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## Zhineng Qigong Emersiology

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OTHER BODIES, OTHER GAMES - D'AUTRES  
CORPS, D'AUTRES JEUX

SCIENCES OF SPORT-HEALTH INSTITUT OF PARIS  
CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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## Zhineng Qigong Emersiology

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”Observation of the Teaching of a Consciousness Practice in  
Gesture Anthropology” - Proceedings of the Communication on  
February 17, 2024 - 9th Seminar of Emersiology

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Organisation : Bernard ANDRIEU

April 13, 2024

# Abstract

Our ethnography of Zhineng Qigong consciousness practices challenges anthropological inquiry methodology. We opted for a participatory observation ethnography and used this presentation as a space for our reflexive endeavor, while contextualizing our discussion through transcriptions of the practices we experienced in the field, guided by an instructor. The goal of this presentation is to share the essence of my work from the past eight years of doctoral research and explore how it would be possible to develop a methodology employing emersiology (Andrieu, 2017). Indeed, the data I will express in this presentation comes from my field observations. A key point I would like to share is the challenge of documenting so-called "internal" or consciousness practices (Midole and Chenault, 2017).

**Keywords:** Researcher reflexivity, consciousness practices, gestual anthropology, phenomenology, emersiology, presence, subjectivity, Qigong, Zhineng Qigong, ethnopraxy, feel.

# Résumé

Notre ethnographie des pratiques de conscience du Zhineng Qigong questionne la méthodologie d'enquête anthropologique. Nous avons pris le parti d'une ethnographie de participation observante et de faire de cette présentation le lieu d'une tentative de notre réflexivité, tout en contextualisant notre propos via les retranscriptions des pratiques que nous avons vécues sur le terrain, guidées, par un instructeur. L'objectif de cette communication est de partager l'essence de mon travail de ces huit dernières années de doctorat, et comment il serait possible de développer une méthodologie employant l'émersiologie (Andrieu, 2017). En effet, les données que j'exprimerai lors de cette communication viennent de mes observations de terrain. Le point important que j'aimerais partager est celui de la difficulté que cela peut être de témoigner des pratiques dites « internes », ou de conscience (Midole et Chenault, 2017).

**Mots clés :** Réflexivité du chercheur, pratiques de conscience, anthropologie du geste, phénoménologie, émersiologie, présence, subjectivité, Qigong, Zhineng Qigong, ethnopraxie, sentir.

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# 1 Introduction

This non-peer-reviewed publication is a communication I presented at the IXth seminar on emersiology: Other Bodies, Other Games, organized by Professor Bernard Andrieu.

I will begin by contextualizing the subject of this text by discussing Qigong, how this practice emerged in China, drawing on the historical and anthropological research of David Palmer (Palmer, 2005) and Evelyne Micollier (Micollier, 2007). Then, I will bridge the gap between Chinese anthropology and the notion of the sensible, anthropologie du sensible, as well as cognitive sciences. We will see that my approach relies on a methodology of participant observation, or even observant participation, with the concept of ethnopraxy by Loïc Wacquant (Wacquant, 2001). This will help us understand how to compose research such as the one I conducted during my doctoral thesis, i.e., research that questions the internal perception of consciousness practices, and therefore how to capture the subjective discourse of field protagonists. Here, it will be with the help of first-person conscientization, developed, among other authors, by Professor Bernard Andrieu (Andrieu, 2013), the organizer of the seminar, as well as the second-person interview techniques of Claire Petitmengin Petitmengin (2006).

We will then discuss the notion of circulation or inter-practice passage, which will give me the opportunity to briefly present the Trame, with which I conducted a comparative study with ZNQG<sup>1</sup>. It is the teaching of these practices that will then allow us to question how to transmit practices like those mentioned above, or how to transmit an esthesiological unknown, with the help of Richard Shusterman's notion of esthesiological recalibration Shusterman (2019) and Marcel Jousse's anthropology of gesture (Jousse, 2008), in order to theorize the transition from an unknown to knowledge, through experience.

I will conclude with the longest part of my presentation, regarding emersiology itself, using various types of ZNQG practices as material, such as the tree posture, called Zhanzhuang (Chenault, 2010) (Gutekunst, 2024) (Gutekunst, 2024), as well as the concept of 体察思维 *Tǐchá sīwéi*, derived from Pang Heming's ZNQG theory, the creator of this Qigong style (Pang, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup>智能气功Zhineng Qigong is a Qigong created by Professor in TCM Pang Heming. This Qigong is the practice we observed in a comparative study with Trame practitioners during our doctoral thesis, *idem*. For more information on the terminology of Zhineng Qigong, we refer to Fabian Winiger's article (Winiger, 2017).

## 2 Zhineng Qigong

Before delving into our approach to the literature of the sensible, we need to pause for a moment on Chinese anthropology. Both David Palmer and Evelyne Micollier offer historical and cultural approaches to Qigong in China, the source of Qigong. In *The Qigong Fever*, regarding Falun Gong, (Palmer, 2001) a Qigong now banned in China since the late 1990s, Palmer allows us to understand the historico-political logic of Qigong. Since its official creation, its development, its institutionalization within the Chinese Communist Party, and then its rejection by it, as well as its prohibition across all schools. Palmer's current analysis of Qigong intersects with the realm of religions. It is the lack of metaphysics or spirituality that was filled by Qigong, and which today, according to the author, leaves a void that struggles to find something to fill this place in the lives of many Chinese.

Evelyne Micollier, on the other hand, distinguishes several categories of Qigong, (Micollier, 2007) creating models of Qigong that she distinguishes according to their compositions and objectives: for example: the YiXue Qigong, which is the ontological study of Qigong, through science and medicine; the Zhongjiao Qigong: religious Qigong, and the wushu Qigong: martial Qigong. The notion of "ordinary Qigong" concerns Qigong "neutral" from the first three categories we have just seen: scientific, religious, and martial. "Masters" would be its representatives, secular charismatic leaders. It is this ordinary Qigong that, according to Micollier, is known internationally and concerns our field in France and China.

Palmer and Micollier both agree on the neologism that was the term Qigong in the early 20th century, then naming a new form of medicine as replacement medicine, due to a lack of means and medical facilities in certain remote regions of China. These "medicines" are then drawn from the popular countryside medicines, closer to a form of Chinese shamanism than to traditional Chinese medicine: ZhongYi (See Palmer, 2001).

Chinese anthropology concerning the practice of Qigong allows us to clarify the complex system of Qigong as well as its current representations. Qigong presents itself to practitioners in its different forms; models enumerated by Evelyne Micollier. However, no model is entirely impermeable to other models, which only allow theorizing the constituents of these Qigong. "Ordinary Qigong" more specifically defines the form of Zhineng Qigong that we have observed. In practice and teaching in France and China, discourse sometimes refers to ontological Qigong or religious Qigong, referring to Taoism and Buddhism, and even recently to martial arts with new "Zhineng kung fu" workshops.

### 3 Human Sciences of the Sensible, of Consciousness

Literature review: Marceaux Chenault / Valentina Grassi / Nancy Midole / Evelyne Micollier

#### 3.1 Transition from a Techno-Corporeal Approach of Observing Chinese Practices to an Opening on Practices of Consciousness

Practices of consciousness, bodily ecology, or even psychosomatic, are appellations to define practices that integrate and aim for proprioceptive and meditative work. Valentina Grassi explains in her article on "Qigong or the Energy of Emotions, Symbolic Analysis of a Practice of Bodily Ecology" (Grassi, 2018), the notion of bodily ecology. This notion concerns so-called "holistic" practices, in the sense that they involve the mind, body, and environment "in a whole where each element lives in continuous interaction with the other elements." Grassi boldly introduces another notion that is semantically more contestable: "energy." Contextually named "Qi," this "energy" of Taiji and Qigong practice most often defines a vital, invisible, and metaphysical energy. While Grassi's symbolic analysis in this article remains superficial and is based on a rather subjective interpretation of the etymology of the character "Qi," and its other "qualities" or "origins," it allows an introduction of this type of practice through the analysis of human sciences of an internal activity focusing on inner life within the body, rather than external bodily activity of sports, for example, or artistic bodily expression.

Marceau Chenault, in his article on "The Tree Posture: Zhanzhuang," which is an essential practice of ZNQG, (Chenault, 2010) provides a technical, historical, and semantic analysis of this meditation or health practice. Chenault establishes a connection between this exercise, most often attributed to Qigong, and a generic of countryside medicines, which claim themselves to be an evolution of popular rural medicines, whose reference work, the Huang Di Nei Jing, Su Wen, and Ling Shu, is attributed to the "Yellow Emperor." This branch of TCM is now very different from the biologist and technical orientation of modern TCM, developed in China, which increasingly integrates the metaphysics of an invisible and natural Qi, recalling the interdependence of a health system and a representation of the living, between nature and man.

Thanks to Chenault's historical work, Zhanzhuang appears to be a transdisciplinary



practice, belonging according to Chinese writings to the martial sphere, then diverted into health practices, and finally used in Qigong practices. Marceau Chenault's study of the Zhanzhuang practice allows us to understand a descriptive approach and an attempt at symbolic analysis through the history of this Chinese practice. The complexity of the history of Chinese bodily practices also appears to be vast and requires a multitude of different and transdisciplinary sources of information, such as Stapps, history, sinology, sociology, and anthropology. Cognitive sciences also bring great insights into these bodily practices, so it is the sensible or otherwise named aesthetics, the relationship to sensation, and the "lived experience" by the subject, to borrow a phenomenological notion used, among others, by Bernard Andrieu (Andrieu, 2014). It is therefore this link between sensoriality and the consciousness of this same sensoriality that cognitive sciences also highlight.

## 4 Consciousness of Lived Experience

Several authors in the humanities allow us to understand the body and subjectivity. Indeed, consciousness is the notion that allows us to make this connection, the link between the material world and thought, between what we experience and how we perceive it. It is the notion of "awakening," which appears to name an "emergence of what has been activated in the living body and which accesses consciousness involuntarily or through a work of attention and vigilance to what occurs." (Da Nobrega, 2017, Andrieu et al., p. 43).

Speaking of consciousness is to enter into terminology that our field has appropriated to the point of making it a concept. In Zhineng Qigong, consciousness becomes, in opposition to simple subjective consciousness, an objective viewpoint, shared by all and beyond the individual. This use of the word "consciousness" can disrupt communication with those observed. Nevertheless, it is straightforward to discern the discourse of practitioners in the field from its theorization, by redefining certain terminologies used in the field.

### 4.1 Ethnopraxy

It is necessary to recall our ethnographic approach in these fields. Loïc Wacquant defines ethnopraxy as consisting of "practicing in real time and situation with natives..." (Wacquant, 2001, p. 80). In our case, the practice of Qigong and the Trame were necessary to observe these same practices experienced by the practitioners. The sensory dimension of these practices is important because the entire body of the practitioner is engaged in the

practice. The notion of consciousness is also important because there is a whole discourse that punctuates Zhineng Qigong, as an instructor guides the practice where the instructor explains a "path" of becoming aware of the body in what Zhineng Qigong calls the "Qi Field." It is therefore an incessant back and forth between sensation and awareness experienced by practitioners. This exchange between consciousness and sensory perception is accentuated by a teaching model where the instructor must practice while verbally guiding; the instructor performs all the movements with the students, being aware that he could not guide correctly if he were not under the influence of the practice.

Psychosomatic and somatopsychic links are at the heart of these observed practices, and ethnopraxy, in which we researchers engage our own bodies in observation, leads us to clarify the discourse of practitioners regarding their practices by becoming aware of our own mechanism of consciousness of the lived experience by our bodies and the influence of consciousness on it.

Shusterman's aesthetic recalibration/reappropriation (Shusterman, 2007, 2010) appeared appropriate for analyzing the data received during our fieldwork with practitioners. It is the researcher's, our, approach that we will analyze primarily through this concept. The analysis of sensation, of our own sensations, during our observations of Qigong and the Trame, will primarily face the discovery of new sensory experiences induced by a particular attention that we could not have sought otherwise than through ethnopraxy. New sensations produced by the intellect imagining these sensations where there should be none. Here, therefore, recalibration will be retained as a concept, following the idea that we did not feel, or did not pay attention where we should have. The reality of the observed practitioners questions their discourse about sensation. The verbalization of practitioners about their sensations experienced during their practices is important for us researchers to capture information about the practitioners' experience, but it raises more questions than it resolves. The verbalization lacks knowledge of aesthetics on the part of practitioners, and it often lacks precision. This lack of precision was experienced by myself as a text with gaps, where not only the right words were missing but also the translation of some of them. Ethnopraxy thus helped us to re-appropriate, aesthetically, the jargon used by practitioners, allowing us to understand their discourse, recontextualized because experienced subjectively in turn. These are therefore processes of aesthetic and semantic reappropriation for the observing researcher. Discourse becomes meaningful when there is the possibility of referring to a lived experience.

## 4.2 First-Person Consciousness

It is "(...) how bodily experience reacts on the living body and how the living body modifies not only its body image but also its body schema: the living brain is connected to its sensorimotor system." (Andrieu, 2014, Burel et al., p. 47). This article by Andrieu and Burel has provided us with elements from cognitive sciences and its revelations about the relationship between bodily sensation and thus biological consciousness. It is also the "psychosomatic" relationship in opposition to this first somatopsychic relationship that appears as possibly a modifier of sensation. This bilateral relationship would thus be a cycle of influences: from the biological to consciousness and from consciousness to the biological, with the will or not of change.

Therefore, consciousness raising has mechanisms described here by Andrieu and Burel (Andrieu, 2014, Burel et al.), but which are subjectively different from one individual to another and which sometimes are blurred and influenced themselves by beliefs and convictions of having experienced or wanting to experience certain experiences in particular. This is the demonstration that our field made; consciousness-raising processes can be biased or not work in cases where the perception of reality cannot be made or made little, because of filters of representations of reality as it should be experienced. This is what we noticed with a public of practitioners in shamanic tourism approaches, where the quest for sensation takes precedence over the reality of the lived experience and even over the theoretical objectives that internal practices propose.

## 4.3 Claire Petitmengin; Second-Person Consciousness Interview

Claire Petitmengin has developed interview techniques based on consciousness raising, in order to question field actors about their lived experiences (Petitmengin, 2006). Taking up some principles explored by the authors seen previously, about consciousness raising and the gap between the lived experience in the present and the vision we can have of this experience. Petitmengin describes and constructs a protocol allowing to get as close as possible to the lived reality, to the first sensations experienced, by undertaking guidance for becoming aware of the experience itself. This involves total subjectivization; interviews are conducted by the guidance of an enlightened person with consciousness-raising techniques. This practice of second-person consciousness interview is far from easy to perform; the learning that the researcher must undertake is lengthy, and the researcher must be able to

consciously experience his or her own lived experience in the most objective way possible, that is, by being fully aware of his or her own subjectivity. The methods for practicing consciousness-raising are, according to Petitmengin, methods borrowed from meditation practices, from her experience: vipassana seems to be the most suitable meditation, however, there are other methods of internalization and exercises of sensitization and presence in the body.

The researcher thus has every interest in practicing consciousness-raising exercises, themselves derived from the practices we observe, or at least from similar practices. We will see in the development of this second-person consciousness-raising approach some of the limits we encountered, which often turn out to be protocol-based, as they are often inadequate for the observed practices, especially for Qigong, which moves away from the sensational to joint states that practitioners do not seem to experience in the sphere of sensation but in that of the emotional and especially "out-of-frame" states of ecstasy or well-being that they have great difficulty in describing because they categorize them as different from sensation or emotion. Our interviews regularly confronted the description of these states, whose understanding often passed through our own reference to our experience of long and repeated practice, allowing us then to pinpoint the state in question that the practitioner was trying to describe to us, if it had been experienced in our practice; otherwise, we barely managed to glimpse what the practitioner was talking about.

#### 4.4 Circulation

Talking about the circulation between the two observed practices in our research fields was mainly done thanks to François Laplantine's modal anthropology (Laplantine, 2005), while drawing inspiration from the recent scientific works of Tim Ingold, *The life of lines* (Ingold, 2015), and *Imagining for real* (Ingold, 2022). The vision of François Laplantine's modal anthropology allows for an analysis written in a rich grammar, a grammar that aims to break free from the defining and denoting constraints of what he calls the philosophy of logos. According to Laplantine, certain observation fields regarding the sensory should be observed from a different angle than that of a categorizing and objectifying science at all costs. The objectivity so eagerly sought, which allows us to do science, would then be impoverished by the pride of control, of judgment of what enters or not into objectivity, in a neutrality devoid of the living, so difficult to observe and account for in words. Modal anthropology proposes to integrate subjectivity, activity, and we could even speak of the

mind translating the Greek *animus* or *pneuma*, because if there is a subject, there is also grammatical animation, conjugation as well. It is therefore on the edge, playing on words, that the subject implies being a point of view testifying to a life experience and conjugating the verb actively. This grammar is specified by Laplantine as a modal grammar, that is, one that integrates other grammatical modes:

”The modal consists in a suspension of denotation. It allows us to consider the relationship to the past, or more precisely the passage, and to understand that in reality, there is virtuality. A modal anthropology reveals the variations and flexions of our sensitive, but also intellectual behaviors. It pulls us out of the speculative realm of metaphysics and restores the different forms of action and conjugation: the indicative, the optative, the conditional, the gerund.”(Laplantine, 2005, p. 188)

Where the indicative predominates in science, modal anthropology would free the multiple, the hybrid, or in other words, what is hybridized.

Ingold, on the other hand, brings the idea of imagining activity as a component of reality, in addition to perception. Reality becomes a projection of a reality captured by the senses but also constructed with the idea we have of what we experience. *Imagining for real*, the main concept and title of Tim Ingold’s latest work (Ingold, 2022), is the idea of realizing the activity of imagining. This element of imagining goes hand in hand with our analysis of teaching consciousness practices, which seek to teach learners to experience an experience that can only be personal because it is sensitive and based on an esthesiological unknown. This learning is done through verbal guidance, describing an aesthetic reality experienced by the teacher, himself seeking to describe it to his students so that they can experience it themselves, starting by imagining the unknown or trying to get closer to it, in order to experience it.

## 5 Observing transitions from one practice to another

The central point of our research object is the transition between the two practices we observe. It is the transitions made by practitioners, moving from one practice to another, to practice them, but also the connections they make between them and between the different representations of these practices. Imagination (Tim Ingold, 2021) is very important in

these practices. For teaching, it creates the imagined reference, verbalized by the trainer, that practitioners can follow, advancing, so to speak, in the dark or in a void of sensation, needing it to be explained to them what they are supposed to experience. In Trame, they are intentional movements transmitted by placing hands, i.e., intentions that are not physically moved, but that practitioners must ultimately induce into the patient's body. To learn to feel their projected intentions during the Trame session on the patient's body, the instructor first asks the learners to physically mimic these intentions, which are most often undulating movements, waves, going from the practitioner to the patient or from the patient to the practitioner. The mimicked movement allows future practitioners to imagine the movement that will then only be an intention. Here, Marcel Jousse was of great help to us, as his anthropology of gesture allows us, through his description of the learning process of Man, which he calls "anthropos", evolving in his environment called "cosmos":

"Who says Anthropology of Gesture says Anthropology of Mimesis. It's a whole experimental laboratory that opens up to us. It is no longer the dead instrument that dismembers man. It is man who becomes aware of man. The experimenter has become the experimented. Man is no longer "this unknown". He is his discoverer. We only know ourselves well." (Jousse, 2008, p. 35)

We are on the territories of gesture and mimesis, not named as such by the protagonists themselves, but easily analyzable in these terms. However, for the Trame field, the reference framework being alchemy, it is said and reminded by the trainer that "the experimenter has a place in the experience", and even that "the experience would act on the experimenter". This soteriological principle, i.e., self-elevation, is present both in the reference framework of Trame and in reference to alchemical hermeticism, and within ZNQG.

## 6 The Qi Field

The "Qi field" is a particularity specific to ZNQG. It is both a concept and a specific moment of practice, the opening of it. The principle is that of informing information, or self-informing, i.e., self-programming. The term information is a bridge, one of the theoretical passages between the two practices we observe. Here, this "information" is often assimilated to Qi, the Maussian mana that we identify as such for ZNQG. ZNQG trainers say: "To practice ZNQG you must know the theory of ZNQG", they then add: "The theory of ZNQG is that everything is Qi".

The practical part of the Qi field is, as we have said, at the opening of the actual practice. It is the opening of the practice. It also takes up the principle of mimesis, since the trainer sets an example by practicing with the students. More than the practice itself, the trainer guides the practitioners through voice, explaining, during the opening Qi field, the intentions that practitioners should imagine. Indeed, the Qi field is done without movements, standing, arms along the body, feet together, and eyes closed. Here, it is again the notion of intention that returns and is found on both sides of the two observed practices.

## **7 Le Zhineng Qigong et la Trame**

Zhineng Qigong is a Qigong that I chose to study during my doctorate for various reasons. The first reason is the proximity of this field to that of Trame, meaning that Zhineng Qigong is taught by the same organization that I followed during my observations for the Trame field. Marc Gutekunst is a Trame instructor, one of the first trainers trained by Patrick Burensteinas, and before that, he was also one of the first "tramistes" trained by Patrick Burensteinas as well. Marc Gutekunst's learning of Trame coincided with his training in traditional Chinese medicine, also known as TCM in English. Marc Gutekunst plays a significant role in our research; he embodies the element that links all these different activities that I observed for this thesis.

## **8 Teaching Practices of Consciousness**

We briefly touched on, in our section about Marc Gutekunst's teaching, our interest in teaching "practices of consciousness."

As we have seen earlier, "practice of consciousness" is a term we choose to refer to the practices I observed in the fields of this thesis. Several authors have influenced us to analyze my observations with the notion of consciousness. It is cognitive science that allows us to understand that consciousness-raising can enable science when properly directed and educated. This is what Claire Petitmengin talks about in her method of second-person interviews (Petitmengin, 2006), where the person being interviewed is accompanied by a researcher in social sciences who has the education to sort through the information gathered in the interviewee's discourse, as well as helping them formulate their narrative or better select passages of the narrative that would be more relevant to testify to a lived experience.

Another important notion is that of "lived experience," which we have drawn from Bernard Andrieu's research in cognitive science, the "lived experience" which represents the return and articulation of gesture, action, or simply aesthetic perception, in its original sense, perceived by the senses. The lived experience is then a return to a reality experienced at the very moment we experience it, without even necessarily realizing it, so it can be unconscious, because it is the time between the senses, the action in motion, and the realization of the lived experience that mark the difference between this present moment, the living, and the realization of the lived experience, the consciousness of it by the experimenter. The concept used by Andrieu to name the desired process of consciousness-raising is the "consciousness of lived experience," itself borrowed from phenomenology, from Husserl and then from Merleau-Ponty. To make conscious, is to do science in its etymological sense. If consciousness is what is with science, i.e., knowingly, then science itself is not analyzed with "scientology," not to be confused with the sect of the same name, but with epistemology, which consists of the ancient Greek episteme, which is a way of shedding light on, because synonymous in Greek with a light illuminating the mind of man, difficult to translate without making an analogy. If we play a bit on words, but in order to continue to illuminate our steps, "to have light on all floors" means to understand, as Marcel Jousse called it, that is, once again, to become aware. Bernard Andrieu, in his studies on consciousness, therefore teaches us that biologically there is a gap between the experience of the living and its consciousness, so that we realize that we are experiencing this same experience. The time in question between the living and its consciousness would therefore be due to the path of our nervous system, this distance being subject to time, because the nervous message being an electrical signal, it would take about 500 milliseconds to cover the distance from the sensory organs to the part of the brain that allows us to interpret the nervous message. So it's an image, but there is time between the switch being flipped and the time the light comes on. As for the analogy with electricity, this path undergoes information losses, which we will see more precisely with the notion of emersiology which considers this "loss" and finds a method of capturing deeper living (see with Ti Cha Si Wei at the end of this presentation). Consciousness-raising thus integrates a cut between the lived reality and the reality understood or simply "realized." It takes time to realize what we have experienced, and therefore the reality apprehended by the person experiencing an experience will depend on how they interpret this same experience, passing more than a biological filter, but also a filter that we could call cultural, in its sense of constructed. The person experiencing the



experience will therefore pass through their representations built by their life experience and access to the lived experience and its consciousness-raising will therefore be a more or less translated, therefore interpreted, representation of the experience.

Where were we going with consciousness-raising in our thesis? Consciousness-raising is only one element that will allow us to talk about our observations and the difficulty of remaining faithful, for us, as observers, in the transcription of observed fields, being aware precisely that even the practitioners observed in the field will make mistakes in transcribing their own lived experience. Moreover, it is also a guideline that we have chosen for ethnography. The consciousness-raising that is difficult to observe, for the reasons mentioned above, can therefore be objectified by the understanding framework that the protagonists of the practices observed in the two fields, Trame and Zhineng Qigong, engage in practices called "internal" which rely on an internal or inner experience. These are therefore, for the actors of the field, microscopic self-observations, which escape the observing researchers that we are, escaping especially our senses. Marcel Jousse explains that:

"A microscopic internal gesture is just as much a gesture and just as much recordable as an external macroscopic gesture. *Plus vel minus mutat speciem*, say the scholastics. And that's very true. Our eye does not perceive it, but our eye is not the scale of Science." (Jousse, 2008, p. 50)

The scale of science is then understood here as broader, and if the eye cannot perceive the action to be observed, it is the relationship with the practitioners that can do so. How can we receive the testimony of the field actor, an extension of our senses, where they lend us their own senses through their discourse? This will be in practice, in a participant observation, which I prefer to call "practitioner observation," because it is directly drawn from praxis.

## 8.1 Practitioner Observation

Practitioner observation is known as ethnopraxis. Loïc Wacquant, let's remember, defines ethnopraxis as consisting of "practicing in real time and situation with natives" (Wacquant, 2001, p. 80). This approach is inspired by Marcel Jousse, in his *Anthropology of Gesture*, which we will interpret for the benefit of our field observations and analyses.

"We have thus arrived at a certain number of laws based on the *Anthropology of mimism*, that is, on the Anthropology of Gesture as intussuscepting *cosmological*

*Interactions* and reverberating them into *anthropological Interactions*.” (Jousse, 2008, P. 51)

In this definition of the Anthropology of Gesture, Marcel Jousse expresses that, in the capturing of intussuscepted observational data, absorbed or reflected by an impression of the researcher through the same observation of the other, because of a mimism of *cosmological Interactions*, which are qualified as cosmological because they are external to the notion of *Anthropos*, the anthropologist can then transcribe with more accuracy, as they will have acquired knowledge through gesture, or through play, and repetition, hence ”replay,” an indispensable element according to Jousse to master a mimicked gesture. If anthropology observes the other, it is in a study that extends to oneself, not necessarily directly, but with the aim of extending to humanity, since anthropology is a study of man in the very definition of the word ”anthropology.” I am only stating the obvious here which allows me to continue an expression of what we can draw from Jousse’s Anthropology of Gesture. Long before the writings in cognitive sciences that we have seen above, which also inspire us, on a scale that we have defined with the consciousness of lived experience, it is Jousse’s almost paradigmatic stance that we will look at here:

”So, fundamentally, we are only reception devices that replay only what they have received. We only know what we receive, and of which we become aware.”  
(...) ”We are only practically limited reception devices. So much so that we behave a bit like ”apraxics” in the face of many interactions of the Cosmos, as unbalanced as we are compared to everything we could receive.” (Jousse, 2008, p. 56)

This quote is not chosen randomly as it combines two notions that we have just presented for our ethnography, praxis and consciousness-raising. While Jousse’s writings were difficult to use in contemporary anthropology during the author’s lifetime, it is now paradigmatically relevant. Denis Cerlet’s article on Jousse’s Anthropology of Gesture shows us how Jousse was an anthropologist who mixed several disciplines:

”Jousse’s anthropology is fundamentally dynamic. It counters the ambient anthropological discourse of its time by relying on the scientific advances of other disciplines such as psychiatry, medicine, phonetics, and dialectology. Marcel Jousse deliberately changes paradigms and, interested in the study of the corporal man and the physical and biological modalities of the social, he fully in-

tegrates the human and social sciences into the domain of the living sciences.”

(Cerclet, 2014, p. 24)

Denis Cerclet wrote an article on the Anthropology of Gesture in 2018. Jousse was a difficult anthropologist to classify or integrate into an anthropological paradigm, especially at the time when he was conducting research and teaching at the Sorbonne in Paris. This inspired and original anthropologist had attempted to theorize an anthropology outside of text, that is to say oral, and based on human interaction, including gestures, rather than on the mere meaning of discourse and semantics, which he himself called ”algebrose,” inclined to practice a ”disembodied” language (Cerclet, 2014). Separating his metaphysical research from the application of his anthropological research to the interpretation of the Gospels, as Jousse was a priest, it is nevertheless this perspective that led him to observe gestural social interactions in Palestine, in order to interpret the New Testament in a form of cultural recontextualization. Gesture, a notion encompassing what he calls Anthropological mimism, brings the idea that man, in his cultural construction, becomes human through observation and bodily repetition, like a calibration of his personality, nourishing himself from the interactions of other human beings around him.

Several notions that come from Marcel Jousse are now accessible and interpretable in studies of bodily practices like those we observed in our fields. If Jousse was a ”UA” in the early 20th century, that is to say an ”Unidentifiable Anthropologist,” to compare him to a UFO in the academic field, he finds his audience today after significant scientific evolution, across all fields. If Denis Cerclet describes Jousse’s work as placing ”the human and social sciences within the domain of the living sciences,” it is also the interdisciplinary approaches of other more contemporary scientists like Bernard Andrieu in cognitive sciences, but also Shusterman in philosophy (Shusterman, 2019), to name a few, that have allowed bridges to be built and changed the perspective we had in the human and social sciences to conduct our research. Francisco Varela, biologist and neuroscientist, brought his research on the human brain into a profound dimension of human science, as his research on internal perceptions and states of mind modified by the practice of meditation initiated new representations of ways of experiencing reality in humans. Like his extrapolation of living autopoietic forms to the organization of human societies as well as cells, autopoietic forms that would define individuality (Varela, 1987). Autopoiesis being a term composed of auto and *poièse*, from ancient Greek production, which can also be translated as ”self-development.” Varela is the perfect example of a change in perspective and intellectual representation that we can

have on the human being, compared here to a cell. However, it is the internal and external interactions between an individual's life and its environment, its adaptability or rejection of it, that can be applied to humans, as well as any other living organism. When we observe the field of Trame practitioners, we are faced with individuals who adapt to their environment and who encounter a form of unknown. This is the essence of our work on teaching the practice of Trame, defining how a technique based on the unknown of the living is transmitted to Trame practitioners. Let's go back to Jousse's cited quote:

"So, fundamentally, we are only reception devices that replay only what they have received. We only know what we receive, and of which we become aware."  
(Jousse, 2008)

In this same chapter, Marcel Jousse proposes "Consciousness-raising Laboratories" as "self-observational observatory laboratories." What he called Cosmos, we have seen, is Varela's biological milieu, or the object itself, the object that we, anthropologists, study through the eyes and perception, more broadly, of the anthropos, to keep Jousse's vocabulary. If consciousness-raising is about shedding light, and thus being able to focus one's gaze on the lived experience of man, or more inclusively, the anthropos, cognitive sciences, biology, and humanities come together today to help us in theorizing our observations. In the perspective of crossing the observed disciplines, another "crossing" could be considered, that of the contribution of science to the observed practices and vice versa, that is to say, how observed bodily practices and the practitioners' views shared with the researcher open doors to new epistemological methods of ethnography.

## 9 Emersiology

Getting closer to better appreciate, live, the reality of the field, that's what "conscious awakening" is called by four researchers (Petruccia Da Nobrega, Mary Schirrer, Alexandre Legendre, and Bernard Andrieu, 2017) in an article about emersiology, living body, bodily practice:

"(...) exposing emersiology, which consists, by activating the living body through bodily practice, in identifying degrees of consciousness awakening, going from the unconsciousness of the living to the consciousness of experience." (Andrieu, Legendre, Schirrer et Da Nobrega, 2017, p. 39)

Emersiology would therefore be the action of a person delving deeply, that is to say, into self-observations that require more precise attention than the sensations of everyday life. "Identifying degrees of consciousness awakening" can be interpreted as exploring or esthesiologizing places in the body where consciousness is not accustomed to going. "Going from the unconsciousness of the living to the consciousness of experience" reflects the same idea: we are not always attentive to everything our body can experience, and shedding light on these hitherto unconscious areas would create a discourse on it, witnessing a memory, here called "the consciousness of experience." Our ethnographic approach found a voice in the writings of researchers working on emersiology. What seemed obvious to me in the observation of bodily practices that I observed, in the commitment of my own body to the awakening of my own body consciousness, was not an ethnographic evidence because the social sciences, while they have been addressing this issue for a long time now, have still not or little integrated into the education of young researchers the esthesiological dimension of the observation of the living body. Still in this article, observed apnea brought us a new point of comparison between the practice of Zhineng Qigong and apnea:

In order to lengthen their apnea, welcome or exceed unpleasant sensations, apneists modify their states of consciousness: visualization, meditation, consciousness rotation, self-hypnosis, even refraining from thinking to spare themselves and "let go." (Da Nobrega, 2017)

What appeared to us in the practice of Zhineng Qigong is its difficulty and the pains that practitioners experience throughout their practice, especially at the beginning of it. Despite its calm and gentle appearance, Zhineng Qigong practice is not pleasant. It is even an aspect of the Zhineng Qigong method that would require learning through discomfort during practice, and even pain. In *Hunyuan Entirety Theory*, a book translated by one of the Chinese Zhineng Qigong teachers, Wei Qifeng, on Professor Pang Heming's Zhineng Qigong theory, it is specified that in the Zhineng Qigong method, one of the first aspects to work on by Qigong practitioners is that of *Shen*, which we could translate as the *psyche*. This can also be seen as mental activity, for example, and what directs the body according to Zhineng Qigong, but this is a simplification that I will make here to understand an important point of Zhineng Qigong:

"Practicing the controlling capability of sensation. Focus attention to choose the sensory object, exclude disturbance, and improve sensitivity, such practicing Lift

Qi Up Pour Qi Down.” (Pang, 2015, p. 63)

This step is one of the first in Zhineng Qigong, it is the subject of the first method of Zhineng Qigong. This method leads practitioners to become aware of their ability to control their bodies and direct them through intention. This method is slow and appears to be not very athletic, as the body moves slowly and repeats slow movements that can last indefinitely, depending on the time practitioners devote to each movement. But the slowness and repetition of slow movements are actually very challenging for practitioners in the early stages of practice. For example, one of the movements of this method seems very simple, because physically, it is; it is called the "pulling and pushing" movement. Let me pause for a moment to describe this movement in order to explain this important aspect of the physical endurance of this Qigong practice. The feet are together, the legs are straight, and the practitioner is standing. The arms are stretched out in front of the body, parallel to each other, forming a 90° angle perpendicular to the straight body like an "i". The hands are open, palms facing outward, in front of the practitioner. To give a visual image of this movement, imagine the stereotype of a sleepwalker standing, arms out in front of him, and eyes closed, as practitioners share this trait, except they are not asleep. Keeping the arms stretched out in front like this movement is tiring, the shoulders heat up very quickly, and the gravity becomes increasingly noticeable. It is not a posture, it is a movement, and therefore, once in position, the practitioner makes a movement of pulling and pushing with their arms, as if they were grabbing emptiness with their hands, and then pushing it away. Many practitioners suffer from shoulder pain the first time, but also at chest level. The movement evolves into other similar movements throughout the duration of the first method, chaining, arms stretched out in front, then to the sides, then hands above the head. Practitioners then testify to the difficulty of keeping their arms stretched out, of a form of "suffering". They say that this eases when Qigong instructors explain in detail the subtleties of the movement, that they are all global movements of the body, not just the arms, for example, but that it is the whole body that oscillates back and forth in this movement, inducing a global and unifying movement of the entire body. This is just one example of an explanation provided by the instructors. There are also suggestions to smile, which seems absurd and useless for practitioners who suffer at the beginning. These elements bring a certain awareness of suffering, of the pain felt by the practitioner, and here the awareness of the entirety of the body is a form of emergiology, as discussed by the authors, including Bernard Andrieu, in the article cited earlier.

This approach of movements that pushes practitioners to their limits leads them to have no choice but to experiment with the instructors' advice because they suffer, they have chosen to be practitioners at this moment, and they are also faced not only with themselves but also with other practitioners, including the instructor who, smiling, does not appear to be suffering. It is noteworthy, once again, that Zhineng Qigong teachers practice while they teach. We could immediately conduct an analysis based on Marcel Jousse's writings on anthropological mimesis, where the example is important in reflecting reality through anthropos. Here, cognitively, there is a relationship between the learner and the teacher that is made unconsciously from a neuronal point of view, with recent theories of mirror or sympathetic neurons, as explained in this excerpt from an article by André Guillain and René Pry:

"The postural body functions as a mirror. It presents, to others, the image of itself, and it takes shape by conforming to the image that others present to it. The postural function could therefore play an essential role in understanding others. This understanding would rarely be the result of reasoning; it would primarily and mainly mobilize motor skills, allowing the individual to interact with his partners." (Pry and Guillain, 2012)

This opens up the possibility of introducing another type of practice proposed by Zhineng Qigong, that of posture. Here, there are no longer any movements; the practitioner is then faced with other bodily stimuli. For example, Zhineng Qigong practice consists of different postures, most often standing, with the worst being standing and bent on the legs. The most well-known posture, which varies among different Qigong practices but generally takes the same form, is the Zhanzhuang posture, or "tree posture". As presented earlier, Marceau Chenault described this practice in detail in his article titled "The Tree Posture" published in STAPS:

"(...) "the tree posture" is based, like qigong, on the principled dynamism of Qi (Robinet, 1991). It is introduced into the history of Chinese thought as a "unique principle of reality that gives form to all things and beings in the universe, which implies that there is no demarcation between human beings and the rest of the world" (Cheng, 1997, p. 252)." (Chenault, 2010, p. 29)

The posture seems absurd from the outside looking into the practice of it. It is a personal experience, at least subjective, but also personal in its privacy and difficulty to practice

”outside the walls” of a Qigong setting, for example. Doing nothing but doing it well summarizes this practice fairly well. It is hardly practicable in public because doing nothing, standing, in a position that is not comfortable for someone who has never practiced it, can be disturbing. I myself experienced this when I was surprised by friends in a field, where I thought I was alone. The friends in question questioned what I was doing, and after watching me for half an hour and seeing that I had not moved, it began to worry them. That day, I had to spend an entire evening explaining my approach. The tree posture in Zhineng Qigong can last from fifteen minutes to an unlimited duration, moderately practiced for an hour, more difficultly practiced for two hours. Two hours and more are often exceptional practices where the practitioner has lost track of time. Zhanzhuang is the practice I have practiced the most among all Zhineng Qigong practices, not counting the years when I practiced it in the context of martial arts. For over two years, I practiced this posture for an average of one hour a day, every day. This approach came from an experimental desire to be able to self-observe over the long term and not just during Zhineng Qigong workshops that I observed. Today, the pains are gone, but not the suffering, which is different. However, I have no difficulty in following a practice of more than an hour guided by an instructor. It is even thanks to this practice that I sometimes ”shine” during Zhineng Qigong seminars among other practitioners, who often do not practice regularly, even though they have been practicing for years. Standing to meditate, because it is a standing meditation, has its advantages. Zhineng Qigong would bet on the physical engagement of its practitioners in one of its objectives.

”This posture, both grounded and flexible, is the starting point for a deeper exploration, whether in the pursuit of well-being or in the practice of martial arts. One of the objectives of this exercise is to maintain a tranquil and stable mind, focused exclusively on present sensations, without being distracted by external thoughts. It is important to avoid drifting off into too comfortable a position (which is often the case) or, conversely, letting oneself be dominated by excessive bodily tensions. It is common to feel various sensations such as warmth in the palms and soles of the feet, tingling, or fluctuations between tension and relaxation, all of which are manifestations of qi, which it is important to observe without clinging to them; sensory phenomena arise and disappear within consciousness.” (Gutekunst, 2024)



Without delving into metaphysics and paranormal postulates <sup>2</sup> (Kuhn, 1991), it allows for greater concentration of the mind and thus of consciousness in the body. Whereas it is easy to fall asleep or think about many things during seated or lying meditation, thinking becomes difficult in the face of a long period of pain. It should be noted that Marc Gutekunst explains that holding posture does not ultimately come from regular practice, but rather from the development of consciousness. Here again, it is an emersiological approach by practitioners who are curious to see the esthesiological evolution of their posture practice experiences. Posture, due to its difficulty, is a challenge in Qigong for many practitioners, and there is not a single workshop without a posture proposed, either as a seminar theme or most often as a closing practice. This article discusses the gap between bodily experience and the ability to articulate it, but not only:

”(...) the impossibility of descending back into one’s living body to what would be the zero degree of bodily truth. This discontinuity between the activity of the living body and the discursive logic of the consciousness of the lived body poses the problem of expressing the sense of the living body in the language of the lived body. (...) The body that writes assumes that the living being produces the text within us, with the conscious hand embodying only what emerges from our living being.” (Da Nobrega, 2017, p. 41)

We see here that emergeology is a method of spontaneous awareness, where the experimenter awaits the manifestation of bodily knowledge from their bodily experience. The approach of Zhineng Qigong practitioners is not very different from that of emergeology, as the theories of Zhineng Qigong on consciousness, as understood by Professor Pang, are rich in details on the explanation of different types of consciousness, as well as on the methods to achieve these consciousness goals. Emergeology could be compared to a type of consciousness qualified by Zhineng Qigong as ”Consciousness related with experiencing and observing” or called ”Feel-observe thinking” (Ti Cha Si Wei, 体察思维):

””We can call this feel-overse thinking (Ti Cha Si Wei, 体察思维). It is consciousness used to sense and observe the self’s inner life activity, ideally the kind of mind-state found in qigong practice. When people practice qigong they need to focus on their own internal life processes, sensing movement and the

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<sup>2</sup>Paranormal that opposes the framework of understanding of normal science.

changes within them. This state of consciousness is referred to in the Zen Buddhist phrase, *Yin Ding Sheng Hui* (因定生慧), which translates as "stability deepens the observation". In Zhineng Qigong it is a focusing of consciousness to strengthen the life activity. During the process there exists no logical thinking or judgment or deduction. Feelings and emotions may be there but they are observed without analysis. With more stability there is greater observation, and the greater the observation the more the stability. Consciousness directly senses and observe the various inner changes." (Pang, 2015, p. 127)

**"With more stability, observation is greater, the greater the observation and the greater the stability. Consciousness directly feels and observes the variety of internal changes."**

Placing consciousness at the level of listening, of bodily activity itself, is one of the definitions that Zhineng Qigong gives of Qigong activity. From this point of view, emergence could be synonymous with Qigong, in this latter definition that we have just seen. Collective co-construction is seen again here, in an intellectual exchange based on scientific observations and in bodily activity in fields of exploration outside of science or of paranormal sciences in Zhineng Qigong. If translated works of MTC Professor Pang's writings are rare, they greatly influence the work of Marc Gutekunst who teaches Zineng Qigong with practice orientations focusing on consciousness.

Recently, Marc Gutekunst has organized online workshops, since the beginning of the pandemic, offering practice in the study of *Yi Yuan Ti*, a quality of consciousness in Zhineng Qigong. This took the form of guided meditation, mostly sitting. The sessions lasted two hours, from seven to nine in the evening. Gradually, students followed a progression in meditation, aiming to go deeper and deeper into the perception of the body, then into a thought of emptiness, using vocalization and visualization of a place within the head, which practitioners had to seek. The vocalizations were there to help feel this part of the brain that Marc Gutekunst explained, focusing on the pineal gland. Indeed, the vocalization of *Shen Ji* (the name of this brain area for Zhineng Qigong) aimed to consciously bring the practitioner to call this area and to observe the resultant vibration in the body caused by the sound emitted by the vocal cords. I was able to attend his workshops from home and follow this evolution and the feedback from practitioners on this practice. It is mostly a different perspective on daily life that is offered and trained during the evening sessions, with the proposition made to practitioners to observe their daily life differently. Jousse

used the vocabulary of play, of being played by the reflection of the world embodied by the anthropos, but also the possibility, once the anthropos is built, "not to be played by anymore", but to take the reins and play oneself. It is from this perspective that I understand this kind of exercise, or at least, that it is the proposition made to practitioners with this study of *Yi Yuan Ti*.

## 10 Conclusion

Apraxia, which Marcel Jousse discussed when he mentioned the difficulty we have in integrating gesture into our intellectual knowledge, leads us to consider gesture and the perception of internal movements differently. It is the process of knowing through bodily experience, through gesture, intussusception (Jousse, 2008), that is, understood, integrated, and that has nourished us with its substance after ingestion, digestion. Jousse's vision was one of the most organic when it came to discussing learning through mimism, repetition, and appropriation that constitute knowledge, understanding, through gesture and therefore through experience. The dichotomy between the anthropos and the cosmos allows us to understand the evolution of the human being, ecologizing (Varela, 1987), adapting to its environment, in other words, and learning from others. The teaching dimension involves self-learning, in the practices I have observed, such as ZNQG. The instructor, guiding by voice, verbalizes the attention that learners must follow, and practices while teaching, which allows for the mimism that Marcel Jousse spoke of. It is a rhythm, between listening to oneself and listening to what needs to be done, as well as the very example of how to practice well, always with the reference of the teacher.

Emerseology, in an ethnographic context, and in the service of research in anthropology, has allowed us to reconcile two things: the use of phenomenology (which we have used little in writing this text) which has the particularity of questioning the notions of consciousness and presence via "transcendence", that is, from top to bottom; "*top-down*", where thinking allows for the realization of lived experience, awareness, and empirical knowledge, "*down top*". The "language of the body" (Andrieu, 2018), a concept developed by Bernard Andrieu, is an attempt to testify to the living, understanding that words, thought articulated with words, have no place in the present, it is other modalities of representation, of words without words, that are then explored. ZNQG, with its theory of different forms of consciousness, even if the word consciousness is not the most precise to speak of it, has tried,

in China, and now in France, to put words to the living which, precisely, is experienced without words. The *Tǐchá sīwéi*, this thought of observing the felt, is an example of possible collaboration between the actors of an anthropological field and epistemological research. These are participatory research perspectives, done with the people observed, specialists in their arts, that our research leads us to. Emerseology is still looking for modes of observation and remains open to suggestions for improvement and discussion, as it is very recent. Anthropology takes it in turn and the research we engage in with it will allow us, over time, to give a voice to the body, where words cannot translate the living.

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