is a clear example of distanciation. Brecht, by emphasizing the audience's intellect, gradually developed his idea on the theatrical stage in an objective manner: the actor's non-emotional action and interpretation through memory, which is the quotational actor, without pretending that the actor and director are unaware of what is happening on stage. Brecht later termed all of these as distanciation, or alienation (Shahla, 2020, p. 138). In Brechtian theatre, the actor, by deliberately creating alienation from the role, moves the audience away from conventional and ordinary emotions and calls them to awareness, judgment, and cognition. From this perspective, both Ta'zieh and Brechtian distanciation share similarities within the framework of theatre (Shahla, 2020, p. 139).

Brechtian theatre, also known as epic theatre, aims to strip the stage performance of emotion and sentiment. For this reason, an old and familiar story is often preferred over a new one in epic theatre. Brecht considered the question of whether the events shown in epic theatre should not be familiar in advance. If theatre is a place for showcasing pre-known events, then historical events are likely the most suitable. The narrative expansion of this type of theatre, which occurs through acting styles, announcements, and intertitles, has no other goal than to ward off emotionalism and excitement (Benjamin,

2016, p. 54). This is why familiar narratives are considered more enticing for Brechtian theatre. For example, one of Brecht's most significant plays concerns the life of Galileo, a story whose historical renown leaves no room for debate or doubt.

Brecht's narrative theater incorporates a narrator within the play, uses descriptive texts outside of dialogue, and provides a summary of each scene's events at the beginning of an act. This is all done with the aim of stimulating the audience's critical thinking and inviting them to confront and react to what is presented on stage (Shahla, 2020, p. 137). In evaluating narrative theater, one could suggest that Brecht, by presenting it, sought to achieve a form of Eastern ritualistic or religious performance, or even a type of Ta'zieh narration. Therefore, narrative theater is something akin to Ta'zieh-khani, or at least indirectly influenced by it (Shahla, 2020, p. 138).

In some theatrical analyses, the theorists' primary unit of analysis is action. In this context, the fundamental unit of action is the human body, which proceeds with intentional or purposeful movement. These analyses are essentially based on the human agent, human means, human action, and human intention. This is precisely what we expect from a methodology derived from theatre and performance; theatre is an art form dependent on live human performers (Puchner, 2018, p. 73). In such analyses, the footprint of Ta'zieh can also be observed. The actions in Ta'zieh rely entirely on human performers, each moving on stage with a specific intention and purpose. That is, the form of body movement, especially in a coherent and unified manner with a predetermined destination, is in Ta'zieh performances itself expressive of an impactful and important concept. This ranges from concepts indicating the cruelty and ruthlessness of negative characters to those drawing the audience's attention towards spiritual, sublime, and sacrificial moments. Here, by way of

comparison, we can point to a thought-provoking idea regarding the concept of the body in modern art. According to Linda Nochlin's interpretation, in modern artworks, the body is often depicted as fragmented or dismembered. This signifies a rather mournful emphasis on the loss of wholeness and unity in the ancient world. This feeling of absence and lack of totality, resulting from a departure from the unified framework of old, manifests itself in the imagery of bodies whose reflection and embodiment in modern art are no longer integrated, seamless, or connected. This point becomes so significant that fragmented pieces or bodies are considered a metaphor for the modern world (Nochlin, 2020, p. 34).

Another point regarding the various aspects of the convergence between theatre and Ta'zieh is that theatrical performance occurs as a particular collective activity and formation within an overarching dynamic framework. This means theatre acts as a social agent with its own unique, multi-layered ontology, and indeed, its ontology parallels the ontology of society itself. The theatrical level of this specific ontology encompasses the spatial relationships and arrangements that govern the interactions between performers and audience members. Its dramatic level is the story that performers represent and narrate—that is, the embodied actions and interactions of characters by the performers. At the textual level, a form of performance instruction is established, meaning a framework that can be a written play or an idea that is developed. This symmetry between theatrical performance and society transforms theatre into a social ontological image, a kind of institution for social communication and introspection (Nelhaus, 2018, p. 95). This implies that theatre, while leaning towards and emphasizing individuality, depicts a form of togetherness or community that fosters numerous and diverse interactions. In essence, by performing social introspection, theatre also functions as a model

for social agency. The art of Ta'zieh is no exception to this; in fact, this concept applies even more strongly to Ta'zieh. From ancient times, Ta'zieh has been a performance deeply embedded in people's lives and cultural norms. Every year, with the arrival of specific days—namely, the month of Muharram—Ta'zieh gathers individuals around a central point: the Ta'zieh stage. This communal gathering has created a kind of institution for forming social relationships and has served as a prominent catalyst for collective actions among people. All of these points validate the social agency of Ta'zieh throughout Iranian culture.

Conclusion

In this article, our aim was to discuss Ta'zieh as a performance that lends itself to serious analysis within the framework of theatre philosophy, drama studies, and performing arts discussions. This meant identifying the characteristics of Ta'zieh as a credible dramatic structure to reveal and, to some extent, examine its points of intersection with theoretical and philosophical discussions about drama. Our initial endeavor was to present aspects of Ta'zieh that might seem novel or original—points that, when we ordinarily view the phenomenon of Ta'zieh, might remain hidden from us. Next, we briefly explored the philosophy of theatre and discussions related to drama and theatrical performance. This allowed us to delve into philosophical concepts while moving closer to our objective: establishing a theoretical framework for discussing Ta'zieh. Finally, we examined the differences and similarities between theatre (as an originally Western performing art) and Ta'zieh (as an Eastern national and religious performance). By outlining these themes, we aimed to demonstrate that Ta'zieh should be regarded as a serious performing art, not merely a repetitive and superficial ritual. It contains a rich set of fundamental concepts and components. Naturally, viewing Ta'zieh from this perspective can also pave the way for future research.

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