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Being Formless: A Daoist Movement Practice

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Abstract

This study aims to develop a Daoist movement practice. Based on qi-energy, Daoism, a Chinese ontological study of being, suggests that Dao is the formless changing of in-between being. I explore how the formless nature of Dao informs my own creative practice. I argue that formlessness signifies an uncertain, unexpected, and constantly changing boundary of the self. Improvised movement emerges from within, and as an extension, of formlessness. The improvisational mode considered here is thereby experiential, an expanded way of being, rather than compositional.

This thesis presents a somatic practicing process of embodying Dao in emergent movements. Chapter 1 discusses a practice-as-research methodology, which relates the ways in which practice and theory intersect to the relationship of *yin* and *yang* from a perspective of qi-energy. In Chapter 2, I discuss the somatic experience of improvised movement arising from qi and rethink the understandings of “practice” in the encounter between movement-based practices and Daoism. In Chapter 3, I borrow Eugene T. Gendlin’s theory of a felt sense and explore how the felt experiencing of qi is activated by a holistic awareness and gives rise to movement through the body based on the Daoist concept of the changing self. Then I explore four diverse states of the in-between inspired by the Daoist philosophy of “light” through improvised movement in Chapter 4. Furthermore, in Chapter 5 I develop a sequential transformation of in-between states toward Dao and discuss this process from a Daoist view of the self. A boundary of the changing states is examined in a series of emergent movements as a process of practicing the self in Chapter 6. I finally reflect upon Dao in my developed principle that focuses on an awareness of subtle emergences, and conclude formlessness, as it corresponds to Dao, is an emerging felt sense of being that is constantly changing before interpretation within the self in this movement practice.

Acknowledgements

Completing this research project has been a long journey. It took time to understand Dao, both in terms of philosophy and practices. I must express respect and gratitude to my qigong mentor Yan Xin. Without his inspiration in relation to qi-energy and its intertwined Chinese philosophies as the lineage of my qigong experience, my research could not have been completed. In addition, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to all of the people who have accompanied, inspired, encouraged and supported me in any way on this rugged and tough road. I have learned so much on this journey and the experience is invaluable to me.

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Preface: A guide for readers

The layout of the written part of this thesis is intended to echo the conceptual ideas embedded within it. As such, when reading this thesis, readers should keep in mind that a space between words, lines, or paragraphs may be as meaningful as a gap or space of the in-between in movement.¹ A space contains infinite possibilities; nothing (emptiness) means something (fullness). There are many blank spaces distributed purposely throughout this thesis. The goal of arranging spaces is to alert readers to a sense of the in-between and its vagueness by means of “experiencing” space. Space is no longer a symbol of emptiness or nothing, but instead it is something unknown. Try reading this thesis with an awareness of blankness. Spaces encountered within this thesis can be felt as a breath or a blurred area among the materials that shape it.

Some of the materials that emerged or were produced in the creative process of this research are inserted in the contents of my thesis to refer poetically to my argument and the theoretical concerns expressed herein. *Certain poetic sentences written in italics and dated are quoted from my reflections on the creative process which were documented in my diary.* I chose poetic and reflective words that have certain implicit articulations with key notions within some paragraphs of this thesis. The drawings included also come from my diary. These might be described as intuitive doodles that emerged from a meditative state, as does the mode of improvised movement evoked by qi. Thus, these doodles can be seen as another visual mode, an analogue of this movement practice. They provide a sense of emergence and the in-between, operating like purposeful gaps on the pages of this thesis. Moreover, they give readers insight into an aspect of my ongoing process through the accumulation of diverse modes (movement and drawing). Footage of the

practices developed in this research is displayed in the form of a DVD. Some video materials were compiled in a documentary film accompanied by poetic words in order to reveal the connections between movement and philosophy. The video images aim to give readers a flavour of the ongoing practice rather than frame the movement in any way as a complete work or as a videodance. The DVD is structured to guide viewers through the material that is linked throughout to the appropriate sections of the thesis.

The space between different modes of material also signifies something intangible or an implicit articulation between them. doodles, Their inclusion causes variable spaces in a paragraph, drawings, which can make a rhythm of reading. Readers should feel reflective words, vagueness and the unknown of the silences made by poetic words, those spaces.² Moments of shifting among diverse modes of material in this thesis can also be felt as blankness of consciousness with a sense of ambiguity. descriptive words, and footage

This thesis is designed to enable readers to experience philosophical thought and a movement practice weaving back and forth in this particular writing style. Some paragraphs may have a pause,

therefore appearing incomplete due to the insertion of a blank space and other creative materials. The insertion of these periodic slippages away from the tenets of traditional academic writing corresponds to the Daoist idea of formlessness.

Finally, the terms that are reconceptualised through Daoism in this thesis, such as “formless,” “self,” and “body,” have certain in-between implications in addition to their literal meanings, as with the Chinese language.³ This allows me to discuss ambiguous meanings using one term, so the terminology can remain clear and fully reflect the

subtlety and vagueness inherent in Chinese thinking about the in-between.

¹ This idea is inspired by an old Chinese text in the Daoist book, *The Principle of Taiyi Golden Flower*. The Chinese annotator Wang Kui Pu notes that there is a space in the original text describing the space between the eyes. Since heightening awareness between the eyes brings on the state of *wu*, he interprets the space as *wu*, an in-between and holistic state (Lu-zu, 2006, p. 122).

² This idea is inspired by musician and performer John Cage's (1973) two essays, "Lecture on Nothing" and "Lecture on Something" in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*. Influenced by Zen and Chinese classics such as the *Yi Jing*, he uses spaces to visualise silences and rhythms in speech as music in the texts. These articles present his ideas about nothing, which correspond to *wu*. His argument about form correlates with Daoism. He thinks nothing and something are the same in nature and encourages artists to do something that will lead to nothing (p. 129).

³ For instance, in the Chinese language, *wu* (nothing) and *yo* (something) do not definitely mean "yes" and "no," but instead imply each other.

Introduction

This research explores how the notion and experience of Chinese qi inform the development of a Daoist movement practice. However, rather than confining the inquiry to a style or aesthetic of movement, this thesis looks at what will arise in a movement practice, across territories of practice and theory, if the emergence of movement is explored, discussed, and understood in terms of qi-energy. Daoism as a Chinese philosophy of qi is involved in a debate with the nature of movement; therefore they inspire each other and enhance my understanding of both fields. Thus, this can be thought of as a journey to a Daoist-inflected movement practice based on an embodied exploration of qi. As Daoism explores Dao, the essence of an in-between mode of being,¹ in life, I search for Dao within the context of a movement practice, in order to better understand the nature of emergent movement. This practice is a unique process of understanding Dao through movement in a non-performance field. This movement practice focuses on an alternative, emerging view of the self rather than a new form or style of movement.

As a practitioner of movement improvisation, my interest in the articulation of emergent movement and qi began in 2002 with my study of Chinese traditional advanced qigong, a Chinese martial art or meditative practice that operates with qi.² I have been learning qigong from a Chinese qigong master and doctor of Chinese medicine, Yan Xin. The qigong that I was taught aims to activate and enhance the qi inherent in the body for maintaining good health from a holistic perspective. This particular practice is a meditative form of qigong ("*Jing Gong*") based on Daoist and Buddhist concepts, which focuses on "developing a clear, tranquil state of mind, with deeper self-awareness and harmony with nature," (Cohen, 1997, p. 5). This differs from the way of "martial qigong"

(“*Wu Gong*”), which works with fixed movement patterns realised externally in the space (Cohen, 1997, p. 6). Regardless of the form, consciousness and physical training are related inseparably and improve together in any qigong practice. During meditative qigong, “the mind is not thinking about but rather experiencing directly, immediately” (Cohen, 1997, p. 148). In other words, meditative qigong also elicits an embodied experience of being just as more movement-based qigong practices do; spontaneous movements emerging from the flow of qi are acceptable during the practice of meditative qigong guided by Yan.³

Qi is an internalised experience in my body, which influences my disposition—the ways I think, behave, move, and improvise. My improvised movement becomes prone to emerge from the inner, such as a sensitive physical impulse in my body, and an implicit sense that is unknown and deep inside, which are fostered by training of qi. Moreover, inherited from Chinese traditional culture and thinking, qi is not only a significant concept and practice in martial arts but also embodied in daily language and the Taiwanese culture in which I was born and raised. My aim over the course of this thesis is to unravel the interrelations between (my)self, qi-energy and improvised movement, which are substantial and interwoven in my life and in my practice. For this reason, this Daoist movement practice targets the emergent movement that freely follows the flow of qi-energy instead of set-patterned movement in operation of qi as in specific methods of martial arts such as Tai Ji.

Qi and movement

One can say that, for the Chinese, everything in the universe, inorganic and organic, is composed of and defined by its Qi. Mountains, plants, and human emotions all have Qi. Qi is not so much a force added to lifeless matter but the state of being of any phenomena. For the Chinese, Qi is the

pulsation of the cosmos itself.

(Kaptchuk, 2000, p. 43)

As Ted J. Kaptchuk (2000) points out in his study of Chinese medicine, qi is more like a particular sense of being more than a physical energy. He describes qi as “somewhere in between, a kind of matter on the verge of becoming energy, or energy at the point of materializing” (p. 43). Moreover, he states, “But it is far beyond this simple attempt to bridge the chasm of a Western dichotomy. In a single syllable, the word Qi proclaims one of the deepest root intuitions of Chinese civilization” (p. 43). This infers that qi has metaphorical and cultural meanings beyond energy in Chinese thought. Qi’s in-between character and comprehensive development in history make it hard to define exactly. Consequently, the concept of qi can be described and discussed differently in various contexts, such as biology, physiology, psychology, phenomenology, philosophy, and culture. In order to reveal qi’s spirit and depth of conception, I suggest describing qi in specific contexts in a way that keeps a certain sense of the in-between as its nature rather than rigidly or assertively defining what it is.

In this Daoist movement practice, qi is conceptualised in multiple layers. From my experience with Chinese qigong and movement improvisation, I am aware of qi as a vital energy that is inherent, implicit and necessary in my body and movement and particularly related to a state of being. In terms of how it functions, qi as a primal energy circulates within and around the body, including the external as a whole (Chen, 2009, p. 2). Furthermore, through this movement practice, I understand qi as an experience of articulation, a sense of being, felt as implicit energy that can subtly connect the self and the relationship with the surroundings or the other self. Yet the relationship with the environment is not the intention of this research. My explorations and discussions focus on the development of a sense of being of myself in practice. The awareness of a certain articulation with the external is regarded as part of my lived experience that can

enhance my sense of being, of the self and of the flow of qi-energy because the self and the world are indivisible like oneness in the Daoist concept of being.

When I am aware of myself and qi articulated, my movements arise in a mode of “emergence,” as an instant revelation of a process of being, which is unpredictable and open-ended. The emergence is a phenomenon occurring within the circulation of qi, an arising dynamic that is inherent in the body and implicitly connected with the self, rather than an imposed means without qi to shape the body. I regard this as the spontaneity of emergent movement in terms of qi (more discussions about spontaneity in Chapter 4). These qualities of emergence can be associated with the improvisational in some aspects.

However, the emergence via qi is not like the compositional mode of improvisation that was particularly inspired by jazz and incorporated in American and European experimental theatre and contemporary dance in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Foster, 2002, pp. 27, 31). Referring to the same tradition, dance scholar Michelle Heffner Hayes (2003) suggests that improvisation often concerns a reference to “a ‘map’ of possible choices determined by the structure of the form” as a means of instant composition for the mover to make a quick decision (p. 106). An example of this is the improvisation works of the Judson Dance Theatre. In this Daoist movement practice, however, emergence occurs along with the dynamics of qi without a clear intention of instantly designing, choreographing or composing. I do not purposely choose to abandon the compositional mode, but the qi mode of emergence based on Daoist philosophy makes me have no obvious intention to manipulate choreographic elements such as time, space and speed in movement.

Hayes (2003) argues that improvisation is “neither truly spontaneous nor fully

choreographed” at the moment when the mover has to make a quick decision as a means of instant composition (p. 106). This infers an in-between character of improvisation and somewhat corresponds with qi-mode emergence. As a feature of qi, emergence is an in-between experience beyond kinesthesia, so the mode is not exactly like responding to sensation or stimuli of the inside and the outside in Contact Improvisation and Skinner Releasing Technique. Although the mode of qi is not purposely choreographed, I argue that the ability or means of organising the moment akin to decision-making are not totally eliminated from a spontaneous movement that rises along with qi flowing up and down in this practice. Instead, I observed that they implicitly exist in the in-between or emergent mode of qi within my movement. In other words, rather than being imposed by an intention to compose during improvisation, those means may become phenomena spontaneously revealed through emergence as process in this Daoist movement practice. For instance, when sensing a strong qi-energy in my left leg, I was aware that a thought about whether responding to the sensation or not flashed through my mind. In a second, a movement emerged. Suddenly I was conscious that a decision to follow the sensation of movement was made quickly in a subtle way.

In this case, it may be more suitable to call the implicit mode of decision-making a sort of sudden understanding or awareness of a state of being in terms of qi. In other words, spontaneous movement of qi is not entirely indeterminate. The instant that a movement emerges via an articulation between qi and the self signifies the awakening of a certain awareness or rising qi-energy. Movements can be thought of as directed by a sense of qi, even though the sense of guidance from qi may be very subtle at times.

I suggest the moment of emergence can be thought of as a beginning of an improvised movement, which I particularly look at in this movement practice. The qi-mode of emergence can heighten a mover’s state of consciousness and accelerate his or her

intuitive reaction in the moment and so be open to other possibilities of improvised movement (Daoist intuition will be discussed in the section about Daoism later in this chapter). At this moment, movement may appear shapeless or unfinished as a form of itself or nearly being itself in this practice. The emerging movement is just what it is. In this practice, my improvised movements extend from the very point of the qi-mode emergence. In this regard, I employ the term “improvisation” to relate to the emergence of movement inflected by qi within this practice rather than situate my research within the wider field of dance improvisation. This thesis focuses on the improvisational emergence of movement rather than developing it into an artistic form.

In order to explore the Daoist philosophy of qi in movement, I am working with an understanding of improvisational movement that incorporates any emergence spontaneously awakened by a meditative awareness, without a clear and instant intention of composition or advanced choreography. This does not mean I totally exclude the improvisational means developed in current movement-based practices besides Chinese qigong, such as imagery, kinesthetic sensation, decision-making, structure and score, which have been part of my embodied movement experience. I allow all improvisational possibilities to happen in this practice. Following qi, their occurrences spontaneously become an emergent mode, as argued previously. Consequently, I suggest that improvisation is not an imposed intention of this Daoist movement practice but instead an extended phenomenon of the circulation of qi, or an extension of the emergence of qi. The improvisational is inherent in being. This is a Daoist mode of movement, an embodied movement experience of Daoism, which can echo the later section about theory in this chapter.

The issue of formlessness in terms of qi

Starting this research from the context that is most relevant to me, I observed that many Taiwanese artists apply qi to generate dance movement within a creative process for the purpose of establishing a set choreography. In the Taiwanese contexts of contemporary dance, artists in the 1990s turned their attention to an exploration of the body with the intention of creating a new form of movement and energy that combines Chinese traditional and contemporary dance in terms of an alleged “Eastern body” (Wang, 1994).⁴ Many of them, including Liou Shaw-lu and Lin Hwai-min, brought back inspirations from their experiences of learning dance in America and rethought the dancing body in Taiwanese culture. How qi-energy can shape movement and energy for performance has been a particularly pertinent issue.

For instance, Liou, the director of Taipei Dance Circle, developed his practice of Breath [Qi], Body and Heart that he has applied in his works since 1993 (Taipei Dance Circle, 2003-2013). Relying on breath to shape the body, Liou’s method gives rise to movement that appears pedestrian in nature (Liu’s movement practice will be expanded in Chapter 2). His intention is to challenge the established stylisation of dance movement with this “unshaped” and unsettling movement form in a choreographic manner rather than making a definite form of movement or energy by qi.

Compared with Liou, Lin, the director and choreographer of the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, has a much clearer intention to make a specific form of contemporary dance movement transformed from Tai Ji Dao Yin.⁵ Lin created a new sense of “Eastern” beauty in contemporary dance that he has used in his works since 1998. The dancers softly twist their fingers, toes, arms and torsos and spiral their bodies fluently, parallel to the mode of the martial arts in some measure. The movement shapes that follow qi in a free-flowing way look indescribable while some stereotyped Chinese traditional dance, modern dance and martial arts such as Tai Ji may, at times, suddenly

appear in a sequence of his works (for more analyses of Lin's works, see Chapter 2).

For both these choreographers, movement and energy are eventually formalised or codified. I found that, even though the moving figure is indescribable and flowing, it still occasionally embodies a particular pattern of "formlessness" that can be seen in qi-triggered movement, such as Lin's usage of Tai Ji Dao Yin. These two examples made me think about what "formlessness" means in terms of qi and what "formless" qi can bring to movement and the systematic practice of an artist. I intend to explore whether and how the idea of qi can engage with a movement practice in a way that is different from the stylising changeability of movement shapes as a choreographic form.

According to scholar Chen De Xing (2009), who theorises qi on the basis of *Huangdi Neijing* (an ancient Chinese medical and philosophical writing that reflects Daoist and Confucian thoughts on qi), qi's natural character is change because of the energy's assemblage and dispersion. This change means exchange, gradual transformation and sudden mutation between something and nothing, or rather between the "visible" (sensible by sensory organs) and the "invisible" (insensible by sensory organs) (pp. 37, 45). This inherent in-between allows qi to have a tendency toward a state beyond a perceivable form or without a particular appearance (p. 38). This infers that an intention to produce any specific form by qi is likely to drift from the nature of qi. I assume this conception of changing qi hints at us bravely diving into and peacefully staying in an in-between state where all borders between the known and unknown are constantly unsettled in our awareness.

Based on this notion of qi's change, I suggest that formlessness means a form that is constantly changing and unexpected, a form that is without boundaries, just as a gap in space is an image without a

border, rather than a solid figuration whose shape cannot be identified by customary experiences. Formlessness is not a concept in opposition to matter. I suggest that “formless” is not the opposite of “form”; instead it contains an invisible and implicit form. Based on Chinese thought, in formlessness everything becomes in-between and nothing is somehow something. The formless does not mean having no form or being without form, but instead implies an in-between wherein form becomes transparent.

I explore and seek to embody what formlessness means in a Daoist movement practice. Qi-energy is concerned with more than the shape of the body or a particular technique of movement in this practice. The main intention of my research was not to establish a visually innovative style of movement; rather, I have sought to explore states of being in movement as it may accompany qi’s tendency toward formlessness, which I have kept in mind during the process. Here, formlessness is understood more as a kind of “felt experiencing” than as a visual image. In carrying out this concept of qi, boundaries are blurred and resolved.

In order to avoid being confined to a certain stylised form of martial arts, I did not adopt specific qigong methods during my creative process. Instead, I conceptualise qi as a way to experiment, question and explore a Daoist movement practice. Qi is employed as a medium to connect this movement practice and Daoist philosophy much more than as a specific image or stimulus for generating movement. While the phenomenological experience of qi-energy is not disregarded, I advocate the idea that the philosophy of qi is as important as its practice. This cannot be forgotten, neglected or considered separate from movement, so that qi can be fully embodied in a movement practice that has other possibilities beyond helping choreographers design a definite form. My research focuses on an experiencing of movement inspired by a Daoist view of qi, which in turn develops a movement practice that can unfold or speak for those philosophies in

and of itself.

For the movement practice developed in my research, the word “practice” indicates a meditative process of being in-between as a way to allow improvised movement to emerge. This practice regards being in-between as a “magical” and implicit moment when an unexpected phenomenon is about to arise during a mover’s heightening concentration similar to the experience in meditation. The in-between moment may appear as a quick flash or may exist continuously in improvisation.

Through this practice, I address the notion that one may undergo various in-between states during emergent movement. Changes at the level of meditative consciousness may be implicit and subtle, in particular with qi-energy. Therefore, my research is also concerned with this subtlety in emergent movement. This thesis explores my own journey toward such inner awareness and sensitivity to changes. The practices carried out in this research offer an alternative way to practice a Daoist mode of being in-between in the form of a movement practice.

This view of formlessness sees the constantly changing in-between from the perspective of change itself. It is inevitable that, as dance scholar Danielle Goldman (2010) points out, “one could escape confinement only to enter into or become aware of another set of strictures” (p. 4). She asserts that people should not ignore the changing limitations or boundaries that an improviser must negotiate in reality (p. 5). She argues that people should not regard freedom as “a hardened stance” of “a desired endpoint devoid of constraint” but face up to the fact that improvisation has limitations (pp. 3-4). Goldman’s analysis offers a useful redefinition of freedom that emphasises an indispensable negotiation with limitations of improvisation, a changing process in preference to a fixed situation, and improvisation’s “full-bodied critical engagement with the world” (p. 5).

Daoism offers a meditative mode of thinking, a reflexive mode parallel to a state of contemplating the self in meditation that can be used to consider the issues Goldman discusses. Daoism suggests negotiating an intention to overturn or react to an existing form while settling into the nature of the in-between or of change itself, in order to make form flow within the in-between instead of falling into a hardened and tense dualistic situation. This suggestion does not mean that I am unaware of a sense of “confinement” that arises from the self in emergent improvised movement, such as self-judgment, over-expectation and personal movement tendencies, which may give more weight to known thoughts, emotions, feelings and perceptions than unknowns and lose the balance needed for maintaining a felt sense of the in-between. Instead, Daoism enables me to learn to blur the frame by accepting these more limiting thoughts as part of my self (This will be discussed in Chapter 6).

In this case, Goldman’s term “confinement,” which implies certain restrictions or limitations, may not suit a Daoist view of the in-between. It needs to be rethought of as a boundary of the self inherent in human nature which is explored throughout this thesis and practice. Nonetheless, I believe people may unavoidably face conflicts in the process before coming to a sense of calmness, as in the course of meditation, and my research process is no exception. This notion of formlessness establishes an alternative view of the in-between that can be applied to a reconsideration of any dualistic relationship, having been incorporated in my thought and practice.

From a Daoist perspective

Chinese qigong is associated with a variety of Chinese systems of thought such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism (Jing-wei & Ai-ren, 1998, p. 83). My qigong mentor Yan holds this kind of comprehensive view of Chinese traditional advanced qigong,

regarding it as a practice that developed very early on before it was transformed, characterised and interpreted by these different Chinese philosophical schools and systems and furthermore connected to religions.⁶ Thus, he tends to discuss Chinese traditional concepts related to qi in the way that no particular Chinese philosophical system is emphasised; instead they are merged within his holistic thinking. He also suggests that practicing a particular qigong method and philosophical reflection upon qi (such as within Chinese traditional philosophies and scientific investigations of qi) are equally important for heightening qi-energy.

While my qigong mentor Yan is not a Daoist, I found that, after reading Daoist literature, Daoism resonates more effectively with my embodied experience of practicing Chinese qigong than other Chinese philosophies. This may be because the traditional qigong method that the master chose to teach his followers was somehow influenced by or has certain similar tendencies that resonate with Daoism, or my disposition of qi based on my personality and constitution is more resonant with Daoism.⁷ For this reason, I chose Daoism as a basis of support for the practical process of my research. More than a philosophy supporting experiential knowledge, Daoism, its texts and its principles connote a particular approach to meditative qigong practice. Daoist philosophies offer a grounding for practitioners to improve their meditative practices, since fostering of the self and qi are inseparable and benefit each other. This implies that Daoism is not only a philosophy but also a practice, or rather a practice as philosophy. This idea influences how philosophy is involved with the practice developed in this research (see Chapter 1).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Asian philosophies and meditative practices such as Daoism, Indian Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, Zen, Chinese qigong and Indian Yoga have interrelated or somehow corresponded with one another throughout history (see Chang, 2011; Cohen, 1997). Therefore, there are inevitably some traces of epistemic

premises other than Daoism, (for example, Buddhism and Zen), informing my arguments, and sometimes it is helpful to draw on them to clarify some of the principles underpinning this Daoist movement practice. This integrative approach is implicitly influenced by what I have learned from my qigong mentor Yan, who whilst developing his practice under the guidance of Master Hai-Deng, a Chinese Buddhist monk, nevertheless went on to develop a decidedly holistic vision of qigong.

I have consulted Chinese and English literature on Daoism that took linguistic and conceptual translation into serious consideration. Since the translation of a text when the two languages are very diverse transforms its original meaning, I mutually referred to Chinese texts and their English translations while reading.

The Principle of Taiyi Golden Flower is an important historical writing about the Daoist concept of “light” as a symbol of qi, a method of meditation handed down in the form of Daoist master Lu-zu’s texts. This philosophy of “light” was adopted to explore different in-between states in practice over the course of my research (see Chapter 4.) I have studied *Contemporary Interpretation of the Principle of Taiyi Golden Flower* (Lu-zu, 2006), a Chinese version annotated and edited by Wang Kui Pu, which translates all the contents of the ancient book.

Richard Wilhelm translated and edited an English version titled *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life* (Wilhelm & Jung, 1929/1962). Wilhelm’s translation of Daoism is sometimes criticised because it has been suggested that he understands Daoism from the Neo-Confucian perspective he was taught (Karcher, 1999, p. 20). He chose not to include the latter part of the classic book. The material omitted from Wilhelm’s version reveals the summit of freedom that a Daoist qigong practitioner can reach at the ultimate stage. For this research, the latter section of the book is considered

the most significant part of Lu-zu's texts, since it represents the most illuminating literary account of Daoism. Therefore, it is worth reading, understanding and developing as a practice for my study.

In addition, some contemporary Daoist studies are examined from different viewpoints. For example, Wilhelm interprets Lu-zu's texts as wisdoms of spiritual life (Wilhelm & Jung, 1929/1962), while C. G. Jung comments on Daoist meditative practice in light of Jungian depth psychology (Wilhelm & Jung, 1929/1962). Lai Xi San (2008) investigates the nature of being in ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuang-zi's Daoist theory in support of Martin Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. Ou Chong Jing (2010) reinterprets the classic text of Zhuang-zi by means of semiotic analysis based on Derridan deconstructivist theory. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames (1998) analyse the Daoist concept of the self from an intercultural perspective.

The fact that these scholars interpret Daoism from the perspectives of their own professions, cultures and intellectual concerns determines how they translate the terminology and key concepts of Daoism, which gives a specific slant to their discussion of Daoism. I mainly draw on Lai's text to articulate consciousness, being and the self with *qi* because his elaboration of the relationship between these ideas can explain what has emerged in this practice and in my findings. I apply Hall and Ames's cultural studies of Daoism to explain the notions of *wu-wei*, *de*, and the self. During my discussion of the self, I did not choose other disciplines that apply or are informed by Daoism, such as Jung's depth-psychological theory of Self, because my thesis addresses a specific cultural view of the philosophical aspects of this movement practice. Therefore, referring to Hall and Ames's terminology, my thesis does not create a new term for "self" but does define it within the context of traditional Chinese philosophy. Their comparison and articulation between the Daoist view and diverse cultural meanings of the self in the

Western philosophical tradition also inspired me to reinterpret multiple states of the Daoist self in a way that can be understood in the field of creative practices (for more discussion of Ames and Hall's theory see the introduction of Daoism related to *wu-wei* and the self in this section).

Moreover, non-Asian Daoist scholars' writings may also serve as references for considering how to translate a Chinese concept into English. For instance, Ames and Hall (1998) consciously avoid using dualistic wording and terminology to describe Daoist concepts, so as to correspond to the spirit of Chinese traditional thought. James Miller (2005) and Russell Kirkland (2005) both discuss translative problems of the terminology in their studies. Miller (2005) points out that *wu-wei* is often literally translated into "non-action" and misunderstood as "letting be;" however, in a Daoist context, non-action tends to be a sense that an action reveals rather than truly doing nothing (p. 140). He states, "this 'action as non-action' is really a form of spiritual technology by means of which humans cultivate their own natures and the nature around them" (p. 140).

Kirkland (2005) also indicates that *wu-wei* is usually interpreted wrongly as "spontaneity" or "naturalness," but it might suggest "shrewd tactics" of being in-between, according to his understanding of the original text of *Dao De Jing* (p. 60). I agree with Miller and Kirkland, yet I think "action as non-action" and "shrewd tactics" may still reduce the original meaning of *wu-wei* and mislead readers. If key Daoist notions are translated by means of paraphrasing, their meanings are, at times, simplified or incomplete because English words have relatively definite meanings when compared to Chinese terms relating to Daoism, which usually contain vague implications. In order to maintain the depth of those concepts in language, I chose to transliterate several Daoist terms that are difficult to translate and avoid fitting a Chinese notion, such as *wu*,

wu-wei, Dao and *de*, into a single English word or phrase.

Philosophical scholar Chung-yuan Chang's (1965/2011) book *Creativity and Taoism [Daoism]: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art and Poetry*⁸ has a certain echo with my way to unfold this movement practice based on Daoism and the Daoist thoughts I found connected during the process. Chang brings in the similarities between some Daoist concepts and Western phenomenological theories, and Chinese and Western aesthetics in painting and poetry. In order to elaborate the distinctions of Daoism, he also compares diverse Chinese philosophical systems including Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The literature discusses how Dao as a process of experiencing the "pure" or "real" self of the artist (pp. 70, 78), or rather "interpenetration between Nature and Man" (p. 16), is revealed in a spontaneous, intuitive and contemplative way of creation specific to Chinese poetry and painting. Chang argues that from a Daoist viewpoint the highest state of an artist reveals a childlike innocence from within beyond the aesthetic confines of the work (p. 250). He relates such an intuitive process of "inner reflection", which is "direct, immediate and spontaneous", to a Daoist vision of creativity (p. 94). Thus, he states, "Chinese painting is not merely a product of technical skill but it is basically an achievement of a high level of self-cultivation, without which creative intuition cannot emerge" (p. 258). He points out that in Chinese thought the "real meaning of art" is "to reveal the artist's inner state of being," namely the transformation of the self (p. 267).

While Chang discusses the forming of an aesthetic work of art, this is not the focus of my thesis. Rather, I regard the Daoist movement practice developed in my doctorate research a *process or pathway to understanding* Dao through movement. However, the spontaneous and intuitive way that my movement emerges from qi in this practice, which has been discussed in the first section and will be expanded upon later, is similar

to the implicit and subtle principles underpinning the creation of Chinese poetry and painting articulated by Chang.

Further, Chang (1965/2011) regards qi as an aspect of material energy rather than a metaphysical principle and therefore comments that practicing qigong is helpful but not necessary for understanding Dao (pp. 92, 194). In contrast, within the context of my practice as research, Daoism is not a purely metaphysical theory; instead, it is both a philosophical and an embodied practice of qi as addressed previously. Moreover, as a qigong learner, I have found that when reading written material related to Daoist philosophy, certain implications of qi in the text can inspire the qi-energy in my body, similar to my experience during meditative qigong.⁹

The following sub-sections will introduce five key concepts of Daoism that can support the in-between idea of formlessness in this thesis: *wu*, Dao, *wu-wei*, *de* and the self.

Wu

Wu means yet its literal meaning is not absolutely nothing, as it bears a sense of the in-between, that is, something as nothing or nothing as something. *Wu* is a state in which everything unidentified is still whole. In terms of qi, the relationship between dual elements, *yin* and *yang*, is not one of cause and effect but rather of the coexistence of oneness, as light and shade coexist *yinyang* (Kaptchuk, 2000, p. 8). *Yinyang*, as a whole, is ever changing. Accordingly, *wu* is never still or fixed.¹⁰

Wu suggests the in-between means not only a chaotic state in which things have not been named but also an integral whole of those things from a Daoist perspective. The idea of the in-between is a character common to the other Daoist notions such as Dao, *wu-wei* and self. Therefore, *wu* is similarly central to my research. My hypothesis is that

being in-between is the shared experience or territory between meditation and emerging spontaneous movement within this practice. The notion of *wu* is employed to inform and investigate various in-between states or experience in improvised movement more than in meditation.

Dao

Dao is the principle of interaction between *yin* and *yang* that makes life go on (Chen, 2009, p. 49). In other words, *Dao* is change itself, a way to understand *wu* that cannot be named, shaped and timed but is fluid beyond any form of restriction (Lai, 2008, p. 14). This signifies that the word “state,” in terms of qi, means being dynamic, changing or becoming, which refers to how qi-energy flows or transfers rather than existing in stasis (Miller, 2005, pp. 60-61). The only form is change itself, so everything can grow in its own way, as does the central idea, Dao.

Since Dao is change itself, the idea of formlessness is an essential aspect of Dao, which is characterised in part by an ever-changing dynamic of the in-between. Formlessness can be understood as a parallel with Dao for this movement practice. Like Dao, the formless permeates all ideas in this thesis as Dao does in Daoism.

Wu-wei

The changing nature of Dao implies a sense of movement. Dao is embodied in an attitude of *wu-wei* toward action (Ames & Hall, 1998, p. 52). Ames and Hall (1998) employ the term “nonassertive actions” to describe *wu-wei*:

Actions untainted by stored knowledge or ingrained habits are unmediated, unstructured, unprincipled, and spontaneous. As such, they

are consequences of deferential responses to the item or event in accordance with which, or in relation to which, one is acting. These actions are *ziran* 自然, 'spontaneous,' 'self-so-ing.'

(p. 52)

However, Daoism does not encourage individuals to be passive or subject to everything but it highly values the spontaneous "arising" or emergence from *wu*. Thus, *wu-wei* can be carried out in an in-between moment when movement is about to emerge in a state of *wu*. *Wu-wei* is an attitude as well as a way to move, which can lead to a relatively passive yet sensitive and transient disposition of movement in terms of its intent to move. Daoist scholar Na Wei (1994) says that *wu-wei*, an emergence from *wu* state, implies a Daoist "intuitive experience" (p. 1, own translation) (Daoist intuition will be elaborated upon in Chapter 3, and explored in an in-between state in the section of Openness in Chapters 4 and 5).

Yet it is not easy to put *wu-wei* into practice in a presentation context in which, most often, the intention to present something to an audience occupies the motivation. This also makes formlessness tricky. When one intends to stylise or focus closely on the form of movement or energy led by *qi*, then the form will become fixed.¹¹

De

According to Daoism, the key to the realisation of *wu-wei* is stronger faith in this mode of spontaneous emergence, or deference to "intrinsic excellences" called *de* (Ames & Hall, 1998, p. 52). It is a human virtue in terms of approaching Dao, or an understanding of what life and the world are about. The question is how to transform the idea of *de* from the field of Daoism into improvised movement and from concept to practice (See Chapter 1 in relation to my way of unfolding this practice and Chapter 2 for further discussion of these issues).

The self

Daoist perspectives of energy highlight an attitude or a specific type of heightened awareness. Human thoughts and movements are believed to stem from the self. Rather than being regarded as a fixed entity, the self exists in a mode of energy and bears the characteristic of qi, that is, constant change without a particular form. I view and discuss the self from a point of in-between. Therefore, I suggest that the changing self should not be misunderstood as the highest spiritual realm that people finally reach in a time scale of a meditative practice, but an attitude of easy acceptance of every state of a person that can be achieved at any time.

Inspired by Ames and Hall (1998), my thesis focuses on the “culture-bound character” (p. 5) of the self to reinterpret the Daoist self in movement. In their writing, the late-modernist tendency toward “a plurality of ways of characterizing the unity of the person” is articulated through the Daoist notion of the in-between “that rejects the unitary self, and affirms the self as a locus of sometimes consistent, and sometimes less than consistent, experience” (pp. 7, 18). I propose that the multiple states of the Daoist self in movement can be thought of as diverse inclinations of the self, such as physical, mental, social or cultural influences or, “personality as a function of self-creativity and persuasive power” to “establish the context of meaning” (Ames & Hall, 1998, pp. 5-7, 11-12). These various states or inclinations of the self can be regarded as diverse levels of energy from a perspective of qi. A Daoist notion of the self, due to its constant state of change, can be embodied in improvised movement in a way that equally regards all inclinations of the self. These inclinations cannot be delineated or named; each is just one of many distinct states in terms of qi-energy.

I just sit, pick up a hair on my clothes and drop it. That's it.

Chapter outline

Proceeding from the notions of the in-between and formlessness as previously introduced, Chapter 1 establishes a practice-as-research methodology that articulates practice and theory as the relationship between *yin* and *yang*. Influenced by this Daoist concept, I regard the practical and theoretical aspects equally as diverse modes of exploration or contemplation, and explore the dynamics of their cooperation. In addition, considering that movement emerges from *wu-wei* in a subtle way, I explore and propose a particular way to carefully “unfold” this practice in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 explores the somatic experience of improvised movement emerging from *qi* in the light of both the wider field of Daoism and this specific movement-based practice. Inspired by Japanese philosopher Yuasa Yasuo’s view (1993) on repeated training of Asian bodymind practices and the concept of *Dao* as a constant changing, this chapter reconsiders the notion of “practice” as an ongoing, creative process from a perspective of *qi*. I argue that a sense of practicing the self can exist in an in-between moment when movement is about to emerge in a meditative process. This idea is examined in the contexts of different approaches to improvisation and somatic practices in America, Europe and Taiwan. Therefore, the practice developed in this research is redefined as a meditative process of practicing the self and becoming in-between.

Chapter 3 aims to explore how formlessness can be felt or experienced in relation to movement from a perspective of *qi* rather than anatomy or kinaesthetic awareness. To begin with, this chapter examines the ambiguity of Daoism based on conceptions of *Dao* and *wu*. Borrowing psychological and philosophical scholar Eugene T. Gendlin’s (1997) concept of a “felt sense” through experiencing, I discuss how an ambiguous sense of *qi* can be experienced and how this felt sense makes the body move subtly in a way of *wu-wei*. Moreover, I explore how to experience a felt sense of formlessness by

elaborating the changing self with reference to the concept of transparency in Daoism.

Chapter 4 considers how diverse Daoist in-between states can be embodied in movement. Based on the philosophy of light as a symbol of qi in Daoist meditation, I examine and experiment with four in-between states of consciousness through improvised movement. I discuss how an in-between state gives rise to movement, how Daoism informs a creative process, and how a qigong practice and a movement practice resonate during the process.

Chapter 5 focuses on the transformation between different states of consciousness and the self. Through exploring a sense of the unknown related to the body, I break down the four in-between states developed in the previous stage into more detailed states by working with a participant in a research workshop (for designed sessions see Appendix 1). Accordingly, a continuous procedure for gradually transforming states of consciousness is established and developed into a structured improvisational movement sequence. I explore how the self can melt and become softened into a changeable entity through serially changing states of consciousness during movement. The felt sense of freedom in the transforming process is discussed.

Chapter 6 explores the Daoist idea of the changing self and *wu-wei* in an “open” improvisational form of movement. Considering the boundary of the self during improvisation, this chapter examines difficulties such as judgments and habits in the process of unfolding this practice. I argue that whether or not the boundary is felt as confinement or formlessness depends on a mover’s view of her or himself. Moreover, since *de* is a guiding principle of Dao in Daoism, I examine what *de* means and how it can be attained while unfolding this movement practice. This process gives rise to a principle of improvised movement focusing on awareness of emergences or changes in

and around the self, aiming to explore the idea of practicing the self as a mover's only attempt at action. A duet as an example of this principle is discussed.

Finally, my conclusion discusses formlessness and awareness of Dao in this movement practice. The principle of improvised movement developed at the end of this research is indicative of the Dao of this practice that I eventually discovered through a subtle awareness of spontaneously emergent movement. I suggest the felt experiencing of formlessness within this movement practice is flowing and redefined by the changing self all the time.

¹ The Daoist mode of existence might be related to a phenomenological experience. I employ the phenomenological term "being" to describe it in this thesis, even if there are differences between the conceptions of the two theories. The distinction of the Daoist mode of being will be revealed throughout the thesis.

² According to American qigong master Kenneth S. Cohen (1997), there are several types of Chinese qigong that have developed from ancient times to the present, such as "medical qigong" (*"Yi Jia Gong"*), "external qi healing" (*"Wai Qi Zhi Liao"*), "meditative qigong" (*"Jing Gong"*), "Confucian qigong" (*"Ru Jia Gong"*), martial qigong (*"Wu Gong"*) and "Business Qigong" (pp. 5-7).

³ Cohen (1997) proposes that meditative qigong often accompanies medical qigong (*"Yi Jia Gong"*) as a prescription for "self-healing" (p. 5). Healing is indeed part of my lineage of Chinese qigong, as my qigong mentor Yan Xin is a doctor. However, this is not the concern of my Daoist movement practice even if it exists implicitly as invisible traces in this research.

⁴ "Eastern bodily perspective" has become a popular term in Taiwan's dance field since the 1990s. The term "Eastern" can be found in the official websites of Taipei Dance Circle (<http://taipei-dance-circle.imagecoffee.net/>) and Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (<http://www.cloudgate.org.tw/>) to describe their works. I suggest this term should not be arbitrarily misused to depict a general characteristic of Chinese culture without considering the differences and diversity within "Eastern" culture in Taiwan.

⁵ Tai Ji Dao Yin is a contemporary method of martial arts developed from the martial art of Taijiquan. The founder of Tai Ji Dao Yin, Xiong Wei, a master of Taijiquan, claims that this method of qi is suitable and accessible to people for improving their health and well-being.

⁶ For Yan's discourses, see Jing-wei & Ai-ren's edited book *The philosophy and practice of*

Yan Xin QiGong (1998). The official website of Yan Xin Qigong (<http://yanxinqigong.net/>) provides a short description of Yan and his qigong practice for English readers.

⁷ Since following tradition means only a qigong master can accurately instruct and transmit the profound and advanced Chinese traditional qigong practices, as a learner, I am not allowed to reveal the method.

⁸ Taoism is another way of spelling Daoism. The same holds for Tao and Dao. They belong to different systems of translation.

⁹ For example, in Daoism the “great sympathy” (“*T’zu*” [*ci*]) means “the primordial, immediate source of love, the secret root of all love and compassion,” functioning as a way to blur the boundary between the subject and the object, transforming from the self into “selflessness” (Chang, 1965/2011, p. 54). The great sympathy is “the primary moving force of the universe” (p. 68). Such force infers qi-energy. Chang borrows this notion to explain an artist’s embodied experience during her/his making process of Chinese poetry and painting and how people can experience the similar atmosphere when seeing these works. I do not investigate the concept of the great sympathy in my thesis. However, it perhaps can be associated with the idea of qi as a subtle connection between the self and the surrounding environment, activated through sensitive awareness in my research, as well as the idea of sharing as a way of unfolding this Daoist movement practice together with (an) other(s). The great sympathy may be thought of as an expanding feeling of a sense of qi, like as a subtle connection between beings, since the two notions are both based on Dao. This corresponds with my personal experience of qi in that I can feel a more sympathetic connection with the surroundings in my current progress of practicing qi than before.

¹⁰ In this thesis, I employ the term “*yinyang*” as the whole composed of *yin* and *yang* elements in order to emphasise the oneness, whilst using “*yin* and *yang*” in the discussions over the relationship and dynamics of the two elements within the oneness.

¹¹ For this reason, formless movement is not described or distinguished in detail in this thesis, because the human mind is easily pinned down to a specific image through language, even if the language is referring to the in-between. If movement is described as a form that lies between two conventionally recognisable forms, then the form of ambiguity becomes fixed in that description.

Chapter 1 In between practice and theory

In Daoism, practice and philosophy are synonyms—a “practice as philosophy” and vice versa. This inclination of Daoism and the main notion of the in-between influence and inspire me to integrate philosophy and practice in a seamless way. In this practice, improvised movement is a process of understanding a “philosophy” learnt from theories and practical experiences. Therefore, practical and philosophical areas grow and advance at the same time through this methodology.

Many studies have explored or expounded the methodologies of research through practice, which are defined as practice-led, practice-based, or practice as research.¹ There are quite a few ideas that resonate between a practice-as-research approach and Daoism. Jane Bacon and Vida Midgelow (2010), scholars and practitioners involved in the development of Practice as Research (PaR) in UK, suggest that the PaR approach “resists closed definitions” in order to leave an open space for conversation and interfusion between practice and theory (p. 6). They propose the significance of “notions of embodied knowing and the processes of speaking ‘from’ rather than ‘about’ movement,” “the articulation of processes” and “dynamic relationships between theory and practice” to distinguish Practice as Research from more conventional forms of academic research based on a theoretical stance (p. 4). On the other hand, they also suggest “opening up the territory of the critical, to note and value the multifarious modes of knowing that exist in movement practices” (p. 5). This is what “embodied knowing” or “an ontology of the bodily,” that Bacon and Midgelow suggest, means (p. 9). These nuances also apply to my methodology based on Daoism. The ambiguous, in-between character of Daoist concepts such as *wu* and *Dao* allows for explorations open to the unknown and the formless without fixed definitions or boundaries, just as in PaR.

Moreover, Daoism focuses on the nature of being or the in-between itself, from an ontological perspective, which can be associated with Bacon and Middelw's idea of "speaking from rather than about." Furthermore, corresponding to the relationship between practice and theory in PaR, Daoism is a dynamic system and a transformative process/practice based on the Chinese notion of *yin* and *yang*. Thus, in my research, movement practice and Daoist philosophy contain each other, and the movement practice is allowed to speak for the philosophy.

Moreover, Bacon and Middelw (2010) suggest that certain issues can be revealed only through or in practice, and thus regard practice as a way of research that is necessary (Bacon & Middelw, 2010, pp. 6-7). Similarly, Dao cannot be transmitted, taught or understood by words but via a mode of "nonexplanation" since it is a meditative and intuitive experience beyond intellectual thinking or a logical system (Chang, 1965/2011, p. 71). This is the key reason why a PaR methodology is required to develop a Daoist movement practice.

The practice-as-research methodology of my study is particularly inspired by Daoism, incorporating the flow of qi, or the dynamic relationship of *yin* and *yang*, in the interaction between practice and theory. Besides elaborating upon the methodology and specific approach to this research, this chapter also contains my way of unfolding this Daoist movement practice.

1.1 Methodology: Practice and theory as *yin* and *yang*

Artistic and creative processes and theoretical study are equally important in my research; they can both contribute to research and give rise to different modes of knowledge, like *yin* and *yang*, which may be felt implicitly and explicitly, respectively.

Yin and *yang* symbolise any two reversible elements that coexist in the world in terms of *qi*. Essentially, nothing is opposite, since all paired elements bear the same nature in Daoism. This is why *yin* and *yang* can exist together and interplay harmonically, whereby one contains, produces, influences, transforms into the other, and derives another pair of *yin* and *yang* (Kaptchuk, 2000, pp. 8-13). Associated with Chen's (2009) argument of *qi* cited in the Introduction, the complex correlations between *yin* and *yang* can be thought of as a result of *qi*-energy's ceaseless gathering and dispersion.

pthoeory

Similarly, practice and theory are interwoven to the extent that they are not divided into definite or distinct areas. I do not simply place them in opposition, such as non-linear/linear, creative/logical, and correlative/cause-and-effect, but rather acknowledge that either side of these pairs can occur in both modes. Instead, I stress that practice and theory coexist as two modes of exploration, and one mode does not necessarily follow the other. Theory inherently arises from practice because theory can be realised or discovered through practice. Practice is latent in theory because theory implies practical experience of and attitude toward life. In short, they exist within each other implicitly and secretly, which may be easily overlooked; therefore, careful revelation is required during research. This correlation with *yin* and *yang* implies that practice and theory flow in a mode akin to *qi*-energy.

To merge practice and theory as in the dynamic relationship between *yin* and *yang*, I apply a meditative mode of imagery informed by my experience of Chinese traditional *qigong* and meditations within this research.

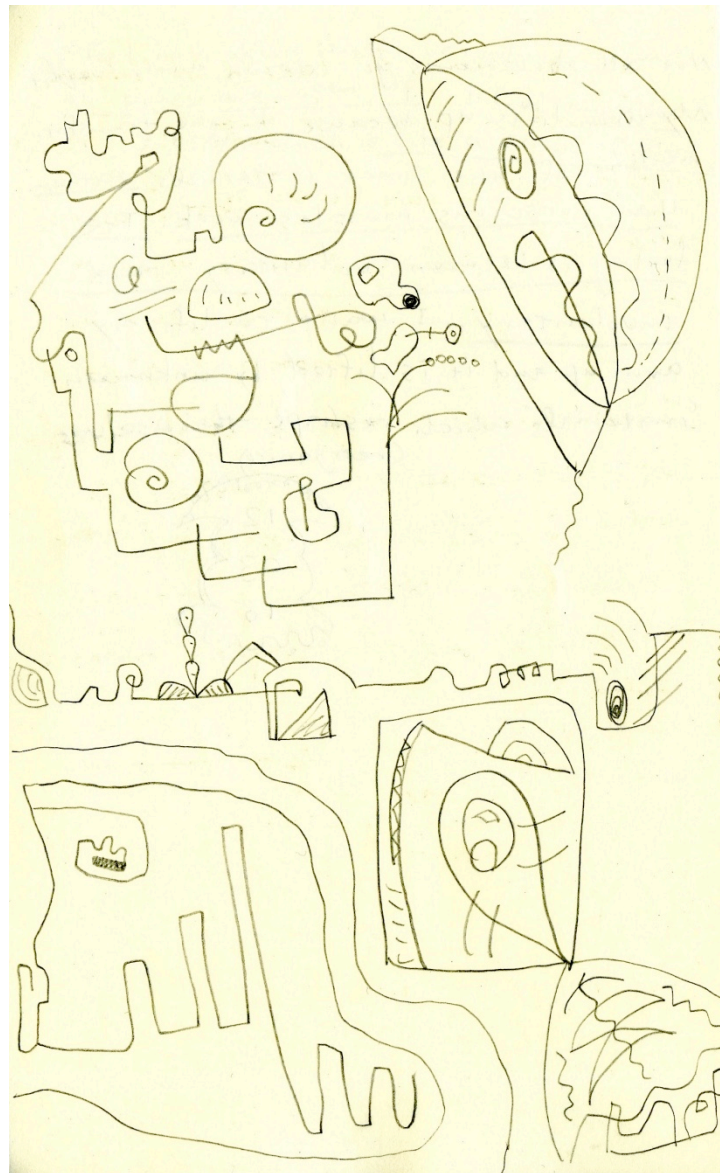
Imagery can help to establish a formless relationship between the two disciplines. As in the case of images experienced in meditation, practice and theory can only be felt vaguely on an implicit or explicit energy level. Their particular images and boundaries become blurred in my mind, the same way body image becomes formless in emergent movement (see Chapter 3). They are “just” two exploratory modes or meditative processes deepening my self — who I am and what I want to say in this Daoist movement practice.

In the course of this research, practice and theory involve three strategies: exploring (this takes place within this movement practice, as well as qigong meditative practices and theoretical reflection), writing (reflective, poetic and academic), and reading (poetic and academic). Each strategy has theoretical and practical aspects that overlap and intertwine. Diverse strategies embrace practice and theory in different proportions in the way that *yin* and *yang* coexist. One mode (either practice or theory) may be more dominant than the other in a strategy; for example, exploring in movement and in theoretical reflection. This means the recessive mode is not gone but still implicitly embodied, even if it is invisible. Through those strategies, a sort of understanding (philosophies learnt in this movement practice and qigong meditation as well as findings from theoretical studies) emerges. This awakened understanding, like qi-energy, articulates and communicates practice and theory, allowing both to work in the same dynamic ways as *yin* and *yang*. The awakening implies a sense of energy shifting between practice and theory, and their proportions are changed.

The timing of changing a strategy can be explained more concretely by Zen Master and photographer John Daido Looi's description of how an image emerges by itself and flows with/as qi-energy in a creative process:

As my sense cleared, images began to reveal themselves, gradually at first, the more and more intensely until they were rushing at me. I could not ignore them.... In the creative process, as long as the energy is strong, the process continues. It may take minutes or hours. As long as you feel chi peaking and flowing, let it run its course. It's important to allow this flow and expression, without attempting to edit what is happening—without trying to name, judge, analyze, or understand it.

(Loori, 2005, p. 90)



13 March 2010

While researching, I would find myself engaged in one strategy until I felt that a sense of energy was falling or that an image was absent. When I sensed this decline, I would let go of all previous thoughts and allow a strategy to emerge to enable a deeper understanding or new finding to come. For example, I felt an inclination for poetic writing after exploring and analysing my practice of continuous transformation through academic writing. I felt a disposition to draw a doodle after writing my reflections of a movement practice in my diary. The contents of those different modes of material that emerged might not be regarded linearly as cause and effect but both supported my state of being at the time.

Informed by my experience of practicing qigong, concentration on the moment when the self is involved is the key to this meditative methodology of practice as research.² A heightened consciousness can be calming and lead to *wu*, an in-between state that is beneficial for spontaneous emergence. Only through such embodiment of being in a contemplative and calm state can a view of the in-between itself be established, not only in practice but also during academic writing.

Moreover, in one aspect of Daoist qigong, everyone has an individual road on which to practice the self, based on the principle of qi. By the same token, everyone has a different path and unique process to reach the self. The methodology of this research and its approach to movement do not comprise the only means for research that concerns a meditative mode of being or combines Asian philosophies, somatic experience, and movement. For instance, choreographer Deborah Hay explored spontaneous movement in a heightened consciousness and developed a dance practice called “performance meditation” (Hay’s practice will be explored more in Chapter 2). I explore movement as a meditative process via my own path from the viewpoint of qi. My research path is related to my process of understanding qi and the self. Therefore, during this process,

my views about the self and practice have perpetually changed. In effect, this research has demonstrated an individual search for Dao.

This unique methodology does not offer a way for others to follow, but suggests a formless research process that allows practice and theory, as two complementary modes of energy, to resonate by themselves. That is, the practice as research comes into being in a self-organising process rather than being planned in advance. This methodology is informed by the correlative way of *yin* and *yang*, beneficial to studies that seek to include practice and theory as a whole rather than two fields in cooperation.

1.2 Methods

Like Daoist meditative practice, regularly practicing is important for training one's consciousness and movement to not be fixed but to emerge "freely." I practice alone most of the time, but at certain stages I have also found it useful for my research to invite other people to experience this movement practice. This has been framed in a research workshop and a practice session in duet form in order to probe deeper and integrate spoken and movement responses to this work. Those participants, who I regard as my research partners, help me understand myself and explore how this practice can be unfolded through a process of sharing my in-process practices rather than teaching.

Reflective writing is a significant way of documenting, locating and pinning down emergent reflections during or after a session of this movement practice. This method can assist and deepen the exploration of practice and academic writing (see Francis, 2009). The contents contain not only descriptive words about the phenomena during a practical process, but also feelings, findings, reflections, understanding, initial analysis, and articulations with the topic, theories and/or other ideas developed in the study. The

writing style is poetic, for as a mode of “free writing,” a “stream-of-consciousness” is encouraged in this method (p. 91). Through writing I let my words and images emerge.

For example, my diary describes my observations of participants’ reactions and their feedback after a session. I have also recorded as honestly as possible my self-judgments during improvisation. Without reflective writing, I would not have become aware of the amount of judgmental thoughts that came across my mind, nor would I have realised that the issue of the boundary of the body image recognised by the self is worth exploring. All reflective thoughts have to be written as soon as a session finishes so they are still vivid in my mind, to bring more discoveries. However, movements are formed subtly in in-between states, so very few movements can be described in the written form after a session. Therefore, video recording is required to document movement for analysing my own practices. In other words, reflective writing can document the changing states of my consciousness that may be invisible in video recording.

Through these methods, various artistic modes of material, such as doodling, drawings, edited video pieces of this movement practice, and poetic words have emerged from the creative process, in addition to improvised movement. These modes reflect philosophical musings and in-between states in movement that correspond to the variability of Dao. They were documented during the creative process, and some have been included in this thesis.

1.3 A way to unfold

Daoism suggests that the “heart” (*xin*) decides how a person sees, thinks, or feels a thing. The heart “refers indifferently to activities we would classify as thinking, judgment, and feeling” (Ames & Hall, 1998, p. 29).³ That is to say, the heart is the one that merges all

“activities” of the self before they are separately identified or named. The way of organisation by the heart is necessary for the self that is an indivisible whole in traditional Chinese thinking (p. 29). When the heart moves, the body moves, no earlier or later (Wilhelm & Jung, 1929/1962, p. 56). Therefore, the heart is the key to a state of *wu* and to the circulation of *qi* inside and outside the body in Daoism. This infers that the dualistic relationship between seeing and being seen may disappear and change into something else, depending on the mover’s heart.

In Daoism, *de* is a guiding principle of the heart toward Dao. This notion has inspired and been transformed into some artistic practices. For instance, researcher and photographer Philippe L. Gross and psychologist S. I. Shapiro (2001) suggest “conscious camerawork,” an approach to photography with a contemplative and heightened awareness that activates intuition and spontaneity (p. 121). The idea of *de* is applied in the way of “power in the sense of effectiveness or potency without the connotation of domination, rigidity, or self-aggrandizement” (p. 42). However caution is needed here before transferring the practical methods found in other artistic forms to the movement-based form of my research. I suggest *de* has to be located in practice specific to my own subject because it is as much an experiential understanding in practice as it is a personal realisation in life. Moreover, if *de* is just understood as a power of intuition and spontaneity in practice, this appears to be a way of reduction from concept to practice when considering the complexity of *de*’s implications in Daoist theory.

In my research, *de* is a way to blur the boundary of the self, leading to a “formless state of being” in a movement practice. I explore how to reveal the power and depth of *de* in this Daoist movement practice (see further discussion of *de*, Chapter 6) rather than as just an inclination of intuition. The realisation of *de* is the toughest challenge within this movement practice as it is in qigong practices.

Why can't I move freely? Why do I still feel my body bound? I should be able to relax. I should let diverse states of my self emerge. I should have formless movement, which changes beyond expectation. I should... I should... Too many "shoulds," too many pre-images that make me stiff like wood. But I didn't realise in the moment. The meditative consciousness of the self is vulnerable and forgettable like improvisation itself. It needs to be reminded often in life.

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When being watched, a mover confronts a large extent of

“nothingness” in this practice. From a Daoist perspective, intentional movement will not bring about a state of *wu*; it is important to just wait for the self to change as a sense of qi-energy strengthens and emerges through this practice. The tension between seeing and being seen is so prevalent that it may make a mover find *wu-wei* difficult to put into practice.

Since the intent to present and the qi disposition to move from this heart are subtle, the self may become vulnerable in an environment of being watched in a customary way during a presentation or when the mover’s heart confines her/himself (a sense of confinement that the self could face in this Daoist movement practice will be fully discussed in Chapter 6). For this reason, a particular non-presentational way of unfolding this practice is important to protect the subtle *wu-wei* and formlessness. The focus of the practice should remain on fortifying the heart towards *de* during improvised movement, allowing an emerging awareness of the self to unfold rather than generating choreographic material or worrying about performance.

Based on the idea of sharing, I suggest an alternative way of experiencing this practice; this will be further discussed in Chapter 2. Unfolding the self occurs when I reveal subtleties of the consciousness I am experiencing, and this is a sincere encounter for my guests who are invited to experience this practice. When we are on the same “channel” or sharing the same state, we may become aware of an articulation between us, although this experience may not yet be identifiable. I invite the guests to enter and experience a sharing space by gradually arousing their meditative awareness through a sense of subtle energy revealed in my changing states of being during a session of the movement practice of this research. The atmosphere arising from the subtly changing energy of movement allows the guests to be aware of the emerging sense of the in-between during the session, similar to the sense of a “gap” in this thesis.

¹ For example, Graeme Sullivan's study *Art practice as research: Inquiry in visual arts* (2010), Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt's book *Practice as research: Approaches to creative arts enquiry* (2007) and *Choreographic Practices* (2010 - ongoing), a practice-as-research journal edited by Jane Bacon and Vida Midgelow.

² Eugene T. Gendlin's (2003) therapeutic method of "focusing" also allows images to emerge in a meditative mode of exploring awareness of a "felt sense." His method feels like meditation somehow but it runs a different procedure. Besides being in an empty state with imagery, as is often instructed in meditation, one requires observing the self and consciously checking one's own inner conditions like a mode of self-feedback in order to make sure the felt experiencing and the way one describes it match and are right for oneself in each moment. The method of "focusing" has been applied to a creative process of performing arts as a practice-as-research methodology. For example, see Bacon's paper *Psyche moving: "Active imagination" and "focusing" in movement-based performance and psychotherapy* (2007).

³ In some Daoist studies, this sort of "heart" is translated into "heart-mind" (Ames & Hall, 1998, p. 29) or "heart/mind" (Kirkland, 2005, p. 46). I consider that those translations may let a reader misunderstand the Chinese conception of the "heart" only in relation to a mental or spiritual activity literally whilst it is an in-between state. Therefore, I chose to use "heart," which is also Richard Wilhem's translation (Wilhelm & Jung, 1929/1962, p. 21), to emphasise its proneness to a state of consciousness rather than sentimentality.

Chapter 2 Thinking a movement practice in light of qi

In this chapter, I investigate how the emergence of improvised movement and an integrated experience of bodymind can be indivisible, coexistent, and interrelated in a movement practice from the perspective of qi. Whilst in the American and European contexts, the body and mind were traditionally regarded separately in Cartesian thinking, this dualism has been challenged since the 20th century, and the term “bodymind” has been used to convey an integrated state of being in somatic practices.¹

The body and the mind are not isolated items in Chinese traditional thinking, but implicitly contained in the concepts of *xing* (性) and *ming* (命). *Xing* means “human nature,” which “remains as a substratum when no feelings are being expressed, but which lingers, so to speak, in a transcendental, supraconscious condition;” *ming* means “life,” implying “the fate allotted to a man, so too, the duration of the life-span, the measure of vital energy at one’s disposal” (Wilhelm & Jung, 1962, p. 13). They are united until a human is born. Daoism claims that they can be merged again when qi energy circulates well, an integration of the body and mind addressed in contemporary somatic practices. However, this thesis employs the term bodymind instead of *xingming* when discussing this specific integrated circulation of qi, since the practice developed in this doctoral research is influenced by somatic practices and the English language term is already commonly used in this field.²

My reframing of this term, however, is based on the idea of the in-between in the Daoist notions of *wu* and *wu-wei* and my observation of an in-between moment when an emergence is about to happen in a meditative practice or an improvisation. In that instant I suggest that movement emerges spontaneously in connection with the self

when a mover is aware of the bodymind as a whole by concentrating on the moment of being and carefully and immediately listening to his/her own inner voice according to Daoism. I associate this spontaneous, integral and emergent mode of being with a somatic experience of improvised movement in the context of my movement practice.

Hence, this chapter firstly develops a somatic view of qi and discusses an in-between mode of being in improvised movement. Moreover, since improvisational and somatic aspects have intertwined and been cooperative in different ways, I clarify the position of this study in the American, European and Taiwanese movement contexts through comparison with relevant movement-based practices. Finally, I question and investigate what “practice” means in the in-between mode of being within the contexts of my Daoist movement practice.

2.1 A somatic aspect of qi practices

To develop a Daoist movement practice, I suggest beginning with a view of bodymind integration that is common to Asian meditative practices. Yuasa (1993) points out, “training the body means simultaneously training the mind (spirit)” (p. 8). This implies the bodymind can be united and fostered through Asian meditative practices as training for “enhancing the personality, as a human being” (p. 10). Such functions of qi can be associated with the idea of the “somatic” developed in the American and European contexts. Some philosophies that arose in the 20th century, such as phenomenology and existentialism, discuss experience and sensation from a perspective established from the self or related to being; these philosophies have expanded to fields such as psychology, education, medical research, and cultural studies (Eddy, 2009, p. 6). For example, in his phenomenological theory, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) suggests that body image does not come from the mind but from “a total awareness” of being in the

“intersensory world” (p. 114). The body is sensed as a combination of the subject and the object like the “double sensations” when one hand has contact with the other hand (p. 106). Some of these philosophies are resonant with Chinese philosophies. For instance, Jung relates his research on an alchemical transformation of the self to Daoism (see Wilhem & Jung, 1929/1962).³ These American and European philosophies imply integration of the bodymind, in-between, and wholeness grounded on different epistemic framings, although their ideas have similar inclinations to Asian thoughts (for an elaboration of the difference, see the next section and Chapter 3).

By the same token, movement-based practices have had a tendency to pay attention to sensation, spontaneous action, and inner awareness. This approach emerged in post-Judson/Grand Union improvisation in the 1960s (Foster, 2002, p. 34). Proprioception, including perception, kinesthesia, and the internal organic system, becomes a way to sense the self,⁴ which corresponds to Merleau-Ponty’s thought. Also, many practitioners might find that Asian meditative practices such as martial arts, yoga, and qigong are correspondent with the tendency toward perceptual experience and bodily awareness; they therefore incorporated the inspiration of Asian practices into their developing somatic methods or philosophies. For example, Irmgard Bartenieff relates Chinese qigong with Laban’s philosophy of movement for her somatic method of Bartenieff Fundamentals (Eddy, 2009, p. 16); Joseph Pilates emphasises tuning breath inspired by Indian yoga in his practice of Contrology (Eddy, 2009, p. 7).

Thomas Hanna, a practitioner and philosopher of Feldenkrais method, categorised the contemporary somatic practices emerging in America and Europe into “somatics” as a new field of body knowledge in the 1970s (Eddy, 2009, p. 7). Hanna (1995) defines somatic practice as a “process of self-regulation” that aims to integrate the inner awareness (mind) and body and reconcile the internal and external views of the self (p.

344). “Soma” means “the body as perceived from within by first-person perception” (p. 341), which is an introspective scope of the self through an internal awareness of proprioception. A somatic practice features a learning process that “begins by focusing awareness on the unknown” to heighten consciousness, in other words, a process through which “the unknown becomes known by the voluntary consciousness” (pp. 348-349).⁵ Hanna’s definition of “somatic” implies a view of the bodymind based on a perceptual experience developed in the American and European contexts.

Chinese qigong also has a function of integrating bodymind in a process of exploring, connecting, and fostering the self, which is similar to Hanna’s idea of somatic practice. However, qi is a different bodymind experience, a mode of heightened consciousness and awareness that does not focus on the sensory system but rather on a more generalised felt sense of being, even if it still has a certain influence on proprioception (see Chapter 3 for the elaboration of distinction of the qi experience).

I suggest that the term “somatic” does not just apply to 20th century practices, but rather defines a holistic approach to fostering bodymind via modes of articulation that may vary over different periods and cultures. For example, Eddy (2009) views earlier modern dance practices as a stage that assisted the development of somatic practices because, in the era of modern dance, a somatic aspect was highlighted and realised as an idea of expressing the self through the physical body (pp. 9-10). I argue that even in the times of rigid ballet movement, and in the formalistic style of late modern dance (such as Merce Cunningham’s works), dancers might have had a certain differentiated awareness of being through their moving bodies.

Therefore, I would also say qigong is a somatic practice handed down or developed from Chinese tradition that works in a mode of energy and consciousness different from

somatics established in America and Europe. This can be proven by Taiwan's dance field, for which artists have borrowed traditional Asian philosophies and practices that have similar views or energy to qi, such as Daoism, Buddhism, Zen, Hinduism, Tai Ji or Tai Ji Dao Yin, or other Chinese qigong methods to explore a somatic aspect of dance. For example, the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre has incorporated Tai Ji Dao Yin into their innovative movement style as a somatic practice to train their dancers.

2.2 Being in-between: A somatic moment of improvised movement

Furthermore, I focus on a somatic experience that may occur in both forms of meditation and improvisation. Being in-between is a state of bodymind integration in meditative practices. In Daoism, being in-between—on the verge of emerging in a state of *wu*—requires a meditative process of heightening concentration in relaxation and calmness. An attitude of *wu-wei*, to be in-between, is a means to understanding something as nothing in the moment. The movement of *wu-wei* happens as a way of waiting for an impulse that emerges when a person is just about to stir from stillness or about to speak from silence, or when meditative awareness has just arisen (Lai, 2008, p. 70). The in-between moment at the point of movement emerging may be obviously observed by the mover her/himself while the mover's intention of movement is implicit in the way of *wu-wei*. However, this is an in-between state that occurs just before a relationship between the subject and object has been realised. Someone with the attitude of *wu-wei* can have a movement or an idea arising instantaneously, even though the individual is not fully aware of what she or he is doing or what she or he will do yet. Since the spontaneous and instantaneous emergence of movement matters in this experiential mode, being in-between is especially necessary for this Daoist movement practice.

This sense of being in-between can be felt not only during meditations but at numerous points in life, even though the in-between may have varied states and depths of consciousness. Degrees of concentration and relaxation may move up and down like the tides or life's repetitive occurrences. A similar in-between moment can be found in any action, such as a performance or a creative process of arts and sports, as long as a mover reaches a heightened state of consciousness that enables her or him to accomplish a series of actions fluently and effortlessly. In the eyes of Chinese thought, this phenomenon can be regarded as an integrated state of qi. Qi is inherent in the body rather than owned by specific people who practice qigong or meditation. Yet one can learn how to arouse and advance qi-energy through regular qi-related or meditative practices that promote a heightened consciousness through the ability to concentrate and achieve a calm and relaxed state.

In this mode of being, a mover can give rise to movement by listening to the heart, the inner voice of her or himself. Here the self is regarded as important in this practice because a person's attitude toward the self determines how movement feels to the individual in a Daoist view (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 6 for an extended discussion of self). An in-between state occurs when a mover is able to slip quietly into a heightened, introspective concentration. The contemplative instant feels quiet, calm and timeless, like awaking at dawn, in between dark and light, creating an unknown atmosphere before the emergence of movement. According to Na (1994), the heart of the self can be suddenly "lit up" by the attitude of *wu-wei* (p. 21, own translation). This infers that the duration of this meditative process to make movement emerge can be as short as a flash of light in the way of qi. That is to say, the emergence of an in-between moment may happen in seconds, depending on how qi circulates around or communicates with the self.

In my own Daoist movement practice, when moving with the attitude of *wu-wei* in an in-between state, I am more deeply aware of the subtle articulations that characterise qi. The subtle connection between movement and the self projects the spontaneity of the emergence, as if movement does it by itself. The unknown “gap” between movement intention and the self, due to an almost invisible articulation, makes the in-between moment appear ambiguous. The in-between can also be felt or experienced as a “gap” between the known and unknown, like a blank space in this writing with a vague implication of an in-between as mentioned in the guide for readers. The can be perceived as a moment of calming and heightening consciousness to prepare energy for arousing an emergence. In other words when an in-between state is deeper, the emergence of movement feels more unanticipated, or improvisational. Therefore, being in-between is important for a mover in this Daoist movement practice.

In short, being in-between is a way of existence that integrates the bodymind as a whole via qi articulating with the self, and the moment is often accompanied by the spontaneous emergence of improvised movement. To be precise, improvised movement is an emergent phenomenon of an in-between moment when qi is circulating; I see such an emergence of *wu-wei* as a starting point of an improvised movement in this Daoist practice. Based on this concept, I suggest that in Daoist thinking of qi, the in-between embraces improvisational movement and the bodymind (somatic) integration since they both occur in the moment. Therefore, the following improvisational and somatic issues can be discussed as one thing rather than separately in this research.

2.3 Intertwinements between the somatic and the improvisational: Position in the contexts of movement praxis

My research began with a mode of soma-based and improvisation-led practice. This

involved experimenting with ideas inspired from somatic practices in a creative way of movement like improvisation practitioners often do, such as the type of Contact Improvisation that comes from exploring the energy and dynamics of Aikido. The practice of my research has developed into an improvisation-oriented mode; it also can function as a somatic practice in a way that does not transmit an approach to others but works as an individual journey to understanding Dao in a creative practice that can inform somatic and improvisational fields. However, this research does not mean to create either form or a new form in between them but develops a movement practice that contains somatic and improvisational qualities originated from the nature of emergent qi. The practice developed through this research is both a process of locating the self and an exploration of improvised movement.

In the artistic field based in or influenced by America and Europe, improvisation has developed into diverse techniques or methods of moving and performing as specific creative practices, and emerging somatic practices as learning processes that can unite the bodymind via articulating the self have become a professional field. The two fields may view improvisation differently, although it is a manner of expressing the self for both. Somatic practices that have been applied in improvisation practices are training for escaping from the habitual patterns of movement or preparation for an improvisation; improvisation practices that are involved in a performance or compositional mode of theatre dance have a tendency toward the achievement or accomplishment of improvisation.

Yet, somatic and improvisational practices do not relate in such a cause-and-effect way. They intertwine more complexly, even though they have been professionalised as techniques with specific foci and functions. For instance, Contact Improvisation trains movers' bodies to respond to mental images in bodymind exercises such as "standing"

(Paxton, 2003, p. 176). The Skinner Releasing Technique, a movement-based somatic practice that engages the body mainly through imagery, encourages the learner's movement to be improvisational and to respond genuinely to sensation and bodily awareness, allowing the learner to let go of the habits of movement. Therefore, I suggest not thinking of somatic and improvisational practices as two separate and fixed fields. Instead, there is an overlap between them in which somatic and improvisational characters flow into each other, mix, and become blurred and in-between.

The position of this movement practice that focuses on a Daoist mode of being in-between has to be clarified in the context that improvisational and somatic practices are intertwined. Since this practice is my unique way to understand Dao in movement, it is informed by my movement experiences besides Daoism. Therefore, rather than giving a broad overview of the practices in the two fields, the context related to this research should be built up by the somatic practices and improvisation practices that I have experienced. From these practices, I chose various forms as examples in my discussions. Through comparing the differences between these instances and the practice I developed in my research, I seek to reveal the identity of this movement practice.

American, European, and Asian movement-based practitioners who have experiences of somatic or meditative practices may experiment with these ideas in their approaches (see examples of diverse practitioners' methods that will be given and discussed in this section).⁶ Many American and European practitioners' practices are based on the body's anatomical and physiological structure, which is different from Asian practices, even if some of them are also influenced by Asian thoughts. The inclination for physical matter may make the body and movement look more "grounded" than those based on qi, while the momentum is soft and flowing like qi-energy. Therefore, movement connects with tangible or perceivable sources such as improvisation practitioner Steve Paxton's

exploration of moving via sensation of the spine in his practice of Material for the Spine (Paxton, 2008), and Eva Karczag's research on "weight" of deepening sensation in her improvisation practice (Crow & Sager, 2006, p. 9-10).

Anatomically focused approaches (such as Contact Improvisation) differ from what might be considered a Daoist mode of emergence by *wu-wei* in that the more attention a mover pays to physical perceptions or stimuli, the more explicit are the intentions from which the movement is likely to emerge. For instance, inspired by the momentum of Aikido and handshaking in daily life, Contact Improvisation has created a new mode of soft and flowing energy that can lead improvisers to move fluidly via touch based on anatomy and Newton's laws of motion. Movement is particularly activated by sensation along with the full awareness of the inner and the outer, such as self-decisions to respond or receive a partner's touch, the flow of energy, and a phenomenological sense of being in the moment. However, the mode of being in-between in the moment of listening to the body before movement emergence can vary, depending on the improviser's personality or condition. The individual may create something intentionally or allow something implicit to emerge.

Some practitioners such as Paxton, Karczag and Simson, may take a *wu-wei*-like attitude to allow a movement or phenomenon to emerge as needed rather than to create it or make it occur with intention, although their improvisation practices may explore emergent movement based epistemic premises distinct from Asian thoughts. The coherent argument for *wu-wei* bridges and overlaps the two diverse contexts of movement practices based on certain different thinking systems. This also proves the heart, or an attitude, is the key to everything as Daoism says.

Take Karczag as an example. She has learned somatic practices such as the Alexander

Technique,⁷ Ideokinesis,⁸ qigong, Taijiquan, yoga and Authentic Movement. These movement forms have given rise to a deep understanding of dance, and an attitude toward movement such as *wu-wei*. This attitude has influenced the way she improvises. She focuses on how the body in connection with the self feels in the moment, namely in the embodiment or presence of being, more than “thinking of it as a ‘performance’” (Crow & Sager, 2006, pp. 8-10). “For me, improvisation embodies the practice of being present in the moment, attuned to an unfolding meeting of self and environment through physical response,” Karczag said (see the interview in Crow & Sager, 2006, p. 7). The somatic practices she has experienced made her movement “deeply sourced” from within, which she calls “a state of grace” when she can feel free from her habits and prejudgment in dance (p. 8). It is peculiar to individuals and also can be felt by or affect the viewer (p. 7).

Karczag’s “deeply sourced” state corresponds to my idea based on Daoism of the in-between that happens in heightened consciousness and articulates the self. Her words point out that the inner and outer are brought together in the moment via energy. The simultaneity can be applied to being in-between as a moment toward the inner unfolds, while movers express themselves toward the outer via movement. Although her practice is grounded in anatomy, which is different from the Daoist conception of the body and the practice developed in my research, her views on spontaneous emergence and the self in improvisation are consistent with this thesis.

The idea of “deeply sourced” came from Karczag’s experience with Authentic Movement, a method developed by dance therapist Mary Starks Whitehouse from Jung’s idea of “active imagination.” Active imagination is a “process in which, while consciousness looks on, participating but not directing, co-operating but not choosing, the unconscious is allowed to speak whatever and however it likes” (Whitehouse, 1999, p. 83). This

notion is put into practice with Authentic Movement in the way that “the intention is to allow oneself to be directed from within and to give form, through movement, to the images and feelings which arise from attending to one’s own somatic experience” (Wyman-McGinty, 2007, p. 222). Like the way of qi, Authentic Movement also allows vague or intangible situations to happen in the moment of intuitive and spontaneous movement emerging.

Nevertheless, in qi philosophies, an awareness of the subtleties of changing energy is the main point of focusing. From a Daoist perspective, abstract energy or the trace of an implicit sense of being is valued more than images. The nature of qi-energy leads to the self that cannot be concretised, shaped, timed or fixed. An in-between state often emerges before an image is identified or named by a mover. In this case, movements have no symbolic meanings for a mover. In the practice of my research based on *wu-wei*, movements change subtly so that I may realise an image was about to come along, be embodied and make certain meaning of my movement or gesture a second ago. This is why I cannot remember and describe movements but bodymind conditions that I went through in this movement practice.

In my personal experience with Authentic Movement, it takes more time to wait for the rise of those sequential images and feelings than the very point of the emergence of a movement. Movement has to be shaped to some degree so that an image, symbol and even psychological feeling will come out along with it. By comparison, the mover in Authentic Movement is more conscious of images and felt meanings than with the Daoist way of emergence, *wu-wei*. Authentic Movement and *wu-wei* tackle the in-between emergence with different processes: the former reveals images from within while the latter reduces formed images from within. The difference between these two practices may make movements look slightly distinct.

Another comparable approach to movement in an in-between state is Hay's dance practice, "performance meditation." By borrowing from martial arts, yoga, and Asian philosophies, Hay has explored the possibility of making the instantaneous movement emerging from the dancers themselves into a choreographic method. Movement is initiated by an imagination of 75 trillion cells leading the body. This imagery aims to kinesthetically awaken the inner body and to break up the conventional image or fixed identity of the body and self into a changeable entity (Hay, 2000, p. 13). Spontaneous movement also emerges from certain poetic imageries such as "What if where I am is what I need?" (Hay, 2010, p. 1), and time as a river flowing through the river bank of the body. She works from the premise that the past, present and future collect here and now in the way that entering and exiting occur simultaneously, like impermanence of life (Hay, 2000, p. 74). Thus she suggests the body does not need to "create" movement but has the potential for change by itself. Those thoughts and imageries put her in a meditative state of practice that may be associated with *wu-wei*.

I took Hay's workshop at Independent Dance in London in September 2010, and found that her practice leads a mover to an in-between state of consciousness that is different from the attitude of *wu-wei* I explore in my research. Compared to the way of moving through abstract imagery of the self as energy—a sense of being unknown that I have developed in my research—Hay's practice has a reliable image of trillions of cells. Her practice also allows for more intention in order to give rise to movement. She addresses a notion of "dis-attachment" to replace the generally used term, "detachment." She explains, "To dis-attach requires more action on my part as a practitioner. I need to recognize where I am before I can choose to dis-attach from where I am" (Hay, 2010, p. 18). Therefore, I felt an obvious attempt to get rid of the inflexibility and restriction of the physical body, along with learned dance skills and habitual movements by exploring

her practice and philosophy. Her practice rejects restrictions more radically than the one I developed in my research. This may be because she regards spontaneous movement as an instantaneous choreography and does not call the movement an improvisation. As a choreographer, Hay's intention to explore spontaneous movement in the field of performance is clear even if she is involved in an in-between state that seamlessly blurs the boundary between practice and performing. My research concerns the in-between of practicing and improvised movement instead of performance. I draw on and stress a sense of practicing that is informed by Daoist meditative practices and the idea of *wu-wei*. The issue of practicing will be expanded in the next section.

Turning to Asian movement practices, Butoh, a Japanese contemporary dance form, resonates with this Daoist movement practice in terms of certain movement qualities such as subtlety and slowness, since both practices are based on close philosophical concepts. Butoh reflects Japanese Zen, which has many similarities to Daoism through certain historical influences, whilst they still diverge from one another due to cultural difference.⁹ The two systems of philosophy are at one and the same time practices, which focus on the present moment of being. Daoism focuses on *wu* and Zen focuses on *koan*, both of which are a meditative state of emptiness helpful to awaken a sudden understanding or awareness (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 234) and can thereby allow qi-energy to emerge and circulate. Therefore, I suppose Zen and Butoh also involve a similar flow of qi (or *ki* in Japanese) as in Daoism and in the movement practice developed in my research.

However, Butoh was influenced by German expressionist modern dance (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 24), a different cultural and historical background to the one that has informed this Daoist movement practice. This particular heritage has shaped Butoh's expressionistic form and performative mode of expressing the deep and dark side of the inner depths in

order to reveal the light (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 190). The “slowness” in Butoh in particular can be an intentional aesthetic device in performance (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 187). The movement style of Butoh reflects particular Japanese thoughts, culture and aesthetics. In my practice, movement may become very slow in an extremely calm state but it emerges from the flow of qi instead of an intentional action, and this is nothing to do with aesthetics, in the case of my research.

In the Chinese and Taiwanese contexts, which are the closest to the inheritance of my research, this Daoist movement practice may be associated with the particular qigong method “Spontaneous Qigong” (“*Zi Fa Gong*”) mentioned in Cohen’s (1997) study (p. 180) in terms of the way of movement via qi. He states that in this method “[...] the inner movement of qi is allowed to become external movement” (p. 180) and “[...] you are not moving the qi, the qi is moving you” (p. 181), which is different from the qigong methods working with preset movements. This approach encourages practitioners to follow the motivation flowing from the sensation of qi and expand it into movement effortlessly and limitlessly in order to transform into a spiritual state. It may thus look like an “eerie improvisational dance” (p. 180) with repeated movements at times for some practitioners since such movements may signify a releasing process from a block in the body or an illness. My movement practice is more similar to Cohen’s description of moving qi. The spontaneity that qi basically functions to allow movement to emerge is the same.

A heightened bodymind state that qi brings forth in this Daoist movement practice may be thought to have a function akin to healing in terms of spirituality as Taiwanese practitioner Lin Ya-wen’s spiritual dance practice. As an ex-dancer of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, she leads adult dance classes inspired by Tai Ji Dao Yin and chakras—the energy sources in Hinduism—aiming to find calmness in terms of spirituality. In both cases, improvised movement is used as a means of exploring awareness and movement

or expressing a mover's self as an integral whole of the bodymind. These sorts of dance lessons are on the boundary between dance education and therapy or spirituality. However, healing and spirituality in movement are issues outside the scope of my research topic.

In the field of artistic movement practice, Liou has developed a bodymind practice of movement, "Breath [Qi], Body and Heart," by borrowing Asian concepts and practices of inner energy such as chakras, Tai Ji, Zen, and Daoism (Taipei Dance Circle, 2009). In his practice, qi is akin to "breath"—it provides a medium or a means to make sound and movement so that the body is a resonant place for the two elements to reach an integration of body, mind and soul. Breath is not the focus of my thesis, but it is indeed relevant to qi. Unlike Liou's use of breath as an intentional means to shape the body, I allow movement to emerge from an in-between state of consciousness or being on the spot, and I am aware of my self moving in a rhythm of breath, changing along with qi-energy. Therefore, breathing is a phenomenon that accompanies the circulation of qi in movement rather than a devised way to move in the practice established in my research. The occurrence of tuned breath in a mode of *wu-wei* demonstrates that qi is flowing in and out of the body, which means the bodymind is integrated by qi.

In the context of my research based on the in-between state of *wu*, the improvisational and the somatic do not merely overlap but are so similar that one can hardly distinguish one from the other, like *yin* and *yang* in a movement practice. They exist together formlessly in their collaboration. The next section will discuss more Daoist distinctions of this practice.

2.4 Reconsidering "practice" from the conception of qi

This study focuses on and explores an idea of “practice” informed by Daoism as a somatic process of fostering the integral part of a human being because it is regarded differently from the customary meaning of artistic praxis. Yuasa (1993) indicates that repetition is required for Asian practices in the form of continuous and regular practice that “carries the sense of ‘training’” (p. 11). Therefore, *wu-wei*, a Daoist mode of intuitive and spontaneous reaction, needs regular meditative practices to maintain. This echoes dance scholar Goldman’s (2010) argument of improvisation. She notes that when highlighting the notions of intuitiveness and spontaneity in improvisation, the efforts and preparation an improviser may have made for that moment in various dimensions, such as “historical knowledge, the sense of tradition, and the enormous skill”, should not be forgotten (pp. 5-6). Whereas qi promotes practicing by stretching the practicing process to every second that any spontaneous emergence happens, a sense of practicing and emergence of movement is drawn more closely together in time by suggesting that they coexist at the same time to support each other, rather than being cause and effect as Goldman discusses.

Take the use of qi in Lin’s works as an example: q-energy functions as a way to train and enhance dance technique as well as a movement approach for performance. His dancers move with qi in and around their bodies. An in-between and practice-like state carried out in somatic training has to be maintained during a performance because a *wu-wei* attitude is required for qi to operate an implicit disposition to move. That is to say, the meditative process must continue on the stage. In Lin’s work, *Cursive II* (2003), the dancers sometimes gently stretch their limbs and bodies only to the extent of the disposition led by qi, as if an inner universe with subtle energy in their bodies gives rise to the movement. Their movement can be agile, powerful, slow and subtle, following the breathing rhythm of qi and representing the energy of a Chinese calligrapher working on paper. In that moment, the dancers are purely in a mode of being in the performance. In

this case, somatic experience exists not only in a learning process but also in performance.

For qigong and meditation, practicing is not only undergone for enhancing techniques (such as of qi and of improvisation) but also for maintaining a sense of well-being, that is, the circulation of qi-energy, as long as possible. Thus, the somatic learning process is not only carried out in practice sessions, but it is also a life lesson, with practitioners existing in a practicing state in their daily lives. The practicing in terms of qi is not just a mechanical repetition or a still state but an inner state containing the dynamics of sustaining circulation of qi, which implies an attitude of exploring.

With qi-energy, the meaning of somatic practice can be extended into a process of practicing the self that can be executed without a tangible form. In Daoism, it is because the heart in a state of *wu* and an attitude of *wu-wei* are the key to calmness and relaxation. A physical means or form that is often demonstrated in a qigong method such as a sitting position, a gestural pattern or a movement routine, can support the practice and a learner's heart and help foster qi-energy; however, more significantly, the learner can carry on the somatic process in the heart beyond physical sessions. In the formless mode, a somatic practice would have no time and space limit. The practicing of the self is forever; all times are for practicing as a lifelong process.

Consequently, a somatic practice does not mean just a learning process but is an embodied experience that sustains or is inherent in the self. For this reason, improvisation in this practice not only gives rise to outward-appearing movement but it also involves observing and practicing the self at the same time. From a Daoist perspective, when a person pays attention to improvising, no matter how the movements function in the moment, in private or in public, she or he has commenced an

individual session of practicing and discovering the self. This idea is significant and specific to the approach of movement developed in this practice. For a mover, the awareness of practicing the self is the key to paying attention to her/himself and to being in-between as a state of *wu*, the concern of this research.

Since the self embraces different states of existence, a mover may question it and learn how to negotiate its multiple facets to prevent it from being rigid. Based on my experience with practicing the self and my understanding of Daoism, an attitude of acceptance is useful because we can always learn something from ourselves. As movers learn new ideas about themselves and view themselves differently, their emergent movement or energy will also change. Therefore, it is important to practice the self during improvisation because doing so is the foundation of impromptu movement.

This practice has a related function as a somatic practice since it is a meditative process of practicing the self, as one does with meditation. For example, movement emerges from a sense of being in which mental and physical awareness merge into one state in the moment rather than being triggered by the other. Also, imagery is used during the process of this research, like certain somatic practices. Therefore, this research addresses how a state of being or attitude toward the self affects the emergence of movement in a meditative way. It is a process of learning to move with the self in minutely diverse states of consciousness that reinforce the link and integration of the bodymind. Moreover, the practice developed through this research trains a mover to be sensitive to subtle changes in the self with a peaceful heart and to reflect upon her or his awareness in movement.

This practice can be an approach to movement and a process of practicing the self since instantaneous movement can emerge from the particular way of articulating with the

self. However, the attitude of *wu-wei* reduces the intention to show movement or energy and replaces it with the inner disposition of the self derived from qi. The intention to establish a specific approach and particular style of improvised movement in this practice also becomes implicit. These attempts can only be revealed in a somatic mode by focusing on practicing the self rather than by being shaped purposely or particularly. For meditation, the goal is the process of practice in and of itself. This goal is appropriate for Daoism, because Dao is constantly changing, not still or fixed. Thus, I suggest that it is helpful for a mover to view learning as an endless process because there is no exact final product in this Daoist movement practice.

Following Daoist thought, I have avoided an attempt to show spectacular movement or energy in case a presentation goes beyond the intentions of this research. Concentrating on a practice of being one's self is the only intention manifested in terms of Daoism: no more, no less. Therefore "unfold" is a more suitable term than "present" for this research. Being the self is a practicing process, and it is the only process that can be or is enough to be unfolded. Practicing can be thought of as a long process of being in-between, the mode where the unknown and known of the self are still waiting for clarification. This way of unfolding corresponds with the in-between character of formlessness and Daoist thinking.

Therefore, the idea of "practicing" becomes the focus of unfolding this movement practice. When sensing qi-energy flowing smoothly, I allow various states of the self to emerge freely. When sensing qi-energy going down, I change my way of moving. This change can vary, ranging from subtlety to intensity, from invisibility to visibility. The only reason to change a current state during the unfolding process is for comfort and ease of the self. However, this does not mean showing "perfect" or "right" conditions during this practice, since energy fluctuation is normal, as it is in meditation. That is why

I use the word “practicing” to describe the continuous action of practice extending to a mode of unfolding. In light of its relationship with the meaning of *wu-wei*, “practicing” signifies less of an attempt to pursue “perfection” than the term “cultivating,” which is usually used to describe the transformation of the self by meditative training in Daoist studies. Yuasa (1993) argues that “cultivation” means “to redefine, to culture, and to educate” yet it does not include a connotation of a mutual enhancement of the body and mind, which is significant to Asian meditative practices (p. 10). Considering awareness of qi as a Daoist practicing process permeating every second, the appearance and form of movement, and whether the body “moves” or not may not be crucial to being in-between in this practice. The emphasis will rest on an awareness of changing energy, states of consciousness, or the self before that of shape, effort, space, and time in movement.

¹ Examples include BodyMind Movement, developed by Mark Taylor and Katy Dymoke, BodyMind Centring, developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, and BodyMind Dancing, developed by Martha Eddy (Eddy, 2009, p. 19).

² In this thesis, the term “bodymind” is employed to describe a state of integration felt by the whole being as qi circulates, which is not a heritage of Cartesian dualism. In order to relate this research to movement experience, I also employ the term “body” as a medium for perceiving and reacting to a holistic state of being, in my descriptions of a phenomenological experience of the self and movement, although, as I emphasise in the Preface, my use of this term has certain ambiguous, in-between connotations, based on Daoism and qi. I shall explore this further in Chapter 3, where I discuss the body in relation to the self based on Daoism, so as to explore how a felt sense of formlessness gives rise to movement.

³ Some Western theories such as Martin Heidegger’s and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological studies and Jung’s research on depthpsychology are often compared to Chinese philosophy of qi and Daoism by Asian researchers (see Yuasa, 1987; Wu, 2005; Lai, 2008).

⁴ Proprioception is perceived by bones and muscles (kinesthesia), organs (visceral feedback), and a spatial sense (vestibular feedback) (Steinman, 1995, p. 11). Louise Steinman (1995) states, “Proprioception is, literally, how we ‘sense ourselves’” (p. 11).

⁵ According to Hanna (1995), awareness and consciousness are defined differently. Consciousness is volitional but can be enhanced to a higher level through learning;

awareness as a “probe” of consciousness can discover new things (pp. 347-349). “Somatic learning begins by focusing awareness on the unknown,” he said (p. 348).

⁶ According to Eddy (2009), somatic practices can be categorised into “somatic psychology,” “somatic bodywork,” and “somatic movement” (p. 7). Forms such as the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, Ideokinesis, Skinner Releasing Technique, BodyMind Centring, and Authentic Movement were applied or established in the dance field later. Some of them, such as the latter three of the examples listed above, use improvisational movement as a means to examine conditions of the self.

⁷ The Alexander Technique aims to make people aware of their personal habitual movement with the aid of a qualified teacher’s hands. This technique also aims to enhance the effect of the motor system.

⁸ Ideokinesis can improve motor capability, helping learners to practice skeletal alignment and work the muscles through sense and movement by imagery, and emphasising their effect on the body (Dempster, 1995/1996, p. 42). Dance scholar Elizabeth Dempster (2003/2004) explains, “Images are both real and imaginary. They may describe and refer to physical structures, but they may equally invoke virtual entities, such as the line of gravity in the body, which has effects, but no location” (p. 47).

⁹ For example, Fraleigh (1999) suggests that “[...] the Chinese keep the middle way. The Japanese let go in cheerful acceptance” (p. 204).

Chapter 3 A felt sense of formlessness from within based on qi

This chapter expands my view on the bodymind based on qi, a way of thinking that is different from that based on anatomical structure. Aiming to relate such an integrated state with emergent movement experience, this chapter focuses on a Daoist relationship between the self and body, the source from which movement arises and the medium by which movement takes place. The reason is that Dao is a way to explore the ambiguity of in-between through embodied experience in order to view and be aware of the self connecting with all things, a sense of expanding awareness from the inside outward. Ames and Hall (1998) point out, “The Chinese conception of body is integrally related to the fundamental project of ‘cultivating oneself’ (*xiushen* 修身)... The expression and ‘performance’ of the body, like other Confucian preoccupations such as the practice of ritual, the playing of music, the writing of calligraphy, or the composition of literature, is a medium of self-articulation” (pp. 31-32). This Chinese concept of the body in relation to the self based on Confucianism applies to Daoism. The movement emerging through the inner body is sourced from the self, from within, via an implicit disposition of qi. This chapter thereby demonstrates that a sense of qi is felt by the whole being; based on qi and Daoism, the self (as the source of emergent movement of qi) and the body (as the medium of emergent movement of qi) both have an ambiguous image and overlap to a certain extent in this practice.

Considering the ambiguity of the in-between based on Dao, *wu*, *wu-wei*, and the self, I imagine a formless body that has an unknown sense to the self as the self is changing. With the support of Gendlin’s notion of the “felt sense,” I explore how to experience formlessness through the ambiguity qi brings, the inner movement disposition of qi-energy, and the changing self based on qi. This chapter discusses examples in this

movement practice.

3.1 Ambiguity of Daoist thought

An in-between state in which something unknown is about to emerge is based on the concept of *wu*. Everything is not fixed in meaning or form, and the division between things is ambiguous. This emergence is not the cause or birth of things subject to time but a spontaneous occurrence or “self-emergence” (Lai, 2008, p. 22, own translation), a way of *wu-wei*. In other words, Daoism suggests letting all things appear to be themselves in their own way yet still subtly connected to one another by qi-energy, which is believed to be the nature of being and understood as the principle Dao. This “nature” does not mean one substantial foundation or origin or a fixed entity, but the constantly changing process of *becoming* things (Lai, 2008, p. 29). Thus, Lai (2008) indicates that Dao is the process of becoming beings rather than another level besides being (pp. 15-16). In short, “Dao itself is *being in essence as becoming*” (p. 165, own translation). Dynamics exist as such. The ambiguity of being as a process brings a sense of being unknown.

Lai (2008) suggests that Dao is intended for returning to the nature of being, rather than defeating logical thoughts (p. 17), implying an alternative mode of thinking. Since the in-between is a timeless scale in Daoism, as previously argued, this return should be thought of as an intention to reduce the form instead of tracing the original or beginning in time. The form may feel like “no form,” or formlessness, when reduced to its minimum. Therefore, Dao does not mean knowing nothing or being opposed to knowing, but assumes a contemplative understanding that benefits from the exploration of the nature of things. However, some statements in Daoist studies still imply that meditative and logical ways of thinking are so distinct that they cannot occur at the same time,

which is more or less contradictory to Daoism. For instance, Lai notes that the world of cause and effect has no space for the in-between, which features prominently in Daoism (pp. 35-36). A logical relationship is limited in its power to investigate intangible subjects such as the nature of being (p. 11). Na (1994) also states a similar opinion: the concept of being “unknown” provides another view of nature that cannot be analysed via logical knowledge (pp. 22-23, own translation). My opinion is that they can coexist in some way. Logical thinking may require a calm mind that can be offered by a state of meditative thinking; both can bring a person to a rational mind. On the other hand, meditative thinking may require logical thinking in order to avoid going too far from the point of an idea. This means logical thinking and meditative thinking are not opposite but instead support each other as with *yin* and *yang*. Strictly speaking, I believe an absolutely meditative or logical mode of thinking is non-existent according to Daoism.

Therefore, I suggest that Daoism follows a much more tolerant and passive attitude to logical thinking than is evident in Lai’s and Na’s thoughts, since *wu-wei* is the key to entering the deeper self and discovering Dao. Daoism chooses to undo the things that could be burdensome to the essence of being. The knowledge, rules, and mind that have been framed in a logic-based society are not radically eliminated, but instead are regarded as the meaningful experiences of life. Lai (2008) points out that “the primal heart” does not exist independently but as a disposition of qi inherent in beings and the body is the “field” where the state of Dao can be put into practice (pp. 31-32, own translation). For this reason, I argue meditative thinking can also be part of life. I do not seek to address the nature of being in an idealistic manner but to point to the ways being can be located in the realistic world and the movement practice of my research by means of accepting togetherness with other things.

Therefore, a view from the in-between itself means newly sensing a dualistic pair from a

stance of the unknown, as if everything goes back to the beginning before the dualistic relationship is established. According to Lai (2008), the in-between can be seen as the difference of dualistic elements, a paradoxical sense of coexistence of two diverse things with unlimited possibilities (p. 42). The in-between can fill up the gap in dualism (p. 28). This implies that a dualistic pair and its gap, the in-between, come into being and exist together. This echoes my argument of the coexistence of meditative thinking and logical thinking, and my position on the notion of formlessness that is not only concerned with the in-between but also is aware of its boundary as possible phenomena in improvisation. I will discuss this further in Chapter 6.

In this practice, the ambiguity of Daoist conceptions is turned into an unknown felt sense that can be experienced in an in-between state of improvised movement. I see having a felt sense of the unknown as the beginning of stepping into an in-between state. The next section will discuss such ambiguity in an aspect of a felt sense.

3.2 A felt sense of qi

Qi is a felt sense about an overall condition—a combination of the physical and spiritual attributes of a person or an environment, describing something related to personality, emotion, atmosphere and status in Chinese language. Qi is a revelation of energy from the inside outward. The energy represents something inherent in a thing (or in the human self). Rather than a sentiment or an emotion, the felt sense of qi is a full awareness or whole-body reception, sensing the whole of a thing or a person, which may not be a clear idea or image but something vague or unknown to the person in the moment. This felt sense creates an unknown atmosphere signifying an in-between mode of being.

Gendlin's (1997) theory can support and elaborate on such a felt sense because there are implicit correspondences between his argument and the Chinese way of thinking about qi. He proposes an "experiencing" that is "a 'part' of your inward body sense, for it is located within this bodily, felt, inward sense," which is "a quite specific aspect of your total body feeling that your attention specifies" (p. 13). Gendlin describes a felt sense as an "experiencing" instead of "experience", to stress that it is a "raw, present, ongoing functional (in us)" process before a meaning is made (p. 11). Owing to its fluidity, the felt experiencing does not always need to be clear; it is, however, always something intangible. If the changing felt sense that Gendlin addresses is replaced by qi, his philosophy may be thought of as an implication of qi for felt senses that are experiencing the dynamic of energy. The idea that felt experiencing is constantly changing also corresponds to Dao. For this reason, my thesis adopts Gendlin's term, "felt" to describe an uncertain sense or experiencing arising from qi.

Moreover, Gendlin (1997) differs the term "felt sense" from "feeling", which is often associated with emotions (p. 11). The felt experiencing of qi is not emotional; or rather this sentimental element is absorbed into an integrated state, a felt sense of being in the moment of the in-between through qi. Therefore, I employ "felt sense" to describe an experiencing of qi and use "feeling" for other experience that alludes to certain emotions and judgments during my exploratory process of this study.

To distinguish qi-energy's characteristic of the felt sense, I am highlighting the holistic experience of sensing an intangible disposition of energy implicit in, around, and between bodies that subtly and without conscious awareness connects together as a whole. Kirkland (2005) proposes, "all living things—including humans, cereals, stars, and ghostly spirits" need qi-energy to survive or maintain their existence, and "the idea that all such living things are subtly interconnected, that they have their own lives yet

are filled with the same subtle life-force, is an idea that we might call *holistic*" (p. 44). What can be felt as qi-energy comprises the entire state of a thing or person that goes beyond apparent information. The holistic mode of being is not only the felt experiencing before interpretation as Gendlin's idea but also implies a felt sense of "togetherness" in the moment.

To have a felt sense of qi, one needs a meditative, attentive state of consciousness in order to become involved in the subtlety of energy, like the moment of being in the unknown experience when one is deep in meditation. This way of experiencing allows for a blurred space where more possibilities can occur. The felt sense of or something in-between makes people relate in a way that is more than cause and effect or subject and object. They are both experiencing each other together, as if they are sharing the space-time in a felt sense of being; the "felt" means the subtle articulation between their meditative awareness.

The felt sense aroused by qi is more than kinaesthetic and proprioceptive experiences caused by concrete or physical perceptions of the body as an anatomical system (The next section will examine this distinction of the body based on the concept of qi). In order to avoid becoming restricted in consciousness, Daoism suggests being aware of a felt sense beyond becoming overly engaged or indulging in sensation or image. Although some studies have managed to reveal a few kinesthetic experiences of qi,¹ I argue they cannot completely represent a felt sense of qi. Also, the reception of qi differs among individuals because the experience of qi relates to personality and personal constitution. Daoism does not mean to devalue or prohibit physical sensation of qi but advises an alternative attitude toward it, or *wu-wei*. The suggestion of Daoism can be understood more familiarly by Gendlin's expressions in his notion of "receiving":

You welcome anything that comes with a body shift, but you stay a little distance from it. You are not in it, but *next* to it. . . You sense that there is space between it and you. You are here, it is there. You *have* it, you *are* not it.

(Gendlin, 2010, p. 61)

The attitude of “receiving” is parallel with the in-between attitude of *wu-wei*. In Gendlin’s term, Daoism suggests “having” a felt sense of qi rather than indulging in it, which is a rather relaxed and calm mode. The “distance” or ambiguous space from a felt sense of qi allows a deeper state to emerge spontaneously.

From my experience, knowing the felt sense of qi may help people realise and confirm the existence of qi-energy in the early stages of exploration, since qi often brings very subtle and ambiguous sensations. This awareness of qi-energy leads to one’s reliance on qi, which, in turn, facilitates the progress of a qi practice. However, it is necessary to respect the ambiguity of qi, as its felt sense does not have to be very clear in its nature. I have learned to leave some ambiguous space for the felt sense of qi instead of devoting all my efforts to knowing exactly what the experience of qi is in kinaesthesia.

It is worth discussing felt experiencing that has arisen from qi here in this thesis because it indicates an alternative view of being and improvised movement.

The body is sensed like a sponge.

Infinite possibilities in the inner body.

Unknown subtleties in the body.

It’s continuously changing, going somewhere because the flexible material is

shifting, flowing

in my body.

3.3 Implicit movement arising from qi

The awareness of the ambiguous sense of qi signifies that an inner movement is about to emerge and has the potential to expand outward. Gendlin (1993) suggests a felt experiencing can make a “new form” or the “coming of improvisation” (p. 2). He corresponds the idea of improvisation with language speaking in the way that people normally do not have words ready but just a felt sense of something to express until their mouths are open when speaking (although he recognises that elements used to improvise in art are not as fixed as the language that has to make sense in daily-life speaking) (p. 3). Even if he tries to generalise from an everyday-life experience of speaking, the mode of improvisation that Gendlin discusses is actually based on performance, in which innovative form is valued. Improvised movement emerging from qi in my practice is not about making a new form or generating meaning, as in the forms of improvisation that Gendlin implicitly refers to. He states that there is a waiting moment in which many things are implicitly “crossing” but not divided yet before improvisation comes, and he expresses this moment as “.....” (pp. 7-8). He suggests the crossing moment is implicit and complicated (p. 9). This infers to his concept of felt experiencing, referred to in the previous section. The can be associated with a state of *wu*, which I express as in terms of Daoist qi. Gendlin’s idea of a felt sense is a general experiencing; qi is a particular kind of felt experiencing in a heightened state of consciousness. Nevertheless, Gendlin (1993) poses that “what feels more truly me” is more important than technique in improvisation, and this is the key to making improvisation alive (p. 9). This view corresponds to my argument of emergent movement via qi, which I will relate to the Daoist concept of the self after this section.

This section investigates how qi gives rise to movement inside the body. In order to articulate a felt sense of qi with improvised movement, I tried moving my body with traces of sensation in qigong after finishing a meditative practice in a sitting position for practicing the circulation of inner energy.

I start from a small sway of my upper body as it may happen in qigong practice. I remember the felt sense and sensation of the inner body in sitting qigong practice, which is always released and changing in subtlety. It is like a sensation of a light. My body is shaping itself extremely slowly as if it is constructing and deconstructing itself from inside.

10 March 2010

The sense of construction and deconstruction of my body brings a sense of “alignment,” the term often used in American and European anatomy-based movement practices such as the Alexander Technique, Ideokinesis, and Contact Improvisation. For example, Paxton developed the “small dance of standing,” which is an exercise in Contact Improvisation to sense how internal subtle movements of muscles and bones support and keep the body just standing (Smith, 2003, p. 162; Albright, 2003, p. 209). He thinks of the alignment of the spine in the standing position as the minimum movement. In his practical research, *Material for the Spine* (2008), he also explores the spine as a means to connect internal and external muscles and the whole body’s movement. However, the sense of “alignment” in the practice of my research does not derive from the spine or skeletal system but from a felt sense of certain unknown “material” that reorganises itself spontaneously within my body. In other words, I sense something unknown but existing somehow in the body, like material awaiting organisation that can shape the body. I sense that my body is “properly” aligned when the alignment is suitable for my body.

I do not mean that this practice ignores anatomical structure. However, my concern lies

in another philosophical system, and this is the distinction of the body addressed in the movement practice developed in my research. In Chinese thought, qi is the fundamental energy of the body. If the vital energy is gone, the body cannot live and the spine and muscles cannot support the body.² Qi circulates in meridians, a “non-anatomical” system that is a feature of Chinese medicine (Miller, 2005, p. 57).³ When sensing something unknown to me in the body in standing and lying positions, I realise that it does not flow with gravity but circulates vertically throughout my body between the head and legs, which is the direction of qi’s circulation in the body. My body senses a soft energy inside. This innate energy is essential to making the body move. I begin a movement without thinking of my spine or muscles but of something else beyond the anatomical structure.

My arm lifts up because of the transformation of the inner material rather than the conscious work of the muscle. The sense is between the voluntary and involuntary. I want to lift my arm up and it is lifted by unknown material that reshapes (reorganises) itself.

12 March 2010

For this reason, I relate the felt sense of something unknown flowing within my body to qi-energy. Qi is different from my efforts to move and the muscular energy caused by the explicit intentions of my subjective consciousness; instead, it harbours a much more implicit “disposition” to move, emerging from an in-between state.

When I am aware of my movement changing, it has changed.

10 March 2010

A Chinese proverb says, “A disposition (yi) follows the heart.” The Chinese concept of this disposition is the relative intention toward the inner, or the heart, which is less a tendency to move than an intention to complete an action. Unlike one’s intentions to sense and interact with the world, nothing but revelation of the self is expected for the

Chinese disposition of qi in Daoism. The human pays less attention to tangible perceptions than to be aware of the self when practicing qi. Therefore, human perceptions should include awareness through the heart and physical sensory organs.

However, qi is not a mode of being that arises only from utterly inward consciousness but a mode of being between spirituality and physicality. That is to say, qi is neither a purely physical sensation nor a simply psychological or psychic feeling. Rather, it is a specific in-between state of bodymind integration. Kirkland (2004) uses the term “biospiritual” to describe this character of qi in Daoist thinking (p. 36). Miller (2005) portrays “the body as a system of vital energy that is the foundation for both physical life and spiritual life” (p. 57). Therefore, this practice as research focuses on the in-between state of the intangible and tangible, rather than focusing on either side. According to Daoist qigong, the physical and spiritual join together in movement as one entity. This demonstrates that one can gain a felt sense of qi by being in the in-between, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis.

In an in-between state of qi, I am often aware of the workings of my muscles, bones, and nervous system after having a felt sense of something unknown, like an alternative material shifting in my body. The experiencing can be explained by “the flow of feeling” in Gendlin’s theory (1997), which proposes that experiencing keeps changing when it is being observed by oneself or others (pp. 3, 39). Gendlin’s idea of flowing experiencing implies that people may never observe themselves or others in a complete sense but as being in process, which corresponds to Dao.

Accordingly, I sometimes have a felt sense of incompleteness in my movement in this practice. Gendlin (1997) explains that a felt sense of the “unfinished”

comes from a

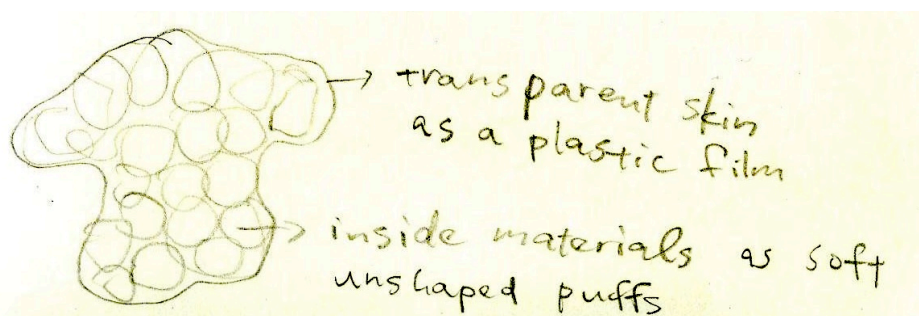
“preconceptual” mode that cannot be fully associated with a “symbol” such as “words, things, situations, events, behaviors, interpersonal interactions, and so on,” so that its felt meaning is not complete yet (p. 28). The felt meaning of unfinished movement becomes implicit because symbols just “refer” to rather than “represent” the experiencing (p. 41).

In an artistic experience, Gendlin (1997) argues that a felt sense may happen before it is connected with a symbol or can be sensed from the outside, but it can be observed by the self and will have a felt meaning that is “symbolized (at least at first) only by the actual object of art” (pp. 68, 71). In terms of movement, the felt meaning of movement may only (or initially) articulate with movement itself. In other words, the felt sense and meaning refers to movement itself. As such, Gendlin’s argument of the felt sense of art supports my qi experience of emergent movement to some extent. However, in this Daoist movement practice, movement emerges sequentially via qi without waiting for any symbols or felt meaning, as addressed in Chapter 2. Movement is changing since it emerges from a felt sense of constantly flowing qi-energy as an implicit disposition to move. Such movement means a deeper felt sense of the body drawn by qi.

Unfinished movement emerges from an implicit disposition of qi rather than an intention that can articulate certain symbols. Gendlin indicates, “When the action doesn’t have the intended results, we are especially aware of the ‘feel’ of it” (p. 68). The difference between a felt sense and a result of movement also happens in my movement in this research. This is why the practice always reveals an implicit felt sense, which is also the experience I managed to uncover in my study. I see the difference as a gap that can be felt as *wu* or the in-between with an attitude of *wu-wei* as addressed in this thesis. Therefore, this practice is concerned with a felt sense of movement rather than the felt meaning.

For Daoism, this kind of preconscious experience is regarded as intuitive. The preconscious reaction emerges from a gap in consciousness as if it is caused by “nothing,” which connects with the notion of *wu-wei*. This consciousness is distinct from the one that can be awakened through the act of waiting to let habitual thoughts or pre-knowledge go out of the mind in such as Gendlin’s (2010) focusing method (p. 61). Although Gendlin’s method applies his theory of felt experiencing, it is grounded in psychology, a philosophical system different from Daoism. In my research, a felt sense of qi is aroused earlier than my recognition of what I have known in my mind, which may be presumed the first or initial felt sense of emergent movement. Na (1994) describes such an intuitive mode of sudden awareness as “light” (p. 21, own translation). Accordingly, I see an instant emergence of the felt gap as a “light” of the in-between in improvised movement. I have explored the Daoist idea of intuition in practice, which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.4 A felt sense of formlessness based on the Daoist concept of the self



11 March 2010

Rather than seeing the body as an anatomical structure, this practice develops a felt sense of the body that is relatively ambiguous based on Daoism. I do not intentionally create an image for the body; instead, this image arises from the unsure sensation of internal flowing energy. The image transfers the felt experiencing of the unknown or qi

into a sense of the matter or material that makes up the body. Rather than ignoring the physicality of the body, the ambiguous felt sense reminds me to keep my body open to any uncertainty and possibility. This body image represents a body infused with qi-energy.

The body's potential for change comes from a multiplicity of the in-between and self in Daoism. There are manifold states of the in-between consciousness that can lead to qi-energy, ranging from the subtle to the powerful. Lai (2008) suggests that the spectrum of qi is continuous and covers various states. The dispersion and gathering of qi give rise to subtleties within diverse degrees of energy. Whether big gaps or minute changes within or between different states, they can be transformed smoothly through qi (p. 129). However, I argue that adjacent states may not necessarily be continuous. Their subtleties still exist. Qi can bridge two diverse states because of its vagueness, which makes them have a sense of continuity. Even so, it is always possible to locate infinite numbers of states differentiating between any two states because of qi's delicacy. In short, the in-between modes of being are varied from a view of energy.

Since modes of qi-energy are tuned by different levels of consciousness and are related to being, qi is about a view of the self according to Daoism. Varying with qi-energy, the self is in-between and vague. This idea makes sense since the self is so obscure that it has distinct meanings, and it has derived a few terms in different contexts. The self can be thought of from diverse perspectives such as from the physical or biological body and of a mental or psychic activity and more complicated meanings, intertwining individuality and culture in being (Ames & Hall, 1998, pp. 11-14). This diversity of the self can emerge in improvised movement in this practice through awareness of qi's changing nature.

I borrow the notion of “state” from the philosophy of qi mentioned in the introduction of this thesis to describe the diversity of the self due to dynamic statuses of flexible and changeable qi. States are like multiple aspects of the self in terms of energy; the self is the aggregate of various states of energy.⁴ The states of energy express images of the self emerging from itself, or rather from the person’s gaze and introspection into her or his innermost heart from diverse angles. All emergent images in the form of energy unfold the same self, the oneness. Therefore, a whole image of the self rather than only a fragment can be revealed in every state, even though this image is rendered at different degrees like a toned image.⁵ As a consequence, various views of the self shift in accordance with a mover’s heart or different levels of consciousness at the moment instead of pinning down one particular aspect. The self as a mode of being in-between shifts meditatively, humbly and gently.

The body is not only matter or material but also includes recognition of the self, which is formless and intangible energy according to the concept of qi. In other words, the body is not felt simply as a concrete form made of anatomical material such as bones, muscles, skin, tissues, veins, cells, and blood. Instead, it is “something” without a clear boundary, as if the image of the self—the outline that a person can have a felt sense of her or his own whole body—disappears. What is absent is not the self per se or its image but the image’s boundary in a felt sense. By the same token, physical material is not gone, but its image is shaken and blurred. The body concerns not only the physical shape but also reflects the multi-dimensional self, which makes the body formless. Formlessness does not mean only a flexibility of the body’s shape but includes a changeability of the self.

In Daoism, the formlessness corresponds to an idea of transparency that describes a state of *wu*. In Daoist cosmology, the body is “the midpoint in an ongoing process” and bodies are “the mediators between heaven and earth” (Miller, 2005, pp. 101, 104). Miller

(2005) describes this experience as a body “transparent to the cosmos,” namely, a “cosmic body” (p. 55). The transparency of the body gives rise to an “expanded sense of self” or “the porosity of the self,” which “extends to incorporate the things that lie around them” (p. 55). The sense of transparency implies the body is a meeting place between the inside and outside, the self and the world. Thus, Daoist cosmological thought does not reflect an utterly spiritual experience, but an engagement of the self and reality.

Karczag describes her experience of “a change in tone” in improvisation, which I think of as an echo with the Daoist concept of transparency. It indicates a process of “sinking deeper” into a state “below the skin” (Crow and Sager, 2006, p. 10). She states, “When a mover or dancer sinks deeper, it’s as if her skin softens,” which draws the mover’s and the viewer’s attention to the depths of the body and all phenomena in the moment (p. 10). This is associated with Karczag’s other idea of “deeply sourced” from the self, which was discussed in Chapter 2. A felt sense of “softening” of the skin and its articulation with the self embody the Daoist notion of being transparent in improvisation.

Karczag’s expression of “soften” can also describe my experiencing of formlessness. In the movement practice of my research, I sense my body soften into the depths and open to the outside in a felt sense of a formless body image. The inside and outside communicate with each other in different states. My personal way often begins with a procedure from the inside out. In a kinaesthetic state or a “skin surface tone,” (Crow and Sager, 2006, p. 10) in Karczag’s term, an unknown image in my body triggers energy, inducing impulses of the nerves on the inner side of my skin like inner light. The sensation goes across my skin, expanding to a surface sensation of my whole body and leading to an awareness of the outer light of the world. Then, the route would reverse from the outside in. When I am aware of the outer world, my body starts to have a felt

sense of transparency, as if light can penetrate my body, and my skin becomes sensitive.

I do not intend to map but “invite” the image of outer light into my inner body.

I don't attempt to relate to light on purpose.

I see it, sense it, welcome it.

25 March 2010

In the dark, I feel another kind of transparency—what comes in is darkness rather than light. Darkness is full of my body and the boundary, i.e., the frame of my body is expanding to infinity and dissolving. Appearance and disappearance is the same thing in the dark. The darkness is not the opposite or the “bad” of light but an alternative material equivalent to light.

22 March 2010

In a deeper state, or Karczaga's “sinking state,” the body is softened thoroughly in a felt sense beyond a focus on kinaesthetic sensation or the skin. I have a felt sense of internally, like air that contains possibilities and transmits “something” flowing in my body so my inner body does not feel different from the outside, with air around my body. My self is softened and connected with the surroundings. My skin or the boundary of my self has a felt sense of being melted and nearly gone, as if it is a transparent film.

The skin is not devalued or ignored when it is softened into the depth; instead, it means the whole body is communicative. Chinese medicine believes this occurs because the surface and inside of the body are connected via meridians (Kaptchuk, 2000, p. 106). The skin can reflect the layers beneath it. In this case, the skin is still sensitive but feels quiet and calm, different from kindled or irritated sensations when the skin is given full

attention. This sense of the body that has a material sensation with the disappearing image's border of the self implies that the body is an in-between place or a mediator, as Miller points out. I experience formlessness in a felt sense of being from within. The felt experiencing of formlessness implies openness in a holistic sense of the bodymind.

Formlessness may be related to relaxation for movers drawing on somatic and improvisational practices, but I argue it means more than that. From a qigong perspective, Cohen (1997) points out that the Chinese concept of relaxation, *song*, connotes "greater liveness" than the Western concept. He states, "*song* is not merely the absence of tension, but rather the absence of unnecessary tension," or rather "minimum effort creating a subjective feeling of effortlessness and ease, no matter how much energy is actually expended" (pp. 98, 100). I consider this statement an echo of *wu-wei* in terms of Daoism. Correspondingly, *song* does not mean losing energy; instead, it means "giving up one's energy externally but preserving it internally so that one's body will be sensitive and alert enough to adapt itself to any circumstance" (p. 100). I suggest that releasing the body and the way of looking at one's own self are equally required for a state of full relaxation if one aims to be sensitive to the emergence of intuitive movement and changing energy. Besides, I observed that my movement emerging from a felt sense of formlessness only exists in certain states of relaxation. This phenomenon demonstrates that formlessness emerges from release. Meanwhile, the sensation of a block or pain in the body can also give rise to movement in a way that orients my body to where a block is "flowing away." This signifies that formlessness also promotes release. These findings in emergent movement infer that circulation of qi and a felt sense of relaxation can sometimes be related as the cause and effect of each other; moreover, they can be formed together as coexistent phenomena, corresponding to my findings in qigong practice. However, learning from my experience of qigong, I suggest that being formless is not only for release but also for fine-tuning qi-energy, heightening

consciousness, and understanding the self more deeply. With this attitude, movement will not be limited.

¹ For example, Loori's book about artistic creativity within Zen philosophy explains, "As attention settles into the hara [*dan tian* in Chinese, three inches below the navel in the lower abdomen], a feeling of lightness or buoyancy will arise. This is chi [qi], the vital energy that is initiated by the source of your inspiration" (Loori, 2004, p. 87). James Miller's Daoist study states, "Anyone who has received a basic training in qi-energy practices is able to sense the qi moving through the body, and it is most easily felt as a pulsating sensation in the centre of the palms" (Miller, 2005, p. 57).

² For example, Wang Chong, a scholar in the Eastern Han Dynasty, declared that "guang-qi," or "light-qi," must come out when a person has a mandate to be a king of divine providence, so that the governed place will be peaceful (Wang, cited in Fung, 1994, p. 257). With this, evil can be warded off and bad luck can be turned into good fortune. Without it, misfortune will occur (Fung, 1994, p. 257). Moreover, he gives the example that a person who has no "guang-qi" will be regarded as a corpse by a tiger, and then will be eaten (Fung, 1994, p. 257).

³ This does not mean Chinese medicine has no anatomical knowledge at all, but merely different philosophies from Western medicine. Chinese medical scholar Ted J. Kaptchuk (2000) explains, "The tendency of Chinese thought is to seek out dynamic functional activity rather than to look for the fixed somatic structures that perform the activities. Because of this, the Chinese have no system of anatomy comparable to that of the West" (p. 76). For example, Chinese medicine has theories about organs different from Western anatomy. "In the Chinese system, the Organs are discussed always with reference to their functions and to their relationship with the fundamental textures, other Organs, and other parts of the body. Indeed, it is only through these relationships that an organ can be defined" (p. 78).

⁴ The idea of "state" in qi theory is not parallel to schizophrenia in psychology because the various states of qi centre on the theme of the whole, coherent self, even if the self is changeable. That is to say, changes happen on the basis of oneness. This is the meaning of the in-between as a whole in Daoism.

⁵ The above elaboration of states and the self is inspired from holography since I found some parallels between discourses of the two fields (For a similar argument, see physicist Fritjo Capra's writing, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*, 1991, pp. 352-353). A hologram is a plate loaded with information of an object that has been imaged by holography, a three-dimensional photographic technique. It can represent a three-dimensional image that rotates along with people shifting their view as a real object does in reality; in other words, the image and viewer turn in opposite directions. Moreover, a part of a hologram

can still present a complete image as the whole piece, while the image's colour changes because the image lacks some information. My research is concerned with the idea of the self as a hologram bearing a variety of whole images rather than displaying the image differently to other people. That is, I explore how the self is flexibly seen by a mover herself or himself to let those inherencies emerge rather than explore how the self is seen by a viewer.

Chapter 4 Diversity of the in-between

This chapter aims to explore and understand the in-between through improvised movement. By experimenting awareness of three Daoist energy sources (*dan tian*) in movement, I probe four ways of movement emerging in four in-between states (three states from the Daoist *dan tians* and one state from the totality of the three). My exploration focuses on the moment when I am about to move, and I am curious about what happens in the exact moment between stillness and motion as seen through a Daoist lens. While maintaining the conjunction of the bodymind, the in-between states in different levels of consciousness shift from kinaesthetic sensation to a mere sense of being. The point of this chapter is not reaching a “perfect” state of *wu* in movement but to reveal the relationship between my qigong experience and Daoism.

In this chapter, I discuss and analyse a series of improvised movements developed in my exploration of four in-between states and conclude features of the in-between. Moreover, this chapter also contains my findings and understanding of both qigong and this movement practice and how they resonate with each other in this exploratory process.

4.1 Four in-between states

Based on the philosophy of light in Daoist traditional qigong, “light” as meditative awareness can arouse *qi* in three energy sources in the body. They are: (1) “light” can be located metaphorically between the eyes (“upper *dan tian*”), namely the third eye, which signifies the discovery of wisdom in Dao; (2) “light” or *qi* can also go down to the lower abdomen (“lower *dan tian*”), leading to calmness; (3) “light” is also the heart (“middle

dan tian") that is aware of spontaneous states of the self before judgment or pre-knowledge (Lu-zu, 2006, p. 287; Yuasa, 2006, p. 79; Cohen, 1997, p. 35). Daoist qigong's holistic concepts say that they cannot work separately. I developed them into three states in improvised movement. In these states, "light" is used as a meditative awareness or a metaphor instead of an image to trigger kinesthetic sensation. The three in-between states overlap in a way that they have to assist each other, even if each one is designed to project a particular location of meditative awareness.¹

The fourth state presents the totality of a qigong state, which can be regarded as a combination of the previous three states that is more than their sum. The first three states are elements in the fourth, although none of them can represent the holistic in-between state alone. The four in-between states have expanded my awareness to cover both the inner and outer spaces of my body. Moreover, the awareness takes care of my heart, a concern about my self, because the middle *dan tian* is involved.

Every sequence explores the four states every time. Since what happens in improvised movement may not be recognised in a holistic state, the first three states conduct additional investigations to make up for the difficulty analysing and understanding the fourth. Research questions are raised during practices of the in-between states and diverse movement qualities are developed.

In this section, the poetic words from my diary are juxtaposed with words in square brackets that describe movement in this practice. This represents the fact that I remember philosophical understanding and felt experiencing of being after improvisation in an in-between state more than specific movements. The concrete descriptions of my exploratory processes translated from the video documentation (which are not featured in the DVD) can compensate for the lack of a movement

perspective in the reflections in my diary. However, that does not mean that my descriptions of the four in-between states are prescriptive in any way. Movements may vary from person to person or from time to time in the same person's practices.

In the followings, each state is named after a specific characteristic that I consider essential to Daoist qigong, giving rise to different layers of an in-between state, in order to discuss and make comparisons between them for convenience. However, it should be noticed that every state has blurred meaning more than the rigid boundary given by its name since there are overlaps among them.

4.1.1 In-between space

I sense the zone between my eyes. My in-between seeing leads my head's direction. My movement thus comes out.

[I start by walking randomly and appear to look around but
do not see anything in particular.]

My attention moves down to the in-between area of my ears. I sway my head slightly. Sounds seem to be away in the distance, in-between tangible and intangible.

[I do not do specific movements but sense the blurred zones
along my body, sometimes in stillness, sometimes whilst
walking.]

Then, I am aware of the space between my shoulders.

[Most of the time I just sway or turn my joints subtly.]

This awareness extends to the space between my hands, my arms and a small space between neighboring fingers as if I have webbed hands. The sensation around my arms and hands appears to be a sense of qi. The same experience happens when my attention shifts to the zone in between

my hipbones, legs and toes.

[My body becomes softer after a while. I start to raise my arms and seem to shift my weight between my feet. I look as if I am balancing between the dual parts alongside my body. I start to have tiny movements in my fingers and toes. I squat down to sense the space between my hipbones. I "walk" on four limbs like an animal crawling slowly and lightly in space.

The four limbs support my weight equally. My centre is distributed over my front torso, the in-between point of the four limbs. My body and the joints of my upper limbs are relaxed and flexible in motion.]

The journey from top down gives rise to an awareness of a middle line of the whole body. I don't relate this blurred area to the specific image of the spine; it's not an in-between state.

[I stand up and find my movement freer as my body and joints release. My head turns around more often, leading me to face multiple directions in order to move. My body parts are loose and relaxed. I sway on a larger scale. My body flickers slightly and my movement looks unbalanced and uncertain with flowing soft energy, which blurs the boundary between the body and space. I sense my body and the space as if they exist together. Flexible movement... the shapeless figure... energy... It is getting hard to describe the movement and energy in words.]

25 May 2010

Inspired by the meditative awareness of the third eye in the Daoist philosophy of light, this state starts with an exploration of the in-between spot between my eyes and

expands the same idea to the other dual body parts and finally through the whole body. By means of kinesthetic sensation and imagery, this state explores three questions. How are dual body parts experienced when sensing the area between them? What does the whole body feel like as an in-between? How does the new experience of sensing the in-between give rise to movement?

In Daoism, a sense of in-between begins from the place between the two eyes, which Yuasa described as “invisible space” or an access to the heart in his Japanese translation of *The Principle of Taiyi Golden Flower* (Yuasa, 2006, p. 78; Lu-zu, 2006, p. 240). The way is described as a long journey since it requires time and effort to reach the deepest heart and understanding (p. 278).

Here, the term “space,” between the two eyes, refers to the highly concentrated consciousness of a practitioner. The point between the eyes is the border between the two eyes, and between the inside and outside, the self and the environment. Seeing is a way of recognising the difference between the self and the surroundings. In-between seeing means perceiving an ambiguous zone in which the self and surroundings do not identify themselves clearly. It is a vision when things and the self are blurred, between not seeing (nothing) and seeing (something), and there is a wide range of variations within the in-between of seeing.

Although the third eye is for inner insight, I begin from an in-between vision seeing the outside world in order to examine how this way of seeing is different from the usual and how the perceived world and my behaviour consequently changed. The in-between of the ears is also included.

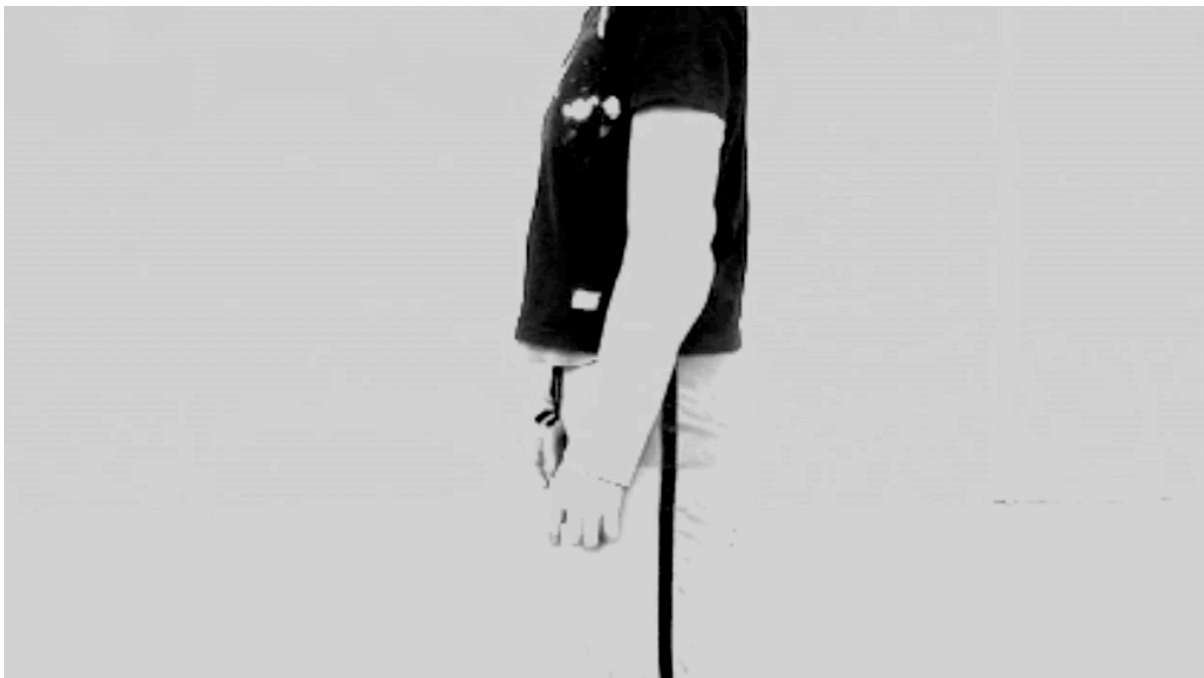
I am “seeing” but not seeing.

I am "hearing" but not hearing.

I walk with in-between seeing. I can still see what is in front of me but I do not really see it. I can clearly hear the sounds around me but they sound distant. I walk randomly in a curved trajectory without particular direction; sometimes I go straight to the boundary of the space and turn around before nearly hitting something because I suddenly see the thing clearly in front of my eyes.

I sense the zones between my eyes, ears, shoulders and hips and imagine they merge into the in-between of my body. I found that the two ends of in-between need to be brought into the in-between state. This coordinates with the idea of *yin* and *yang* in Daoism, that one includes the other as a whole and neither of them can be ignored. I sense dual body parts differently but related while the degree of difference varies with that of relaxation; more tension equals more difference.

In this case, the sense of the central line of the body may not be straight but curved or flexible because distinct dual body parts may be relaxed to different degrees. This sensation changes my body subtly. Twisting or standing in another position may change the shape of the central line. Then I start to walk. The experience of "in-between walking" is different from normal walking. With an awareness of the central line of the whole body, I walk slowly with even weight on either foot like an acrobat. Yet my body is not rigid; the inside is soft and changing along with my weight shifting as if water is swaying in a moving container. Changes in the body are "magnified" in my awareness in an in-between state. I sense weight in each limb and a sense of uncertainty between limbs.



(See *Four states/In-between space* in the DVD)

The awareness of the central line is different from imagining and sensing the spine. Chapter 3 compares my idea of the body based on qi with Paxton's exploration of the spine from an anatomical perspective. Since both think of the body in different ways, the central line is not the same. The spine is not really in the centre but the back part of the body. If the image of the spine is too clear in the mind, it might become an objective image that does not feel melted into and part of the body. I suggest having a subtle sense of the central line instead of the body's alignment along the spine. The imagery is more ambiguous than imagining the line anatomically or vividly. The whole back surface from the neck to the torso—not particularly the spine—may be felt straight after sensing the central line in relaxation and calmness. This proves my statement in Chapter 3 that a felt sense of qi flowing in the body can foster a sense of “alignment” from another route.

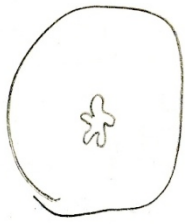
For meditation, the central line of the body, from the top to the lower abdomen, means a connection or a sense of being between the heaven and earth. I sense my self as the in-between and qi-unity of the bodymind, the physicality and consciousness, here and

now. The body image is not out of the self but imagined as superimposed on the physical body along with its central line. The central line of the body is where the self dwells. Therefore, sensing the central line can experience an in-between sense of the self.

I experience this coherence of the central line and the self in this movement practice and in qigong meditative practice. The difference is, in Daoism, the divine consciousness or the nature of the self is located in the middle of the eyes, which is the place for the “golden flower” or the image of “light” as a symbol of qi-energy; however, in the practice developed in my research, the self does not indicate the spiritual consciousness but allows many levels of consciousness between the spiritual and physical to emerge. In this practice, the self dwells throughout the central line of the whole body.

I expand the idea into space between the front and the back, one side and the other, and adjacent body parts such as fingers, toes, a hand and a leg, and imagine the surface of the body, the skin, as the in-between of the inside and outside. The kinesthetic sensation initiates my movement. I am aware of the space between them and the sensation makes me move. These sensations come together, producing an integral sense for movement. The expanded awareness of the whole body releases the serious attention to particular sensation. I appear to move with loose joints but they coordinate with the world in a correlative way—a sense of being. My body becomes relaxed, loose but holistic. My movement sometimes flickers and is indeterminate in subtlety because I sense dual elements at the same time and the in-between is a place to flexibly balance or negotiate their different sensations. My weight stays central but my balance flickers.

In this state, the body as the in-between takes on a sense of fusion and indetermination like a soft border between dualistic elements.



The inner light is the outside of the outer (real) space.

The inside is the outside as well.

11 May 2010

Even though I am involved in the sensation and a sense of being of an in-between state, this is not total immersion yet. Rather than a single moment when two things are about to be identified, I argue that there are various levels within an ambiguous state such as the in-between of a single pair of body parts, along the central line of the body, and all over the body between the inner and outer, that I experience when gradually becoming holistic during this practice.

I sense the inner space. I sense my whole skin. I sense qi around me. I sense the in-between zones of the two. Any movement can be movement in this practice. I don't care how my movement looks. I only care what I sense of the in-between, which shapes my movement, whatever it may be.

21 July 2010

4.1.2 Calmness

The aim of this state is to explore how calmness can generate movement. In Daoist qi philosophy, “light” means “seeing” (realising) or the heart (Lu-zu, 2006, p. 235). “Light” as mobile meditative awareness cannot be separate from the calmness or “stillness” of awareness (Lu-zu, 2006, p. 39). In Daoism, “stillness” (or “still point” in Buddhism) means the “centre” of the mind is still or calm without wandering thoughts. Assuming the mind is confined by accustomed thinking or judgment, the technique of stillness aims to release the mind’s tendency toward tension or fixation in meditation. Once the mind has a centre, calmness, it can be as free and flexible as possible without going anarchic. This is chaos under a principle, or in other words, an order in disorder, like the

reason that things can emerge and operate diversely in their own right on earth according to Dao.²

Such stillness in consciousness lets the bodymind “move” freely. This implies that Daoism addresses an argument against the belief, predicated on cause-and-effect, that calmness can only lead to a quieting or reduction in the scale of movement. Based on qi practices, calmness can enhance relaxation of the whole bodymind, leading to an energy whose flexibility may open up more possibilities and could be powerful. Therefore, calmness means a potential for energy instead of weakness.

Through repeatedly practicing an alternation of circulating and pausing awareness, a practitioner can be aware of the heart and return to the very beginning, the state of *wu* (Lu-zu, 2006, p. 39). This implies that stillness and movement are not related to space or time but to meditative awareness, or rather to spatiotemporal and biospiritual energy, *qi*. Stillness and movement correlate with each other like *yin* and *yang*. Therefore, I question how this Daoist idea of stillness and motion can work in emergent movement.



(See *Four states/Calmness* in the DVD)

... I look inside with a meditative awareness from the third eye and initiate my movement from my body centre (lower belly). I move very slowly and gently... I make a move because my awareness shifts; I pause because my awareness is still.

[I slightly tilt my body and hang my arms forward. Very subtle motive energy from the inside, flowing between my belly, waist and arms, shapes my body. My movement is minute, light and slow. Most of the energy goes smoothly and downward. I raise my arms, turn my body, put my palms together to make them circle around with fluent and soft energy steadily like the movement in Tai Ji. I nearly pause for a second. I stretch out my arm to the top and then relax it. I lightly twist my body, shifting my weight between my two feet. Sometimes a very tiny movement emerges somewhere, probably from the toes, fingers, belly and waist. I bend my knees a little and position myself like a sculpture, which looks nearly motionless but some subtle movement driven by soft inner energy is still visible. I sway my body more freely and move my arms and my body larger and unhurriedly. A stronger energy from inside out is expanding my movement. In a short while, my movement returns to subtlety. I gradually squat.]

Sensations of impulse, etc., which are sensible physically, come after the meditative awareness. This is qi-circulation...

13 July 2010

In this state, the Daoist idea of stillness and motion is put into practice like a disposition

of qi giving rise to movement to some extents. Unlike the intention to sense and interact with the world, the Chinese disposition of qi expects nothing other than being in Daoism. I pay less attention to perceptions and am aware of the subtlety of the within. My movement is activated partly by the physical and partly by the mental in this state of the in-between, uniting the bodymind. Consequently, there may be subtle and slow movement and felt incomplete action, like qi's qualities, between stillness and motion. This makes me stay in a place without travelling in space. However, even if my movement is slow, its speed is changing.

It was a long journey to attain the implicit and obscure relationship between stillness and motion through Daoism in this state. I calmed myself down by sending qi down to my lower abdomen and expanding the peaceful sense to the whole inside body through meditative insight. Initially, my brain still instructed my body's pausing and motion. Through a series of explorations, when my bodymind was on the way to uniting, I could not clarify whether I or qi determined my stillness and movement. Finally I realised that my awareness of qi drives my body. Pausing and motion follow the awareness of flowing qi.

In this case, stillness and motion do not happen alternatively but merge into an intangible and indescribable energy within each movement. My body is still in motion and moving in stillness. Even though I look still, my inner body keeps changing slowly and subtly. This state does not just involve the internal. The motive that drives the movement is the in-between or integration of inner sensation and meditative awareness flowing through the body; either side could be felt more at times, which may change the rhythm of movement. The boundary between stillness and motion is unclear. This echoes the phenomenon discussed in Chapter 2 that the inner and the outer can be simultaneously drawn into an in-between state.

The state of Calmness is a deeper level of consciousness than the first state of kinesthetically sensing in-between space. Although both relate to a circulation of qi, the state of sensing in-between space generates movement through the kinesthetic sensation of qi, and the state of Calmness activates movement through an awareness of qi that goes more inward. This means the former remains with physical sensation and the latter moves toward a biospiritual state.

4.1.3 Openness

I play with a bright light reflected from a car window that catches my attention. I stand up and bend my knees repeatedly to see or not to see the light. I have a desire to pick a corner of the curtain so I do it. I am aware of light outside as well as the “light” inside of my body. I am more sensitive to the pain in my back, which is the “shadows” in my body.

16 April 2010

The heart is essential for this practice because it is part of a method that leads to an advanced level in Chinese qigong and also is the main approach to Dao. According to Zhuang-zi’s Daoist thought, the heart is a source of the state of harmonically communicating with the world that an infant inherently bears. In Daoist qigong, keeping a soft heart like a newborn baby is a way to remember a sense of curiosity, open-mindedness and the child’s innate awareness rather than pretending to be a child or doing something childish on purpose.

This state explores how a childlike heart influences emergent movement. I employ the heart by means of remembering myself in childhood in a mode of a felt sense more than a concrete story, image or movement. My movement emerges from an awareness of who I was as a child, a felt sense of being myself in essence. A child-like sense of curiosity

makes me conscious of both inner and outer space. I am more sensitive to the inner sensation than usual, and meanwhile I also travel rather widely in space.

I sense more impulses happening in my body, like a flash or a short electric current on my nerves, and respond to them by movement... I have more funny or grotesque movements...

[My feet feel some impulses. I am unbalanced with agile and random steps and my loose body sways. My eyes and movement become alert. I curve my arm and put it on my head. I raise the other arm and make a turn. I lift my arm and leg on the same side at the same time. I shake my hand and sharply and repeatedly draw a big curve in the air with the other arm. I wave my arms with some hand gestures. I go forward, turn around and jump. I shift my weight to my hands on the floor in a leap. I swing my arms between my legs. I stand up and
pause, looking forward with a smile.]

I also sense additional desires to move or play... More repetition in the moment. I feel my movement is interesting, like that of children...

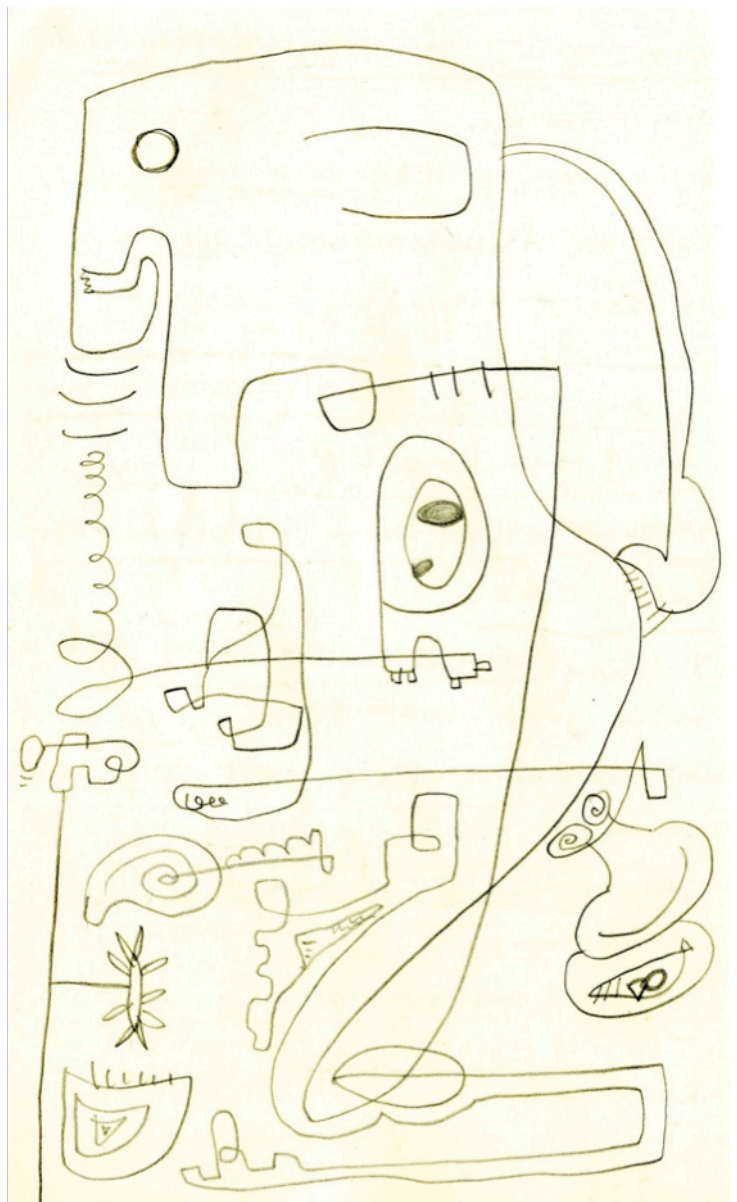
[With my hand slipping under my throat, I stride across a diagonal of the room. I raise my hand to my head and sway my arms between my legs for a short time, and travel back to the centre with quick hand gestures. I lift my hand, turn my head back and suddenly squat down and stand back up. I skip around and look backward to see my lifted foot in hopping. I pause and start to wave my arms expansively. I open and close my arms and knees together a few times. My hands appear to drag something up from the floor. I move my

arm, sway my head shortly, and hop backward. I wave my arms.
I tap my throat. I stretch my arm forward as if resting it
on a table repeatedly. I jump. I jump. I stretch my back with
my arm going over my head to the other side. I hop. I brush
my back with the backs of my hands.]

16 April 2010

With a childlike heart, I can clearly sense internal physical impulses, desire for movement, and images of upcoming actions emerging spontaneously. When moving

slowly, I can “predict” upcoming movement from the unknown (the future), memory (the past) or sensation (the present), as its image or a desire comes to mind. Rather than intentional thought, the images emerge spontaneously and then my body instantaneously follows the images into movement. My desire to move makes me travel in space. In rapid motion, impulse replaces desire because of quick reactions. Phenomena such as image and desire may happen together in a movement.



Moreover, I found intangible, unnamed moments that may

24 April 2010

combine images, impulse and desire or may be alternative experiences that have not

been catalogued or articulated. When enjoying a certain movement, I repeat it as a child would. I feel vivid and playful in my movement. This is from my true heart when desire, images, physical impulses and more unknown experiences fuse.



(See *Four states/Openness* in the DVD)

In the practice of Openness, kinesthetic impulses, images and desire are not expected to happen, and I do not intend to merge them into an action based on the notion of *wu-wei*. The sense of an unknown reason for the phenomenon comes from a state of *wu*. Movement instantaneously arises as though it were a series of flashes at each point of time throughout the practice. Even though particular patterns such as hand gestures, travelling, jumps and repetitions occur in this practice, I feel a child-like interest in every emergence of images, desire and physical impulses. This emergence corresponds to a Daoist intuitive mode as if a sudden understanding illuminates the heart but may be too brief to be processed consciously (Na, 1994, pp. 1, 21). The sudden understanding of the Daoist intuitive experience makes my movements take on qualities of agility, suddenness and instant reactivity. The practice of Openness corroborates my discussion

in Chapter 3 in which I state that *wu-wei* is an intuitive experience in Daoism.

Na (1994) suggests that Daoist intuition is carried out “without intentions and desires” because she assumes *wu-wei* needs calmness that may be disturbed by desire (p. 1, own translation). However, through this practice of Openness, I found that the state of *wu* is compatible with the intention and desire to move or have images, and they can harmonically exist in *wu-wei*. I argue that *wu-wei* is not intended for keeping away from desire and physical sensation or images, which Daoism may see as a confinement to a specific state of the self away from *wu*. Instead, *wu-wei* means to let all possibilities spontaneously emerge from qi. In contrast with Na’s theory that pursuing a void of being with no intentions and desires confirms the “human nature” or “pure existence of the self” in Daoism, I understand *wu* as a state full of various spontaneous emergences from the self in this movement practice. Since *wu-wei* is seen as intuitive, the Daoist intuition is also activated in a spontaneous mode.

Therefore, intuition and spontaneity are related in Daoism. The distinction of Daoist intuition is its spontaneity. Drawing on philosophical scholar Edward S. Casey’s definition (2000) from his study of imagining, spontaneity means “arising in an unsolicited manner,” effortless, instantaneous and surprising (p. 34). The cause of spontaneity could be “conscious intentions” or “unconscious fantasy;” the latter is the process of experiencing imagining that is “felt spontaneity” (Casey, 2000, p. 34). Therefore, spontaneity can be achieved through habit and a felt sense. Casey’s theory of felt spontaneity can be applied to Daoism. It can also be borrowed to conceptualise Daoist intuition. However, in terms of qi, the felt spontaneity and the felt intuition in Daoism do not just come from “unconscious fantasy” as with Casey’s notion, but from a felt experiencing of qi beyond that. I suggest they are better understood in Gendlin’s view of a felt sense, while Casey’s idea can be a reference.

I argue that intuitive movement can happen in two modes. In terms of Gendlin's theory, felt meaning connects with symbols, and the relationship can be explicit as a representation or implicit as a reference, as discussed in Chapter 3. The felt meaning of an intuitive experience may be not completely formed in both conditions. For intuition activated by "conscious intention," a mover has known something such as the trigger of movement, but probably has not interpreted it or considered how to react "properly." When it takes longer to await a response to the trigger, intuition may derive from learnt skills or habits. Daoist intuition is a felt sense akin to the unconscious mode in Casey's case, yet in terms of qi, it is understood as a phenomenon that happens before a mover realises that a felt meaning is emerging, which I have discussed in Chapter 3. Accordingly, I suggest that Daoist intuitive experience is a "felt intuition."

This discussion implies there are different levels of spontaneity and intuition, and I argue that more modes indefinably blend the conscious and the unconscious, intention and imagination, as with this case. The state of Openness does not reach "babylike" spontaneity and intuition like the state of *wu* in Zhuang-zi's concept (Wu, 2005, pp. 105-106). This state has more kinesthetic reactions such as physical impulse, images and desire happening in intuitive movement than *wu*. However, this state is the beginning of being aware of this world just before a holistic state. Therefore, holding a childlike heart, not knowing the world too much and getting to know, that is, in-between the known and unknown, is a pathway to the fourth state toward a state of *wu*.

4.1.4 Transparency

[I flutter my fingers and toes. I lift my hand seemingly to touch or not to touch my head. I lift the other hand touching my head and move my elbow forward with an uncertain effort.

My hand makes a move unmindfully.]

I have a felt sense that my body has much more possibilities, a holistic experience at each moment. I feel free. It connects with the universe. I tell myself to be in an empty state. From nothing to something spontaneous and instantaneous is a "light."

[Still for a while, I suddenly hook my arm horizontally, wave the other arm up and down and step backwards with open legs like an ape.]

My movement is more agile and energetic than previous practices. Some movements happen so quickly. I pause for a second at times. I am not thinking or sensing then, but have "no-thing" in my mind. The space/gap between movements is natural and spontaneous.

[I put down my hand indirectly. I lift my leg twice as if I am not sure whether to move or not. I pause, but my hand seems to neither move nor stop moving, as if I have no control over my movement. My hands and knees flutter. I touch my neck, raise my hands, tilt my upper body and walk in a half circle. My hands shake and move randomly... I turn to the other side, sway my upper body for a second, then turn to the back with a leap and swing my hanging arms... Sometimes the movement looks ludicrous or naive. I slightly turn my upper body for a few times like shaking... I flap my body with loose arms. I take a few steps with my arm and leg extending (but not really stretching) in opposite directions. I tap my belly... I put my hands on the floor and tap my back. I do something unshaped and indescribable. I bend my knees outward and tap my thigh with the back of my loose hand. I shake my hand and

flip the other hand over it softly. The hand claps on the
other hand. My hands brush through my waist.]

*I sense different layers or tones of the in-between in my improvised
movement.*

5 July 2010

Borrowing the Daoist term “transparency”, this state means an inner state close to the holistic mode of being in terms of qi rather than a representation in movement. That is, it emphasises a process of being rather than a result. I have related the Daoist notion of transparency with a sense of being, where the boundary of the self is felt softened into the depth; this corresponds to Karczag’s idea of “sinking deep” into or “deeply sourced” from the self that has been discussed in Chapter 3.

In this state, my research question is how I am being in emergent movement in an in-between state. What does the Daoist concept of *wu* mean in emergent movement? In-between is a state of wholeness, togetherness and release rather than hesitation or restless, schizoid-like tension. It does not need thinking about what is on either extreme of the in-between but just staying in the in-between itself.



(See *Four states/Transparency* in the DVD)

Then, suddenly I understood in-between is not in-between itself anymore once I intend to do that. I should not think what it is but just be in it.

14 April 2010

Therefore, calmness and release with the attitude of *wu-wei* is the key to this state. Without a laid-back or easygoing attitude, the in-between will be like tuning a radio between two neighboring channels. Holding on in the in-between would be as difficult as balancing on the ridge of a mountain from which it is easy to fall into either side. I underwent a period of time hardly staying in an in-between state before becoming inspired by Daoism. I felt three states—two extremes and their togetherness—somehow highly fleeting during improvisation. However, after I applied Daoist philosophy to my movement, I have not been able to identify the three states, but instead I stay in an in-between state peacefully without worrying about “imbalance.”

If I can state it clearly, it is not in-between.

14 April 2010

Furthermore, the in-between is a state of heightened concentration rather than one of unconsciousness or carelessness. I experienced moments when I could not concentrate due to my messy brain, muscular pain or inner blockages. This state does not work when one lacks physical or mental sensitivity, which proves that it is a biospiritual state, a heightening integration of the bodymind. I found that the body and mind make each other free, but the process to attain this may be varied.³

The state of *wu* was not attained immediately during this practice. I underwent a long journey to get there. According to the Daoist way of embodiment as the transparent body with the porous self, I began this state by imagining myself with a transparent body and an expanded awareness of my surroundings. I also imagined breathing through the whole body, every pore of my skin, rather than through my nose or the bodily breathing of a particular body part.

Compared to imagining light through the body, the all-over breathing with skin created a sense of fullness rather than emptiness. My body felt transparent, leading to a sense of *qi*, a holistic experience with energy and power from within the body. Therefore “light” connected with breathing as if light were air going through my pores. I felt my body had many possibilities and was whole and free in each moment, which linked me to the universe.

However, this was not *wu-wei*; I still maintained spatial awareness, physical sensation and an expectation of showing energetic movement. There should be a deeper state than that. In the end, the approach has been simplified as a felt sense of being relaxed and calm without an expectation of imagining or sensing but open to all possibilities to

initiate a movement, which feels like a sense of spatiotemporal infinity.

In short, this approach is a synthesis of extracts from the previous three in-between states, that is, only from their features or senses rather than their methods. This is a full state of *wu*. There is nothing but _____ in my mind. The attitude of *wu-wei* makes my movement intuitive, spontaneous and unshaped so that it occasionally looks unfinished or trivial. Many subtle and indescribable movements emerge swiftly. Sometimes I have the sensation that my body is moving after the movement happens, and instantaneous movements give me no time to sense my body (Those movement phenomena have been probed in Chapter 3). This shows that the state of *wu* may make movement arise via an alternative route that sensation follows movement. However, it does not mean that the body becomes a numb material. Conversely, the surrounding information such as light, sound, passersby or a tension between viewing and being viewed are sensed more clearly in an in-between state.

The state of Transparency is not so ideal as the only standard of *wu* but has multiple layers of the in-between in reality. The in-between is intricate, since the level of concentration and awareness is changing. Sometimes physical impulse, desire, images of coming action, sensitivity as a child, kinesthesia of sensing the in-between, the subtle movement quality of calmness and a felt sense of being may emerge, even though most of the time they cannot be named or identified in an in-between state. There may be other things happening such as memory, emotions, sensation and feeling, even if they are not recognisable in the ambiguous state. For example, a memory of a Taiwanese folk dance popped up when I did a movement lifting my legs alternatively, which became meaningful for me in the moment. The discovery of these lived experiences and elements of in-between are precious for this research because they can only be found and analysed in the early stages of exploration. They become a whole and are more difficult to recognise in my emergent movement now since I have become “skillful” in

moving in in-between states after repeated practices.

Unlike the state of Openness, which depends on intuitive kinesthetic sensation, imagery and psychological stimulation, the state of Transparency is deeper and it brings a larger degree of spontaneity and freedom. In this state, movement always surprises me because I have no expectations. Moreover, *wu-wei* is an approach to the heart rather than the tangible or the material, so various forms can come from that without limitation, which makes the body formless. Any movement is acceptable.⁴ Even though movements may have a similarly subtle quality, from an outsider's perspective, I, as the insider, still have a felt sense of my movement changing and unpredictable in a *wu-wei* state. Each movement emerges as if it is new and has never been experienced before. The sense of generating something from "nothing" makes me feel great enjoyment, freedom and spontaneity.

I do hopping with my arms aside like horse-riding. Suddenly I feel happy to repeat the horse-like movement. I run in a circle as a child playing horse. The happiness is unprecedented, simply coming from doing this movement... I do the horse-like movement in a circle again, this time with a sincere smile... This simple and authentic happiness probably once happened in my childhood...

25 May 2010

Moreover, freedom comes from the sense of being able to freely "travel" in the in-between, a broad and complex state. In Daoism, the idea of "travel" indicates the process of transformation and a sense of liberation in the state of *wu*, which is the ultimate state in meditation. Daoist qigong master Lu-zu (2006) had a magic spell for the far journey in the Chinese ancient book, *The Principle of Taiyi Golden Flower* (pp. 165-189). He pointed out that heightening consciousness ("light") can allow one to "travel" freely between the third eye and the lower abdomen, and the inside and outside in the state of *wu*. This means a circulation of "light" up and down, and outside in and

inside out, permeating from the outer to the inner in both the body and spirit. In this condition, all things (*yin* and *yang*) cannot be identified in oneness but are coordinated harmonically and spontaneously. The spontaneity brings about the autonomy of the body and the self. Time seems eternal as well.

My felt experiencing in this movement practice correlates with the concept of “travel” from Daoist meditative practice. In the state of Transparency, the sense of freedom requires heightened consciousness with concentration on biospiritual, in-between states. I feel free and find movement interesting when I am in a holistic state. I suggest that a sense of freedom is a sign of a holistic state. This can serve as evidence of bodymind integration. The sense of liberation makes me want to keep moving. The spontaneous activation of *qi* in a *wu* state may also produce non-stop movement. However, this sense of freedom does not mean an achievement of a single final state. Since various in-between states are allowed to happen in the practice of Transparency, as mentioned previously, I realised that Daoist freedom means travelling among different states instead. This idea will be elaborated in Chapters 5 and 6.

In conclusion, Daoism’s concept of *wu* extends to a meaning of transparency in time and space, which fuses the past, present and future, and between the inside and outside, within and without. The transparency synthesises all things around me into a state of being with flowing meaning and energy in this movement practice. By “me,” I intend to stress a subjective experience and sense of autonomy. Through the fourth state, I have experienced and realised that Daoism is based on a self-centred cosmology. All things are coordinated through *qi* circulating between the self and the world.

4.2 Reflections of the in-between

The four states can be seen as a process toward *wu*. They became my warm-up steps to get into an in-between state. These states conclude that everything which can happen in any improvised movement, such as desire, images, intention, attention, impulse, awareness, sensation, perception and a felt sense, emerge in the *wu* state, too. Still, these things merge in a holistic way on various levels and create another perspective. Different portions of the composition present diverse degrees of the state of in-between.

These four facets also have diverse routes to movement. For example, the first state, In-between Space, works on a kinesthetic level by means of imagery; the second state, Calmness, lies somewhere between the self and kinesthesia, i.e. the inner disposition; the third state, Openness, shifts to intuition in terms of physical impulse, images and desire via the heart; and the fourth state, Transparency, is a felt sense of being in a full state of *wu*. Various levels of in-between lead to different degrees of spontaneity and freedom.

I found that the in-between states, particularly Openness and Transparency, which contains the Daoist intuitive experience, need to be practiced regularly so I can be involved immediately in these states. This echoes Na's suggestion (1994) that Daoist intuitive experience can be acquired through regular practice to dismiss distracting thoughts such as prejudices, and it is often "unwittingly obtained all of a sudden" in the practicing process (p. 13). The emergence of rapid intuitive responses in this movement practice is the result of great effort in the practice of qi.

Finally, I realised that the self is perceived as a felt sense rather than a subject being-in-the-world in the state of *wu*. This signifies that the Daoist and phenomenological experiences of the self are different holistic states. In terms of phenomenology, I may say, "I feel/sense/see/smell/hear..." In light of qi in Daoism, I

would say, "(I) ". The self is implicit and what is happening is unspeakable in the latter condition. This is a felt sense of the self. Phenomenological perceptions merge into the felt sense of the self as biospiritual oneness so they cannot be named or separated, even though they do exist.

Through a series of practices and explorations, three characteristics of in-between have been found:

(1) Changing/unchanged (infinity)

When in the state of Transparency, I always have a felt sense that my movement is going on forever as in the experience with meditation. The practice often lasts for up to thirty minutes before I am aware of my endurance of concentration or time limited for using a studio. There are two reasons: a felt sense of ever changing in movement, and a felt sense of stillness or infinity in time and space. In the state of Transparency, I have a felt sense that my movement comes from within my body and keeps transforming without manifesting itself in a world in which time and space are too extended to sense their passing. Also, the *wu-wei* attitude keeps movement modest, while shape, speed and the effort of the movement are subtly changing instead of uniform in this pattern. Thus, changing and the unchanged are related.

My movement reflects not only my felt sense toward the space but my psychological and biological conditions as a whole in that moment. When movement is generated spontaneously and is continuously changing, time feels eternal. The non-stop change of movement often makes it hard to find an end. In addition, the felt sense of infinity of space comes from expanding one's awareness of the inside and outside, covering the self and the world. However, I cannot divide time and space clearly but I have a sense of a spatiotemporal state—becoming in being and being in becoming.

(2) Complexity

The complexity of the in-between is implicit. Many things can emerge psychologically, physically and mindfully, but they may not be sensible or visible in a holistic moment. For example, I recognise the thing (sound, light, air and something intangible) influencing me after perceiving these things as a whole that I cannot identify in an in-between state in this practice. Sometimes I am tempted to be inspired by music from the next studio. Sometimes I sense more from the sound of the air conditioner. Sometimes I just stay myself with the sensation of air. These inspirations do not alternate but together influence me all the time, even if I am aware of a particular thing in a moment. I respond to the unrecognised information with my movement before identifying it. Besides, I may be aware of a movement similar to an earlier one. An expectation or self-judgment of “fully” being in the *wu-wei* state may cause me to struggle psychologically at times.

However, I do not feel confused since I am in a calm and holistic state that can manage the complexity easily. Even though some thinking, feeling and memories can still come into my mind after a certain movement has emerged, they just flash by. Movement is correlated with all the things I can perceive across the past, present and future. The complicated information is reshaped or reunited as minimalist movement and the complexity of the in-between presents in uncertainty and subtleties of movement.

(3) Fluctuation

There are infinite levels of in-between, and many possibilities to freely shift among them. I sense no contrasting states working alternatively or blending together, but instead certain extremes and their fleeting togetherness somehow. The four states developed in the previous discussion present varying degrees of the in-between, and my

in-between state possibly fluctuates between them. Therefore, different depths of meditative awareness are possible in the heart (Lu-zu, 2006, p. 233), while they may not be felt when I am involved in a deeper state. The unawareness of differences does not lead to their disappearance but reveals their similar nature as a whole.

4.3 Resonance between qigong practice and Daoist movement practice

<u>Qigong practice</u>	<u>Daoist movement practice</u>
	...
	<i>A sense in between stillness and motion</i>
	<i>I am still thinking.</i>
	<i>At this time, I am not aware of what I am doing</i>
	<i>and how I am moving.</i>
<i>It seems being there or not (若有似無).</i>	<i>I seem to be there; I seem not to be there.</i>
	<i>I find myself moving when the move just</i>
<i>When something (a movement, an image, a</i>	<i>happens.</i>
<i>sensation) just happens, then I am aware of it.</i>	<i>My movement reflects not only my felt sense of</i>
	...
	<i>the space but my psychological and biological</i>
<i>Between sensation and image</i>	<i>conditions at the moment.</i>
	<i>Biospiritual</i>
	<i>This is spatiotemporal.</i>
<i>Not project myself in space reflexively</i>	<i>This is biospiritual.</i>
<i>Not immerse myself in space</i>	
	<i>But in between the two</i>
	<i>Reaction</i>

24 April 2010

Similar senses of experience and understanding in qigong practice and this Daoist movement practice can be found in my diary. The two overlapped columns above are my

reflections after the qigong practice I learned and a movement practice using a felt sense of a qigong state. It is hard to tell which reflections are from qigong practice and which are from this movement practice if they are not titled. In this period, the idea of the two practices started to merge in aspects of the sensation of the inner body, the idea of something as nothing, the experience of after-movement awareness, a sense of in-between being or a biospiritual state, and the attitude of letting it go or *wu-wei*. The reflections of qigong practice and movement practice can be applied to one another, implying that the two practices are interlinked. This is because they share the same philosophy. The development of this movement practice is also partly based on contemporary somatic practices, which, as explained in Chapter 2, draw on principles similar to Chinese qigong, such as spontaneity, kinesthetic perception, and bodily awareness.

Even so, these two practices are still distinguishable. This movement practice focuses on movement, even though this is not the concern of the Chinese inner qigong practice that I learned. This qigong practice concentrates more on fostering the inner energy that can unite the bodymind through meditation than particular movement sequences. As a consequence, this qigong practice pursues an in-between state more mindfully and metaphysically than the movement practice of my research, so there is a subtlety of a biospiritual state in the qigong practice and the Daoist movement practice. More thoughts about movement can be found in this movement practice.

My experiences of qigong and this movement practice grew closer, and they finally converged in knowledge but diverged in form. Initially I borrowed elements of Daoist qigong practice, which made my movement similar to Tai Ji. The convergence and divergence occurred at a time when Daoism and my improvised movement reflected each other and their boundaries had started to blur, which was a chaotic period when I

could not find a point in my practice, but something was changing implicitly. The integration of Daoism and improvised movement, while they resonate and join, means my heart becomes something that is changing.

Since then, my new understanding of qigong philosophy has led my body to another form in my improvisations. This occurred because philosophy is more important than physical form in inner qigong practice and Daoism. Philosophy leads form. Therefore, rather than using the qigong method or its form of movement, I let the qigong philosophy lead me to an artistic and physical form in my movement, and a form is shaped through philosophy rather than transplanted from another form.

Finally, the bodymind is transformed like the alchemy of Daoism, a transforming process in the inner and outer worlds (Lu-zu, 2006, p. 360). *Wu-wei* has influenced not only my meditative sessions in qigong practice and this movement practice, but also the way I move and the way I think about my life. One of the results of this research has been that I am aware of a wider application of *wu-wei* in my daily life, as well as a greater connection to the heart.

¹ Once I only paid attention to one of the three positions in each state, but this method made me unable to find any point in movement, and I felt like I was simply moving with a particular body part. In the end I found that these positions are just sources of meditative awareness, which leads to different effects on movement.

² Another more tangible image can be imagining the wholeness of your bodymind as a soft fabric that can be shaped freely or made shapeless by a secret hand of yourself, rather than a rigid object held firmly in a hand.

³ My personal process is that the mind releases the body first since my training in Chinese qigong focuses on mindfulness. Whilst my mind remains open and neutral without indulging anything, my body is released from a particular state.

⁴ This resonates with Cage's idea that any sound can be music. Interestingly, our similar perspectives on this point in music and in movement both stem from the influence of Chinese thought (the *Yi Jing*, or *Book of Changes* in Cage's case).

Chapter 5 A continuous transformation of in-between states

This chapter investigates a continuous process of transforming consciousness through sequential emergent movements in order to take a deeper look into in-between states. The idea of continuous transformation came from a practice-as-research workshop I held in this stage. Through this process, more in-between states than the four states discussed in Chapter 4 were revealed, so much so that all of them can be connected as in a continuum. This chapter thus begins with reflections on and discussions of this workshop. It follows the procedure of a continuous transformation of in-between states established after the workshop. I analyse and interpret this practice of continuous transformation from a Daoist perspective and discuss a sense of freedom in this process.

In this practice of continuous transformation, movement, initially driven by an intentional response to sensation and images, eventually transforms into movement that emerges from a certain felt sense of being in the moment. Assuming intention is the focal cause of movement, this movement practice looks like ending the movement for no reason. The movement practice asks: what gives rise to movement, and how? In practice, while the intention behind movement is gradually reduced, “something” must replace intention in order to evoke movement. The “something” is a series of complex and implicit experiences that occur sequentially throughout the process. Several different stages take over movement in this process, and each one gradually transmutes into the next. Something growing and fading over the course of transmutation, or diverse ways of being, can be witnessed in movement. Until the end of the piece, a felt sense of being is too subtle to show the relationship between movement and its trigger. The motivation finally shifts from a cause-and-effect (one-to-one mapping) system to a holistic

(correlative mapping) system. This is not an abrupt change, but a continuous transformation with many layers unfolding within it.

This practice of sequential improvised movement focuses on exploring the idea of being unknown that comes from the ambiguity of Daoism as discussed in Chapter 3. The unknown is not absolutely without knowing but, like a gap or a blank space that this thesis proposes, it implies an ambiguous in-between. Indeed, the unknown and known interweave or contain each other in reality. Something that is known always contains infinite unknowns. Furthermore, the unknown is not necessarily insensible, and the known is not necessarily sensible.

In this practice, the unknown itself is an image that can trigger movement; moreover, it is a conscious sense of being in the moment and having an attitude open to the surroundings. It is a blurred, intangible and open-ended experience, as the characteristics of Dao are brought out through improvised movement, rather than being an object that has to be located inside or outside of the body. The unknown may be felt as a still state of being in an instant for me as a mover, while it is in fact changing quietly over the whole process of this practice.

The unknown image shifts from a cause of movement to the leader of movement, and finally weighs more in a felt experiencing of being along with the emergence of movement, which goes beyond a relationship between the object and subject. In brief, the unknown is a felt sense of existence or being in essence (inherently of the self) in improvised movement; it is also a felt state of Dao from a perspective of qi.

5.1 Sharing a practice: A deepening process

Before this sequence of improvised movement emerged, I held a practice-as-research workshop in February and March 2011. This workshop systematically explored the four states I have developed in Chapter 4 in order to allow me to investigate this practice more deeply. Additional states and exercises have been derived from the four original states, creating more than one way for each of the four original states to unfold. The four basic states may be repeated and experienced more deeply through different states of consciousness in separate sessions. Their boundaries have become blurred. Consequently, this practice no longer consists of four states; instead, more states have been developed that fall in-between and fill in the gaps.

Over five sessions, I shared the practice of in-between states I had gone through with a participant. She is a British undergraduate in dance and psychology and a qualified massage practitioner. We examined how she could approach both the physical and conceptual aspects through this practice. The participant tried my approaches for emergent movement and provided comments and reflections on how it worked for her.

The aim of this experience was not to transmit my way of movement to the other. Instead, seeing the participant going through a journey of exploring in-between states similar to what I experienced made me keep a distance from the practice so that I could re-experience it as a beginner, a state that Daoism aims to return to and corresponds to the idea of the unknown probed in this practice. This was necessary at this stage since it became harder to discover unknowns when I had been better “trained” in in-between states of emergent movement through my own numerous practice sessions. In this way, the structure and states for the workshop were shaped during the process and a tendency to release intention is disclosed on the road towards the state of *wu*.

In this process, the state with a childlike heart (the state of Openness) was broken down

into three aspects: the unknown, felt intuition, and openness. The childlike state with a specific quality of openness was problematic to carry out in this workshop. It was difficult to transfer a particular imagery of the self in my personal memory to another mover because people have had different experiences in childhood and memory may lead to an emotional reaction. I experienced detachment from a particular childlike image during the workshop and realised that a childlike heart should not be an image but an association or metaphor of a state near *wu-wei*. Instead, the sense of being childlike should be articulated with an experience of each action like the first contact with the world.

The idea of the unknown informed by Daoism is the core of the five sessions and it is explored at different levels of consciousness. Appendix 1 details the structure and approaches of this workshop:

(1) Attending to the body: Exploration of an unknown image

The aim is to have an unknown image in and around the body. In order to embody an unknown image, during the first session the mover is invited to draw her/his own figure on the paper, rubbing out the images of the parts where s/he has a felt sense of the unknown in the body, and moving with the kinaesthetic sensation of the unknown image in the body. An inner awareness of the unknown is enhanced through drawing and moving alternatively and repeatedly.

(2) Intention-led exploration of the in-between space of the body by means of the unknown image

The unknown image of the in-between is explored by an intention-led motivation that includes intention, image and sensation. This session aims at a kinaesthetic level through hands-on activities inspired by somatic practices such as the Skinner

Releasing Technique. For example, the mover senses an in-between space in the body with the assistance of the partner's hands on the related body parts. The awareness of inner space starts to soften intention and release the body.

(3) Subtle quality of inner unknown material: A shift to image-led movement

The unknown image is imagined as unknown material, materialising as part of the body in order to identify its subtle qualities. The individual quality of movement is allowed to develop on the basis of an accurate understanding of the concept and instructions in this practice. The unknown image can have different qualities for different movers. The mover can also apply diverse qualities of images to different body parts or states. The mover experiences the in-between of the mental and physical. With the help of kinaesthetic sensation, image takes over movement from intention in a very calm state.

(4) Reacting with unknowns: Flexibility, felt intuition, and openness

The body is "melted" through imagery of the unknown material scattering and collecting in the body. This image helps melt the regular shape of the body or the given physical form and rebuild a flexible and amorphous body that allows any movement to emerge by itself easily and unexpectedly. Then the body is open to the outer and inner worlds and it learns to react intuitively to perceived stimuli before they are recognised. A sense of the unknown is important for the intuitive emergence of movement in *wu*, an in-between state.

(5) A felt sense of unknown being: Return to the initiation of movement

Replacing the need for concrete imagery, the only thing required to give rise to movement is a felt sense of holistic and unknown being in the personal perceptual world, including the inner and the outer as a whole. The felt sense is like traces of

imagery. The movement can be reduced to pure emergence, like a return to the primal activation of movement.

This workshop explored the unknown, relaxation, calmness, holistic awareness, flexibility, openness, and felt intuition, which are essential to accessing the state of *wu*, according to Daoist thinking. Each session focused on a different degree of releasing intention.

In this workshop, I realised that individuals may experience the in-between in different ways. We had distinct ways, qualities, and energies of movement, and images, feelings, and thoughts of the unknown when exploring the same in-between state in this practice. We also had different thoughts about the in-between as a whole, perhaps due to our diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, when exploring the central line in the session of sensing in-between space in the body (see Appendix 1 for the contents of the exercise), she understood the idea as moving a pair of body parts in the same way as though they were one piece; otherwise, the pair becomes isolated. She tended to think that the in-between is fragmented, contrary to the idea of wholeness, so that she could hardly put the two things together in movement.¹ Yet based on the Daoist concept of a holistic state, I think a pair of body parts can still be felt as one when they move separately, since they are subtly connected by awareness. This is why many possibilities of movement may occur when the in-between space of body parts is soft and formless. This way of moving body parts is not isolation, which was how the participant seemed to interpret it.



(See *Sharing a practice* in the DVD)

Therefore, in this workshop, I questioned how to emphasise the distinction of this movement practice but keep our individuality. How much freedom or space between us is needed to unfold the difference and similarity between the two selves? During this workshop, our discussion about our different views on some concepts specific to Daoism helped me clarify those ideas and how they are embodied in this movement practice.

In this workshop, I consider the unknown itself as an image. Even though we cannot get at what it is, we can be aware of something unclear and then have a blurred image, which represents a felt sense of the unknown. Even though I can get some information from sensing or touching, there are still many things I do not know. I do not need to figure out what it is but leave questions open. The unknown is infinite. Deeper exploration extracts more unknowns.

However, it does not matter if the image of the unknown dissipates when it naturally shifts to a felt sense of unknown being during the process. A felt sense is enough to give

rise to movement. According to Daoism, there is no need to stick with images. When an image of the unknown is about to disappear from the body, I suggest letting it go.

In Daoism, the unknown image implies an image of qi as the fundamental element of the body. Corresponding to the sense of the unknown, qi is intangible and its form and felt sense are hard to ascertain. A mover may experience a qi-like kinaesthetic sense through the imagery. Assuming everyone bears qi inside, the felt sense or sensation raised from the image of the unknown might help a mover become aware of the qi inherent within her or his body.

However, whether qi is raised or not does not matter for this practice, because it is not intended to create a form of qigong-based movement, and it never means to apply any qigong method. Instead, my concern is how the concept of qi is embodied through the image of the unknown. The characteristics of qi inspired some images of the unknown in this workshop. For example, in Chinese medical theory, the melting body indicates a “flowing body” in which qi circulates through anatomical structures and organs (Lai, 2008, p. 121, own translation).

Since the body figure is shaken, the boundary between the inside and outside starts to dissolve, opening passages between the two sides as a porous membrane. This responds to the Chinese body concept that there is no division but flow between the external and internal (Lai, 2008, p. 120). My way of putting this idea into practice in the workshop was to avoid reminding the participant of the boundary between the inside and outside, even when it felt blurred. My instructions did not contain the dualistic terms “inside” and “outside” but instead used “the world” to mean the unity of both. The boundary was not mentioned in the instructions in the hope that it would fade.

I suggest that changing the contents without remembering the skin or the boundary of the body can help a mover forget the physical frame of the body so that formless movement may be generated. Meanwhile, a holistic sense can be developed. The mover may become aware of the inner and outer together as one world instead of attempting to sense the inside and outside separately at the same time. Then the mover can open to the holistic world and let the image of unknown material react to anything perceived as reaction through qi. Eventually the sense of the unknown can bring about a felt experiencing of being like qi, which enables the mover to be involved with the world in the implicit and subtle way of intuitive resonance and reaction (Lai, 2008, p. 74).

I gained new understanding and findings of Daoist notions in movement from this workshop, particularly in terms of intuition and *wu-wei*. I also reflected on the states of my self that developed in the four in-between states by observing the participant's movements. In the exercise of felt intuition, we tested our first reaction to the first thing that appeared before our eyes after opening them. I found my first movement was often reaching my hand toward an object, which is similar to the way babies may react when they perceive something they do not know. I understand felt intuition as an immediate and direct reaction that emerges before recognising anything, rather than a reaction that may come later from learned skills or habits. In this mode, my reaction always happened in a second after I opened my eyes to perceive an object.

This session corresponds to Zhuang-zi's Daoist theory of intuition as a return to a "baby-like" state. The fact that similar reactions happened to me shows that Daoist intuition is concerned with a prompt response before the known is raised in the mind. Comparatively, the participant spent more time in a reaction that could be associated with a certain symbolic meaning of the object she perceived. I understand my rapid intuitive reaction comes from my qigong training, which demonstrates the Daoist idea

that *wu-wei* can be fostered by regular meditative practices as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

Moreover, different levels of intuition were observed in the participant's reactions during this exercise. Chapter 4 suggests the diversity of intuition. I found that a level of intuition emerged that depended on how much the participant's determination and judgment influenced her reaction. This made me rethink whether I was pursuing a "perfect" mode of intuition for *wu-wei* as addressed in Daoism. Therefore, I realised more possibilities between felt intuition and intention-led intuition—the extreme modes proposed in Chapter 4—than the states of Openness and Transparency that I developed before the workshop. Movement may come from partial recognition so that some parts are identified, while others are not. Such felt intuition actually occurs in an in-between state.

I also reflected on my state of being unknown. The last exercise of exploring the unknown as a felt sense of being allows a sequence of movement to emerge as if from nothing, like a series of sparkles. During this exercise, I observed that the participant's movement became traceless and relaxed, like an unwitting or accidental motion, after she had a Daoist experience of felt intuition in the previous session. What was happening appeared still unknown to her as a mover. Yet through observation, I found the participant, a beginner of this Daoist movement practice, reacted to a felt sense of unknown being with less shaped movement than my expectation of this exercise. I realised that as an experienced mover of this practice, I had more space to learn being unknown, or *wu-wei*. This reflection inspired my next step in this research, which will be discussed in the next section.

The relationship between the two selves changed throughout the workshop, which

informs this research with a Daoist mode of the self emerging through an exploration of the inner and outer. When we worked together the first time, I was aware of our similarities more than our differences. In the second session, I started to be conscious of some differences between the participant and me, the self and the other, which I did not sense as clearly in the first session.

Our distance diminished when we were moving together in the third session in a duet with an image of unknown inner material subtly shifting in the body in calmness. We did not intend to actively interact with each other, but we did our solo practices so close together that we nearly touched each other. When contact happened, we just let it be. The relationship between us was very subtle, as if an implicit energy articulated our bodies. This experience is different from Contact Improvisation even if the dance is done through light contact. We were still aware of each other when our bodies were apart. Sometimes I felt her dynamics drawing me along as if her unknown material flowed and penetrated my body.

In the last session, I felt the distance between us was larger again, but connected somehow. When we practiced an in-between state with a felt sense of being together, we moved mostly alone like two independent selves, yet I could have a felt sense of an implicit connection with the participant. I was aware that our movements were related somehow. This unintended movement was not like copying or imitating her movement but something correspondent with her in a very subtle mode.

The variation of our relationship demonstrates that different states of in-between draw my consciousness in and out to diverse degrees (see the next section) and synchronise. This implies that the distance or relationship between the self and the other correlates to that within oneself. This manifests how the inner and outer, or the self and the world

or other selves, are articulated by subtle energy in light of qi.

Moreover, the footage of our solo practice together shows an implicit connection between the participant and me; it also demonstrates a certain synchronisation in the timing or shaping of movement and energy. We probably were unconscious of this subtle energy between us at the time. This may mean the self is naturally and implicitly articulated with the surroundings when qi operates. Chapter 6 will explore the articulation of energy between selves in a duet and how this reflects my self's states and informs my understanding of Daoism.

To sum up, there are three things to “release” in the workshop. The intention to respond to the kinaesthetic sensation of imagery with movement begins to soften when a mover is aware of in-between space in the body. After going through a period when the mind and sensation determine movement, the intention-led motivation is reduced, and the unknown image itself starts to lead movement; this feels like a harmonic combination, or the holistically in-between of the mental and physical. At the time, the mover can still be conscious of image and sensation, but movement no longer responds to a stimulus, whether mental decision or sensation or a chaotic blend of both. Movement starts to emerge by means of imagery. That is to say, there is no reception-and-response relationship, and an interim stage appears in which intention gives way to image and sensation; however, a medium or image for movement is needed. The image-led motivation is more passive in terms of intention, while this way is more active in terms of movement itself. The next thing to break down is the learned skills and physical frame through the state of the melting body. The mover begins to feel free physically, and therefore have a sense of more possibilities in movement after this stage. Finally, the image of the unknown becomes blank. Without image as a medium, movement seems to emerge by itself from a felt sense of being, which can be seen as traces of image. The

image of the unknown changes from a vivid picture in the mind or body into an abstract felt sense of existence.

The image of the unknown is gradually abstracted in the process. A felt sense of the absence of triggers or a lack of a means to direct movement reveals a gap that does not make sense or is unknown to the world based on the continuity of logical thinking. The gap is the unknown itself; the gap is a felt image or a trace of an image. The relationship of cause and effect does not exist because the lag time between stimuli and responses of movement shrinks to zero. Therefore, the image of the unknown within consciousness and sensation is gradually taken away or released through a series of states that ends with only a felt sense of the unknown (see Figure 1).

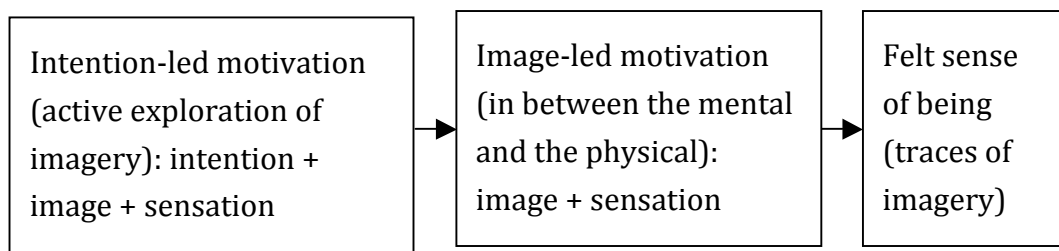


Figure 1 The process of releasing intention in the workshop

It should be noted that although this process proceeds from intention-led motivation to a felt sense of being, it does not mean intention completely disappears at the end. There is indeed an implicit intended tendency to undertake particular procedures and reach a felt sense of being or *wu-wei* as an end throughout the process. By the same token, a felt sense of being is always already a part of intention-led motivation, as Figure 1 shows.

5.2 A process of becoming *wu-wei* in movement

The process of releasing the intention that came into being through the workshop gave

me a sense of continuous transformation. After the workshop, I worked on my own and tried to link the states done in the five sessions into a sequence of improvisational movements. Considering the smoothness of the series of transformation in this sequence, a handful of exercises that were contrived to increase some preliminary ideas for the workshop, were not included.

I roughly remembered the structure of the workshop but I did not mean to do the states in order. I just began with the intention-led state of exploring the unknown image in the body and I felt how it would go next. Then I shifted to the state that came across my mind from my memory of the workshop. As a result, the transformation of releasing intention was exposed more clearly and became visible by sequentially doing the main states in the five-session workshop. More detailed processes were also located and clarified so as to shift between states as seamlessly as possible. My procedure for releasing intention is:

I sense an unknown image in my body by means of moving.

I sometimes explore an unknown relationship between my body and surroundings, such as the floor, through unknown images.

I am aware of the inner or outer space between my symmetrical or asymmetrical body parts.

I respond to the sensation of the unknown image in the in-between space with movement.

I imagine an unknown image implicitly articulating body parts.

My intention to the in-between space becomes soft.

I perceive the quality of the implicit articulation in the in-between space.

I am aware of how the quality of this image changes

(1) Intention-led exploration of unknown image in or around the body

(2) Awareness of in-between space

(3) Shifting to image-led movement

the body.

I can sense mental motivation and physical motivation
alternatively in a certain period.

I am aware of the subtleties of the unknown material
and its shift on a very deep and subtle scale, so the
image feels like it is shaped by the body itself.

I try to let the image lead movement.

I imagine the unknown material gathering and
dispersing to shape my body.

I imagine my body gradually full of unknown material
as if it were flesh or the only actual substance of my
body.

My awareness expands to my whole body.

I imagine the unknown material shaping the body as
well as space.

My awareness expands to the space around my body.

The unknown material keeps leading my movement.

I try to make a move earlier than its awareness.

The unknown material feels able to shift in the
“world,” the unity of inside and outside, peacefully
and freely by itself.

Let unknown material react to something perceived in
the world and cooperate with the world
harmonically.

I react to the world before recognising it.

I allow every reaction to happen.

I have a felt sense of the unknown to be here in the
moment.

Let any movement emerge with a sense of unknown
being.

(4) Subtle quality of inner
unknown material

(5) The melting body as
unknown material being
in the “world”

(6) Reaction to unknown
intuitively and openly

(7) A felt sense of unknown
being

I need to calm down so that intuitive movement does not happen so frequently.

Every movement feels as if it emerges for the first time.

The initial emergence of each single movement feels like a return to the first pulse of movement.

(8) Emergence of movement

During this improvised sequence of continuous transformation, my state shifts when I am aware of a change spontaneously emerging from the inner, along with an implicit tendency of qi to *wu-wei* in movement, and I just follow up. In some moments, the process proceeds slowly and deeply inward because some shifts are too subtle to be named. Besides, I can sense some tiny gaps in this sequence of improvised movements, or going to the next state too quickly as if something has been skipped over. Even though states do not really shift continuously, I can still experience a felt sense of continuous transformation because of the ambiguous sense of qi-energy as discussed in Chapter 3.

Since this practice focuses on exploration of the unknown, the procedure listed above is not the only way to go through it. There is always the potential to divide this transformation into more detailed states. To keep exploring the unknown that is constantly changing, I realised a childlike heart has to be held throughout the process rather than just in some states as I thought during the workshop. I am not involved in a state as a task to complete but rather to allow some “space” of consciousness for the next state leaking or permeating through its boundary. Thus, each state within this transforming process is in-between, such that it may include some qualities of other states, as I have pointed out in my discussion over the four states in Chapter 4.

This transformation signifies a journey to *wu* in movement while learning *wu-wei*. In Daoism, this idea indicates a course toward the essence of the self by means of a meditative practice. *Wu-wei* may be parallel to “letting go,” the notion that is used in

Contact Improvisation or some release techniques and somatic practices. However, this does not mean letting one state go and becoming another, based on dualism, but rather a dynamic state of being in-between. *Wu-wei* is more like unfolding one's own hand and letting the thing in the hand present itself, or allowing something to emerge from it, rather than grabbing, holding or throwing it away. Intention is not dumped, but released to let something implicit and subtle emerge. Therefore, I sense my intention, image, sensation, and a sense of being all exist throughout the sequential transformation of the in-between, but one of them stands out and leads the movement during each state.

As the intention of movement is reduced, the movement behind the effort is inclined to be lighter, unfinished, and unpolished, which means this improvisational sequence makes movement "degenerate" into a formless state. This signifies a process of becoming a formless body. However, this does not mean that a mover will become distracted or unconscious; instead she or he will experience a heightened awareness that is powerful enough to expand inward and outward.

Within the general tendency toward less intention, there are subtleties that occur in this improvised sequence. In fact, meditative awareness goes inward and outward several times in diverse degrees during this improvisational sequence, illustrated by the various depths of grey colour in the background of the eight items (see above). From step 1 to 4, the kinaesthetic sensation goes deeper; awareness expands, including both the outside and inside as a world from step 5 to 6; and steps 7 and 8 bring the self a little inward, from an utterly open state to a sense of being in the world, with a purified emergence of movement. The differences of awareness between inward and outward can be subtle.

The shifts of meditative awareness can be thought of as different states of consciousness and being. Lai (2008) said that modes of being change along with diverse levels of

consciousness (p. 52). According to Daoism, in this practice, the transformation from an intention into images and a felt sense of being means changing levels of consciousness to move in diverse modes of being. However, the felt sense of being and calmness that occur in the later transformation in this practice are a heightened in-between state close to, but not the same as, a state of extreme calmness or emptiness in meditations.

I would interpret this practice as a transformation of different qi-states. Qi as a single integrator or organiser of dual elements such as *yin* and *yang*, or as the in-between itself, can trace subtle changes or flowing states. Therefore, in my sequential transformation in movement, big changes as a result of intention, an image and a felt sense of being, or small changes of meditative awareness flowing inward and outward can be understood as inner energy-changing as varied ways of being.

Therefore, being and consciousness are equated with an energy field. Lai suggests that consciousness can be seen as “an inner energy arc” in relation with the world (Lai, 2008, p. 131, own translation). This view may make the investigated factors simpler and open up another possibility. As representations of qi, all phenomena in psychological, perceptual, spiritual layers, etc., can be reduced to a united experience of being, based on energy. However, this does not mean qi oversimplifies the meditative experience. I am aware that, in the process of transformation, consciousness levels are complex and ambiguous. It is hard to clarify how consciousness and unconsciousness work together, because it is impossible to identify the end or the beginning from within their in-between. Yuasa (1993) suggests an Asian medical perspective in which “the body takes emotions as the flow of qi” (p. 111). Certain emotions occasionally exist in my states of being in this movement practice. However, I sense my emotions reducing and merging into a subtle inner energy up and down since calmness is the key to my practice. With the aid of Daoist philosophy and the conception of qi-energy, this

improvisational sequence shows its potential for going further to another state beyond sensory perceptions and vivid imagery, in which current somatic and improvisational practices are usually involved.

Based on the Daoist conception of qi, since modes of being or consciousness flow continuously, the status of the self changes in this sequence of improvisational movement as it goes through a process from intention of movement to a sense of being. A sense of the self emerges from how I feel myself at the moment. A state of the self fluctuates and flows with changeable experiences.

In the beginning, I can have a sense of myself from my kinaesthetic sensation and intention of movement, which can be clearly sensed and is strongly based on my physical body. The sense of my self becomes blurred around the time when the leading motivation or mode of being changes from intention to image and from image to a felt sense of being, yet it is hard to conclude exactly when it makes a shift. There is also a confusing period of the self when the physical and mental give rise to movement before they are blended into a single image of the in-between to lead movement. In the end, my movement changes when a certain meaning is about to emerge from a movement or gesture and be recognised by myself during this movement practice. I may be aware of some meaning that almost forms after the movement is gone or changed.

Different Daoist views of the self would influence the way I look at the changes I experience during this process of transformation. For instance, according to Lai (2008), the self as the subject of human consciousness built from the body, recognition, psyche, and consciousness, is regarded as easily confined or influenced by social environments and so should be detached (p. 99). As a result, he argues that in Daoism, there is no "subjective self" but the "true self," an in-between state before the self can be named (p.

100). In other words, whether the self exists or not cannot be decided in the moment. The nature of the self is uncertain.

Another Daoist researcher, Ou (2010), argues that the self as object is “deconstructed,” while the “super-self” as something beyond the self is “constructed” (p. 265, own translation). The “super-self” is not the subject but a being that unites the being as a whole, which is Daoist “non-subjectivity” (p. 106, own translation). All things are nameless, as if they had no subjectivity; so being itself is particularly felt (p. 163). This does not mean things really have no agency or subjectivity but, to the contrary, that they gain autonomy to be themselves in a specific way from the transcendent self.

If viewing my self from Lai’s and Ou’s perspectives during the continuous transformation, I would finally feel my “subjective self” blanking out exactly when movement emerges intuitively from a felt sense of being, because the movement appears before my recognition. I would forget the existence of the body or body image, rather than being itself. A sense of being was enhanced while I sensed my subjective self disappearing. When I had a sense that my subjective self had disappeared, I might be aware of my being here and now and movement would seem to emerge by itself. In this case, intention and being my self diverge at the end. This is because I feel my awareness of the subjective self has shifted or gone, while in reality I still see things through an aspect of the subjective self.

I agree with both Lai’s and Ou’s opinions that the self is not completely dismissed, but another “something” ambiguous and much closer to being itself emerges; however, I argue that there is not another “something” that arises when the subjective self is released. No matter whether this “something” is titled “true self” or “super-self,” the consistently existing self is the original idea of Daoism.² The self has always been there

since it can be sensed from the body, recognition, psyche, and consciousness. It is impossible for it to disappear in reality.

In this movement practice, I suggest the self is a felt sense of being now and here. The self is related to felt experiencing about “I” at the moment. Different from meditation, I am not sure whether the felt self in the end of my improvised sequence is “true,” transcendent or essential. I can inherently sense my self, and this felt sense comes from the fact that my movement emerges intuitively and spontaneously from my self. Informed by the Daoist thought about qi varying with relationships of *yin* and *yang*, I regard the self as a holistic entity capable of being tuned with various factors such as sensation, determination, a felt sense, etc., that can be experienced in the moment. Consequently, like qi-energy gathering and dispersing, the self may have a substantial felt sense when each factor is felt strongly; it may also have an absent felt sense when all factors are detached.³



I am deep in the body, around the organs probably.

I am within an inner space where I don't know.

I have no bones but muscles thickly and succulently filling in me.

I am sticky, fuzzy, light and soft.

A space within me.

Relaxed.

I articulate the body parts beside me gently and subtly like silk.

But sometimes I am slightly chaotic and ambiguous, not sure how to move.

I find the subtle dynamics within me changing the body very slowly and subtly.

I am very calm.

I become the material throughout the body.

I am of the body.

I seem to move by myself.

As I change, the body shape changes.

I am flowing in various densities and changing fluently like plasma.

Suddenly, the inside and outside both open up to me.

I am now dwelling in a big world, standing on the ridge of the inner and outer.

I react to someone whom I am sensing yet don't know in this big world.

I am moving by myself.

I feel free.

Here and now, I am.

A movement emerges.

From me.

I am the unknown.

(See *Continuous transformation* in the DVD)

The transforming states of the self that I experienced in this improvisational sequence have been presented in the form of poetic words like the voyages written from the first person in the name of “the unknown” instead of the subjective self (see the above text). I replace the things that are unknown to me in the text with “I”. This “I” is also myself but becomes ambiguous and unknown. The mode of “I” can be found shifting in the text, ranging from something unknown in the body to something in-between, an inner unknown material, and a felt sense of being or the self. Therefore, the image of “I” is transforming with its various modes as if a metamorphic creature is personified. This strategy of personification is not only for creative writing—it is also a way of looking at the self.

The poetic writing becomes the score of this improvisational sequence. I read those poetic words of “I” first before doing the sequence. When starting to move, I recollect and read the poetic voyages silently in my heart, so I have a sense of being myself as the unknown instead of the subject. However, rather than all of the lines of the voyages, I only remember the poetic sense of “I” during this sequence. I do not think about how the story goes on but I follow a felt sense of how the story goes. Then, I just let the movement happen on and on.

The procedure goes more smoothly when I am not aware much of what I am going to do next, but how I am experiencing the state that I am in—being. I have a felt sense of being in different states. Rather than involving an illusion of my self as the unknown, the transformation of the image of the unknown becomes embodied. The changing imagery of the unknown gradually grows into my whole self from within. This time I am really the unknown and go through the journey written in its voyages as if I was telling my story through my body.

In the text and my movement sequence, I am the unknown self that is changing. When my self, time, and space feel united as one, I am here and now. The unknown and I are close in a felt sense throughout the transformation. I am formless and I vary ceaselessly, along with flowing senses of being or states of consciousness. Consequently, I do not have the experience that my body is absent and separate from a sense of being, since my self is united with all of the felt states of being. I always have a felt sense that my self is there, even though it is changing all the time. In other words, the self is always transforming to be itself, since its nature is always changing. If my view changes with my self, no matter how the self changes, movement comes from me. In terms of “I” as the unknown and changing self, movement happens because I move. This means the way we think of our own bodies presents in movement, which reveals different states of consciousness, being, or the self.

The unknown’s voyages represent not only the process of a single practice but the whole journey of this practice as research, which has moved from concrete vivid sensation and concrete images toward a felt sense of being. The “weight” of feeling becomes lighter. Nevertheless, rather than valuing this as an achievement on a spiritual level, this practice regards change and all points in the transformation equally. Each subtle shift in this practice as research, such as the way to move, movement quality, energy and creative material, reflects my view about the self and it means my self has changed implicitly.

5.3 A felt sense of freedom during transformation

This practice of continuous transformation may be thought of as an alchemical process that can liberate from the subjective self that which interferes with the state of *wu* in Lai’s and Ou’s Daoist theories. However, I argue that the desire to escape from a state that is felt as binding in terms of the subjective self is not really freedom but falls into

another limitation of the self, and another cycle may come into being. Once desiring to hold or be free from a particular state, the opposite will come, which is the principle of dualism. The freedom caused by escaping from restrictions also has this tendency. Desire for liberation signifies the existence of its opposite; that is, relative freedom within a frame of dualism.

This idea is supported by scholar Gary Peters' (2009) view on the freedom of improvisation in terms of critical theory. Peters points out that today's dominant concept of freedom based on emancipation in improvisation is arguable. Freedom in improvisation neither focuses on a singular person's will to act or attempt to mark, called "positive freedom" ("freedom-to"), nor liberates collective people from restrictions or conventions, called "negative freedom" ("freedom-from"), but includes both (pp. 22-23). Peters calls this dualistic coexistence of the two modes of freedom "irony," which is a characteristic of improvisation (p. 23).⁴ Peters' idea of "irony" can be understood as an in-between to some extent, but it is different from the Daoist view in my thesis that sees the in-between as a whole. This signifies that freedom inheres in an in-between state.

Peters (2009) argues that escaping from confinements to improvisation "has liberated freedom from its own imperfection" (p. 23), which means it breaks the ironic nature of improvisation. In his view, freedom is "always already there cognitively" (p. 43), so he suggests improvisation is not "the given substance" that represents freedom, but a "search for it [freedom] in the here and now of the work's becoming" (p. 72); "to find freedom is not to be free" (p. 73). In other words, when freedom is something to be pursued, such as the aim of improvisation to free the self, it is not freedom any more. Though Peters' argument is based on the belief that improvisation is a compositional means of performance, which differs from my study, this idea resonates with my notion

of the changing self, which is deemed freedom in this Daoist movement practice because “search” implies a dynamic or a sense of the unknown. This also echoes the Daoist idea of “travelling”, effortlessly shifting among diverse in-between states, in *The Principle of Taiyi Golden Flower*, as discussed in Chapter 4. A sense of liberation cannot be sustained and will bring a sense of confinement if the self remains attached to this ultimate state.

Therefore, a sense of liberating the self from bindings is not the intention of this practice of continuous transformation. Instead, if I am at ease any time and am aware of the changeability of the self, I would have a felt sense of embracing a big world all the time and I would not worry about losing or changing what I have at the moment because I am spontaneously changing. While improvisational movement follows a structured procedure in this transformation, I can still take my time to shift into the next in-between state when it spontaneously emerges along with the pace of my inner energy, qi. I am free to be myself, which changes in any condition; this is freedom for me in this movement practice, instead of holding the self in an ultimate state that can set me free.

Inspired by Peters’ theory, I address freedom in this practice as change itself, practicing the self in the moment rather than after a movement is done or a process is completed. That is to say, freedom is in the process of changing or during the moment of emergence. I am comfortable with the self changing with modes of being; therefore I do not need to take extra action in the moment, which is *wu-wei*—the self is changing so no more action is needed for transforming. Therefore, every state or moment of change is true to freedom. The freedom is in the search of the unknown during the transformation process rather than only in the final state of this practice, *wu*. This sense of freedom can be felt in the ease, relaxation, or “gap” within each state and between states that is demonstrated in the poetic words in the name of the unknown and the footage in the

DVD. The felt sense of freedom in a process of search is minute and sustained, like the stream of a felt sense of qi in this practice of continuous transformation.

¹ The participant's way of thinking may reflect her cultural background. Ames and Hall (1998) indicate that "In late modern culture, to be a self is to be incoherent or narrow; moreover, to have a self in these times is to recognise that our incompleteness, or our incoherent forms of self-articulation and expression, leads to a sense of fragmentation, manyness, and internal contradiction... In this sort of interpretation, the paradigm of self-understanding has shifted from an ego-based, substance view, to that of the person as process" (pp. 14-15). In other words, in postmodern theory, an in-between state is caused by the fragmented self that is multiple and changing in certain contexts, while Daoism regards the multiplicity, the in-between, and the change process of the self as a holistic state or unity.

² This view echoes Zen Buddhism scholar Jeff Shore's (2003) argument that the "true self" or "original self" is the "formless self" rather than "no-self" because "the original self is never totally absent" (pp. 34-35, 38). Zen is Japanese Buddhism influenced by Zhuang-zi's Daoist thinking, so the two philosophical systems correspond in some respects. Some Buddhist studies also make arguments based on the subjective self, similar to Daoist research. For example, Shore (2003) poses the "unbearable self" and states, "*Dukka* can be described as the universal and constant discontent or *dis-ease* caused by a blind desire or craving to have or to be something... In a word, the entire complex of self-world is *dukkha*. And it is truly *unbearable*..." (p. 32).

³ In this idea, there can be found a certain echo of a Buddhist thought of "I", "The I of a human being is a composite of various elements. It's only temporarily formed into one thing" (Takakura cited in Kawai, 2003, p. 135). According to Hua-yen philosophy, a system of Buddhist thinking, a thing is constituted by many elements and each of them is divided into the "powerful" and the "powerless" (Kawai, 2003, p. 145). When a sub-element is changed it impacts upon the whole, namely the thing. That is, the thing changes when the combination varies.

⁴ Peters (2009) proposes that the coexistence of dualistic elements can be found in improvisation as "ambivalence of improvisation itself" (p. 23). He calls this "irony," which can uncover the ontology and depth of improvisation (pp. 69). This is the complexity of improvisation—always mixing unharmonious elements such as production and reproduction, positive and negative freedom, forgetting and remembering, spontaneity and receptivity, reception and production, singularity and universality, construction and destruction, competition and harmony, origination and becoming, and concealment and revelation, which have been discussed in Peters' study (pp. 35, 37, 39, 48, 51, 62, 69). Therefore, those ruptured elements are not exactly opposite but make some ambiguous space in improvisation.

Chapter 6 A process of practicing the self in movement

This chapter probes the changing self in a Daoist movement practice. In the practice of the continuous transformation that was discussed in Chapter 5, the end of the improvised sequence seems to be a return to the moment when movement and awareness of “who I am” emerges, and the last line of the voyage to the unknown implies another start of a journey. The end is another beginning. This means the variation of the self has no end but keeps going. Although the course of awareness of the self can be regarded as a cycle, understanding the self is never the same and never stops, since the self has no particular form. The idea of returning to a starting point and opening another journey inspires me to proceed towards a formless mode of improvised movement as the end of my research.

In this chapter, I explore how moving in an “open” improvisational form can be a process of practicing the self, like meditation. The boundary of the self is explored through a creative process of solo practices. The meaning of *de* is located through a practice of the self unfolded in the form of a duet.

6.1 The changing self

Based on Daoism and Chinese qi theory, I argue that the self can exist as a felt sense of change in improvisational movement. Daoism suggests a dynamic and peaceful mode of interrelationship in which the changing self can take an easy attitude, *wu-wei*, to articulate the surroundings or the people encompassing us as a whole, a world of qi. Thus the self is not fixed but can be in any state it needs. It changes along with different

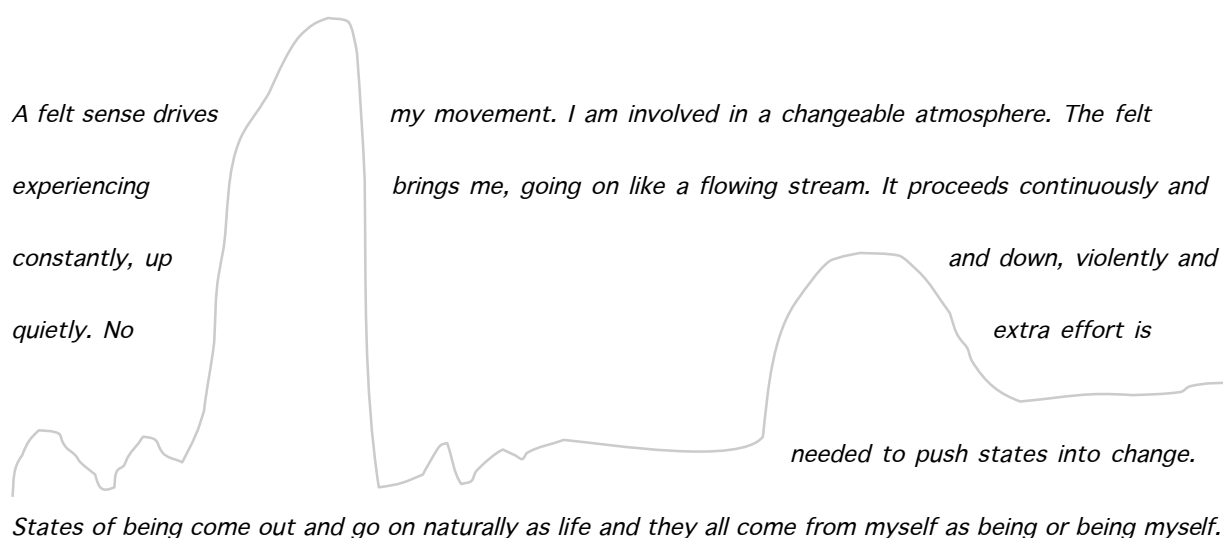
states of consciousness or a felt sense of being in every moment since consciousness is flowing. Like the spectrum of light, whose intensity varies with its frequency, a sense of the self or being can change with levels of consciousness in the subtleties of a continuum. As addressed in Chapter 5, the self composed of various states, combinations of *yin* and *yang*, or an assemblage and dispersion of qi-energy, is a tunable and instantaneously felt sense of being. All states of the self are regarded equally as elements of the continuum, including extremes of the spectrum, if there is a boundary. All states of the self feel true and original. I feel real in every second if I realise that my self and my surroundings can change all the time.

My view of the self takes a different attitude from present Daoist studies that stand for and against specific states of the self, such as the subjective self and “true” self in Lai’s and Ou’s theories that are discussed in Chapter 5. In their works these scholars discuss the ways in which society constricts the “true” self, the forgetfulness of the subjective self, and non-attachment to this subjective self. The transformation of the self in Daoism is regarded as a process of being away from a confined consciousness and turning to the “nature” or “essence” of the self. Rather than focusing on the contrast between extreme states, my research concerns the transformation itself more than the result of the change. I have a felt sense of my self from the in-between more than its confinement.¹

Therefore, the final practice of my study focuses on a movement form that moves the focus away from structure and is open to a wide spectrum of the self or consciousness, from intentional movement to felt emergence, as a band of light that can happen improvisationally. The key to this is how to allow the self to emerge in various states instead of intentionally changing it.

When a movement emerges, I suddenly understand its coming and say, “yes” with my heart.

The only way to follow the score is to listen to every subtle change of the self, that is, an implicit, qi-like disposition of the self or consciousness that flows all the time, and letting it emerge intuitively and spontaneously to give rise to movement. Different states of consciousness emerge, go on, and disappear in their own right. I do not need to keep in mind the diverse modes of consciousness of being. I can have a felt sense of being my self in the moment.



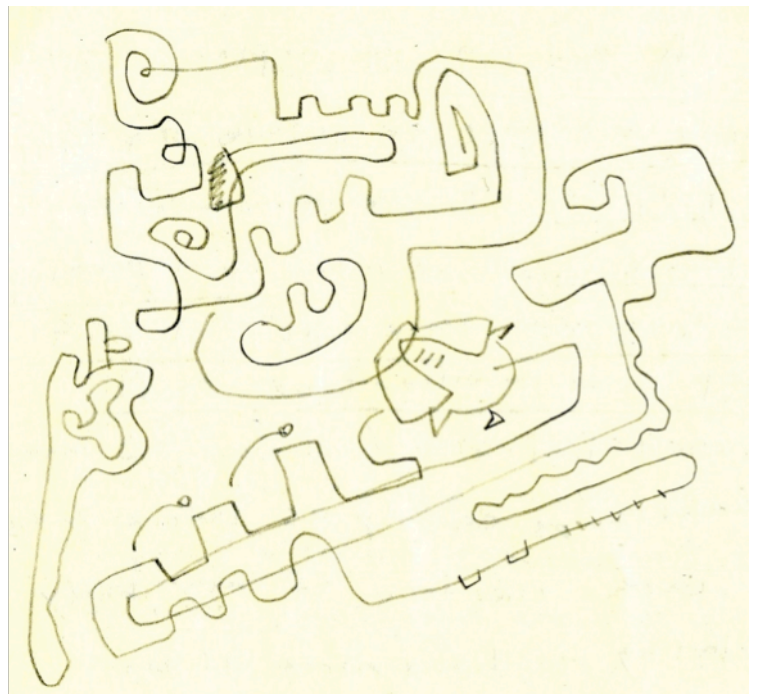
1 June 2012

The “line” of consciousness is like a doodle. Every point is an end of the previous phenomenon and a beginning of the following current. I sense where the “current” of my self goes so there is a sense of continuity between the present self and the coming self, which will become the last self and the present self, respectively, in seconds. That does not mean adjacent states of the self are continuous, but that they can take a big jump. For example, I may move subtly along with implicit changes that arise in my body as if my inner material were flowing by itself. This may be followed seamlessly by an intention to move that emerges from the kinesthetic sensation of an inner impulse. As addressed in Chapter 5, the different levels of consciousness come from the changing qi, implying a shift of states of self. Continuity and discontinuity coexist in this movement

practice. A similar idea is addressed in my argument in Chapter 2 that from a Daoist perspective; a perpetual practice contains an instant emergence at every point of an improvisational moment. A mover may be aware of a swift change of the self when becoming calm and relaxed. This means two things: first, the mover becomes more sensitive to subtleties of the self; second, Daosim says that change is a normal mode of the self while the unchanged implies an accustomed way of being, a desire to hold or not being able to be fully *wu-wei*.

This curved line visualises the “current of my self,” which is associated with the doodles

I created during my research process. Those doodles are drawn as in this “open” improvisational form of movement, indicating the flow of the changing self. The doodles and “open” improvisational movements illustrate the same thing—emergence—in two forms.



25 March 2010

Following the principle of Dao, various states of consciousness happen in a mode of self-emergence during this movement practice. This means that those states do not come about purposefully but emerge by themselves, even if they appear with an intention to move, as argued in Chapter 4. Eventually, elements that can visibly transfer movement or be expressed, such as dynamics, timing, shape, speed, efforts, energy, feelings, and emotions are all aroused by diverse states of consciousness in virtue of qi

as the primary energy of the body. This idea provides a way to move from the inside out, corresponding to the Chinese concept of embodiment. Since the changing self indicates a change from the inside out, this practice is not intended for a variety of movement shapes but an awareness of the changing consciousness or self, thereby giving rise to movement. An inner energy from consciousness shapes the body to produce movement more than an attempt to manipulate the body to generate innovative movement or unusual body figures.

In other words, this Daoist movement practice concerns not only what activates movement but also what activates the process of the activation of movement, an ontological aspect. In this movement practice, movement can be triggered by anything while all triggers emerge from the unknown self as if by themselves. The media of movement — the triggers — can be obvious, ambiguous or nearly absent, such as intention, imagery or a felt sense, depending on the different states of consciousness. Yet the spontaneous emergence of movement triggers makes the natural flow of consciousness possible, which needs observation and insight into the subtleties of the self through instantaneous relaxation and calmness.

Consequently, states that can be made in any condition are all included in improvised movement if their emergences are based on Dao, that is, spontaneously arising in the way of *wu-wei*. I think of the in-between as a band with numerous diverse states rather than a single state, and suggest more tolerance of the self. Thus, the practice in this stage allows indescribable states of the self to emerge that are subtly hidden between and beyond those that have been explored in the practice of the continuous transformation and discussed in Chapter 5. The very extreme states of the band, the “subjective self” and “true self” in Lai’s terms, are also acceptable, if possible.

The relationship between the self and movement is more complicated in this “open” form of improvised movement than that which has a structure or targets a specific in-between state. There are many possibilities between states of the self and the emergence of movement, and they may inspire each other. For instance, in studio, I had an experience when my self or consciousness flowed freely and subtly activated diverse movements. There was a moment when a movement that arose as a beginning open to a new possibility, like a flash of light, became a reference for my next state of consciousness from which another movement emerged. Furthermore, as with the poetic words about the self in the name of the unknown, there are various gaps or in-between levels in diverse states that make the relationship between the self as an unknown and emerging movement different. This depends on how movement arises from the self, for example, from an intention-led motivation, kinesthetic sensation, awareness of inner material, or a felt sense of being. This relationship between the self and movement cannot be determined in terms of their distance or a degree of leading and following but is felt in other intangible ways such as a felt sense. They can correlate or map each other or have a more complicated relationship in this Daoist movement practice.

Therefore, my research from specific states and particular procedures of improvisational movement “returns” to an “open” or a “free” form whose structure does not matter.

significant to thought of as Daoism; the change.

When to make a change?

Change emerges when I am about to identify or name an image.

24 November 2011

The states keep changing in the “open” improvisational form. Changing is this movement practice because it is the nature of life, the Dao of the world in only constancy is the tendency to constant. However, I acknowledge the possibility that

the unchanged self may occur in reality, so the difficulty of changing states is something to be revealed and transformed in this practice (see the next section). A certain

understanding of the self and being can emerge and be located through this practice.

I don't remember what movement I've done but know every moment is my yes. It seems a kind of understanding, which is not of any knowledge of improvisational movement but agreement or acceptance of every movement here and now, emerging from my self.

10 November 2011

6.2 Considering the boundary of the self

Realising that dual elements cannot be divided from their in-between, as I argued in my practical exploration of the specific four states in Chapter 4, this thesis examines the boundary of the self that emerges in this movement practice. The boundary could limit the fixed self or be a formless border for the changing self. It depends on the heart and how a mover thinks of her or himself and what attitude the mover takes during improvisational movement. This can refer to the discussion in Chapter 5 about how different Daoist views of the self influence the way I feel my self and the way I move in the practice of a continuous transformation of states. This section elaborates on the issue of self-boundary and proposes alternative ways to view the habits and judgment that happened to me quite frequently in a series of emergent movement in the “open” improvisational form.

I may have a sense of confinement during this practice when my energy goes down and I cannot articulate this situation with the up-and-down nature of qi. This may come from particular intention, expectation, purpose, judgment or habit that makes me know too much about my being to stay in an in-between state. Less concentration due to physical or mental conditions can also contribute to this feeling. For instance, I was stuck in a certain state without changing because of physical tiredness or judgment of myself, and I

found that my movement was limited in my habits or personal tendency to move. This condition also happened when I sensed myself starting to show movement, energy or abilities to other people.

She comes in. Suddenly I feel a bit nervous. I am wondering how she feels... I unconsciously intend to show improvised movement without judgment and or changing my body before I identify the shape because of her watching.

15 December 2011

When I felt a gaze as a fixed mode of seeing from others, my self-judgment might arise. My states of consciousness and energy also accordingly became unchanged so that some states as part of my self were hidden. In this case, the unexpected ambiguity of states of being was gone while such ambiguity corresponds to how free I can feel to let various states emerge. With a sense of confinement, movement becomes specific instead of in-between.

In order to make a change and tackle the conditions that were causing my self to freeze, in this specific case I returned to a daily-life state, sitting, pausing or going to get my water bottle for drinking, while still maintaining an in-between state in my consciousness during the creative process. These behaviours might have made this practice appear fragmented. A long practice session allowed *I feel free to move, be still, and rest.* more states of consciousness, and both *I am being there.* “successes” and “failures,” to happen. *10 November 2011* However, if I take an attitude of *wu-wei*, these judgmental moments can be smoothed and merely represent the up-and-down flow of energy in qi.

Some dance practices such as Hay's method and the Skinner Releasing Technique are concerned with a tendency to move from a habit, learned skill, training or personal preference and offer alternative approaches to movement. These practices were determined somewhat by the context of the 1970s when artists sought to create innovative movement or find something new by improvisation in order to challenge stereotyped movement in ballet or earlier modern dance. Although I also seek to reduce a sense of confinement, customary movement is not "wrong" or supposed to be avoided in this practice. Since there is equality of each state of consciousness, all improvised movements in this practice are respected and welcomed if they emerge from the changing self.

I argue that the movements that often emerge in a person's improvisation are part of the self, representing personality or individuality, if the self can keep changing. Getting rid of certain "unwanted" movement somehow contradicts the nature of improvisation as if part of the light spectrum is filtered. Provided that the self emerges without limitation, no movement should be avoided. Therefore, my research goes back to the basics of emergent movement to examine changes of the in-between. Stylised movement is not especially marked but is placed in the same position with other improvised movement; it is just one phenomenon during practice.

My judgmental thinking of my self was the main reason why this movement practice struggled to put the Daoist philosophy of qi into practice. This is because self-judgment is easily amplified in a meditative process if one is not calm and trying to avoid it, like waves stirred on a peaceful lake. Self-judgment can come from the outside and inside. A sense of judgment from the other sometimes mirrors the judgment from the self. Thus, one may have a sense of being judged not only by other people but also by oneself.

Daoism and Buddhism suggest not enjoying or holding on to “good” or “bad” feeling too long, which does not mean to devalue sensation, be senseless or make judgment. It may be argued that trying to not judge per se is also a kind of judgment. In Daoism, not judging is not an active intention but an attitude of *wu-wei* toward a mode of being between the inner and outer. Being in-between indicates a holistic state, an attitude to accept all phenomena rather than separating “otherness of the in-between,” namely something “not in-between” or extreme. Yet not thinking of judgment is the most difficult, and this is why regular, hard practice is necessary for this movement practice.

Accordingly, this practice looks for an alternative view of the self with a *wu-wei* attitude, instead of pursuing a “perfect” state or eliminating judgment. The significance is that we are aware of our judgment and we can learn from this experience, which truly occurs all the time. Therefore it is worth examining what we can do beyond that judgment to discover more possibilities.

Some researchers and artists have recommended avoiding judgmental thoughts in improvisation. For instance, Foster (2003) thinks that theories that address the subjective self's control over the body and the way in which the “body/self” are influenced by society or political power, do not apply to the process of improvisation because the body has more freedom of agency in the moment (p. 8). Yet she proposes that “rather than suppress any functions of mind, improvisation's bodily mindfulness summons up a kind of hyperawareness of the relation between immediate action and overall shape, between that which is about to take place or is taking place and that which has and will take place” (pp. 6-7). Performing artist Ruth Zaporah (2003) seeks to be involved in improvisation as “the dance had danced itself,” or “truly riding the energy of the movement without any ego interference” (p. 24). She looks for moments that escape from the judgmental self in a performance. Similarly, my practice as research

does not take a view of the self that dominates or controls one's consciousness and the body either, as argued in Chapter 5. But my stance is comparatively tolerant to different states of the self based on Daoism.

My study views this limitation as a reality that I as a mover must confront in this Daoist movement practice. The condition in which the self gives rise to judgment or becomes fixed is not "bad."

During her leave, I have more movement coming out energetically, which is a different energy quality from the time when she was in... I am glad to get into the "right" state finally. But when she comes back, the sense of freedom and energy is suddenly gone. My movement returns to a slow and quiet quality. Perhaps I shouldn't have judged my state as the "right" thing. Or her calmness makes me react with slow movements?

16 December 2011

I try to be with my judgment and learn from it. I accept it as part of me and as one of the states of consciousness that can appear in emergent movement. This thought helps multiple states of the self emerge.

Gradually I relax. Gradually have no boundary of what I should be. The felt sense of my self is so vulnerable. It can be back just for some inspiring words or a click of thought in my mind. When my mind is released, my body is freed. I have to try my best to ask for the felt sense of my self to stay longer. But it's just like qi-energy coming and going, flowing up and down. Accept this then get into the state of wu. Believe that emptiness will allow more states and possibilities to happen at the same time. Remember it, because it's forgettable.

2 March 2012

From a Daoist perspective, how I see my self and how others see me are from my heart, the inception of judgment. In this case, judgment is a felt sense. Sometimes it is just about my heart, telling myself, “OK, it’s no big deal!” It is as simple as a twinkling of thought in the mind, but, as Daoism states, the body may spend a long time accepting this command and putting it into action, depending on my heart. If my movement honestly follows my heart, the shift in my mind will be united with and revealed in my emergent movement. Therefore, the fact that qi makes movement flow and take shape beautifully matters less than the change in the diverse states of the self uncovered through movement.

The movement practice in the “open” improvisational form is literally a process of practicing the self since a mover may go through several negotiations with the self or learn to view the self in a way of *wu-wei*. Therefore, I need to focus on one thing—practicing the self, concentrating on the experience and allowing any phenomena of states of the self to emerge, no matter how the changeability of the states progresses. The idea of practicing contains a sense of search, coherent with Peters’ (2009) argument of freedom in the search, which was discussed in Chapter 5. By searching or exploring in a process of practicing the self in movement, the sense of confinement is softened and becomes formless as a transparent boundary of the self. A sense of freedom arises in this process. Therefore, rather than trying to eliminate restrictions to get freedom, this movement practice transforms the felt sense of confinement into a process of softening the boundary of the self via an alternative view from the heart with an attitude of *wu-wei*—a view from the in-between itself. This protects in-between states and the freedom inherent in them.

6.3 A principle of practicing the self

Through the process of softening the boundary of my self, I observed how my movement emerged from my self in an “open” improvisational form. The secret of turning a sense of self-confinement into a formless boundary of the self is an awareness of subtle emergences in a movement practice. This can help a mover embody the Daoist view of the self that was discussed in the previous section.

Accordingly, in the final stage of practice, the following principle emerged from the understanding of Daoist philosophy I had gained through my practice up to this point:

Principle: Be aware of any changes/emergences and articulations, noticing subtlety.

You might experience:

- i) A range of changes: These might be evident to you in thinking, a felt sense, sensation, dynamics, energy, emotion, smell, temperature, etc. and beyond.
- ii) A range of ways to explore: Feel free to explore speaking, movement, singing, watching, just being aware or anything beyond that. Doing and being just the way you are is fine, but I suggest you allow or invite more possibilities. There are always more things to explore beyond those examples.

I am aware of the soft, small changes of the clouds. So peaceful... Yet my awareness is inspired by the ever-changing subtleties as a series of flashes. My awareness is changing and my attention is refreshed constantly, even if I am still. In fact, I am not really still. My mind is changing; my toes move slightly at times; and my body may swing invisibly and unconsciously. Don't know how long time has passed in that position.

13 May 2012

This principle corresponds to Daoism's notion of *de*, which is defined as believing the inherent nature of the self. By paying attention to my self's inner being without

judgment, I have a felt sense that my awareness of the self and energy expand to such an extent that it dissolves the boundary between watching and being watched. Therefore, the concept of *de* is evident in the moment of unfolding a Daoist movement practice. Since a sense of self-confinement is smooth, the practicing process of the self in movement can be unfolded safely.

If I don't forget that the surroundings are changing and I am aware of it, it will be a strong support naturally for me to unfold various states of my self. The support is there already for me. I just have to trust my intuition, trust the world I am in. This is the meaning of de in Daoism.

18 May 2012

I invited a guest to participate in a session with me to unfold this practice based on the above-mentioned principle. The aim of practicing with someone else was to deepen my understanding of Dao and its articulation with this movement practice, since the Daoist view of the self is based on a holistic relationship with the world or surroundings. Besides, the form of a duet also solved the problem of unfolding that cannot be managed in a solo practice. I felt myself confined at the moment of movement emergence because my innermost self still judged the appearance of my movements and whether they looked special, unusual, or formless. I realised my unconscious concern through the form of a duet. The session focused on an awareness of energy flowing in its time, subtleties of change, and reflections in improvised movement.

The participant guest is a British filmmaker and performer who has a background in dance and Authentic Movement, and is studying for her PhD in Performing Arts. I chose to have a guest artist who had her own somatic experience with energy and improvisation, rather than to train someone in my way of improvising with a sense of qi. That allowed her to explore the self in her own way, as I have my unique route of

searching Dao in this study. Moreover, as I have addressed, the in-between is not an exclusive experience of qi but of all kinds of improvisation as long as the mover has heightened consciousness. In this way, there are more possibilities happening in the “gap” as well as a certain resonance in energy between my guest and me.

At the moment of encounter, we are the one.

We are together in a felt sense if we're both involved in the same energy level.

It's resonance...

It's distant yet subtly connected.

18 May 2012



(See Practicing the self in the DVD)

I sensed her energy to see how we would start. She entered the space and shortly started to move. I was aware of changes from her and outside sounds, which made me have a felt sense of an energy to move, coming especially from her. She could also sense my tiny movement and energy. We moved slowly with similar energy, but we explored

our own practices in movement without relating to each other. When I chose to be aware of myself more than her, I found myself occasionally attempting to move with larger energy. Yet my states of energy always changed effortlessly when my awareness articulated with her, since we were almost in the same state of energy.

Since unfolding this practice reveals my findings, I chose to do this session in a way that I tried in my personal practices. Transformed from the mode of reflective writing that I used to do after an improvisational exploration in my creative process, I verbalised my instant experience when moving. My guest followed. Our speaking was initially like monologues, but they gradually sounded like conversations.

I am so comfortable to move in this changeable
environment.

Changes from surroundings, changes from my self
and changes from you.

Thank you for your support.

Thank you for changes.

Thank you for your energy.

Thank you for moving.

Thank you for speaking.

You draw me in.

I am trying to find places that are familiar.

Where is familiar?

Everywhere seems familiar.

Oh, so we can do everything we want.

There was a period when I felt too much energy from my guest, the other mover. The feeling became a burden and it bound me. Through our way of speaking out instant feeling during moving, she agreed and suggested we needed a change, so I left the space and tried to refresh my state. She kept moving. I saw her and sensed changes from her in the meantime. Her moving energy quickly drew me in the space again. From this practice, I realised the other self's changing energy might support my changing states. However, it could be restriction if we become too involved with each other and forget to change. This is why Daoism suggests a *wu-wei* attitude.

For a while, we both slow down and seem to have a sense of energy falling. I have a felt sense that it is time to finish. But she is still moving slightly. I stand beside her closely, seeing her moving and waiting her end. Yet my self is also still swaying subtly in the same rhythm because our energy is still resonant. We seem to wait a moment to come to an end but we can't find it yet. The energy between us seems to be able to go on forever. Energy never falls to zero if we remain aware of it. She holds my hand. Finally it's the end. I was also thinking to do this but I was wondering how we would gradually reach an ending by following the tendency of energy.

18 May 2012

Since this practice is unfolded in terms of energy, the guest and I did not often see each other's movement, but we could sense a subtle energy or articulation between us. Whether she could do the particular style of movement similar to mine is not the point, because that means my self rather than hers. She has her unique self to explore in her own way in this practice. Instead, the concern is whether she can sense a sort of subtle energy up and down during the session and subtle articulations between us. In this session, the guest was guided by an innate awareness, curiosity, and exploration that, according to Daoism, inhere in human beings, in order to find her own way to do this

session according to the meaning of *de*. Furthermore, her somatic experience helped create an awareness of a subtly felt connection between us in this duet practice. Our sensitivity to a state of being and energy brought about harmonic resonance between us during the session.

The energy articulated between my guest and myself was felt as distinct from dynamics or effort of movement; it might be too minute to sense physically at times. Most of time, I felt us moving harmonically in the same mode of energy, changing slightly. I felt that our energy was very individual while both of us were connected in a minimum energy. We were connected by our implicit awareness and concentration in the moment by the movement principle focusing on awareness. This corresponds to Kirkland's statement about the holistic experience in which things that are felt are articulated implicitly and slightly by qi, which I have cited in Chapter 3 to support my argument for a felt sense of qi. Therefore, I understand the felt sense of implicit and subtle connection emerging from the awareness between my guest and myself as qi. The constancy of implicit articulation means that qi energy is going on. When being together with the other self and aware of a subtle connection between us in terms of energy, I have a felt sense of the existence of qi more obviously than when practicing alone.

Although the spontaneous emergence of my states and the articulations between us were not always felt fluently throughout the session, the process still conforms to Daoism, since the nature of qi-energy is up and down like tides. When the energy of the duet is lower, that is the time to deeply practice the self, tuning the heart or the view on oneself, exploring how to soften a sense of confinement into a formless boundary. The session of improvised movement is like a process of meditation. Accordingly, this practice of exploring the self was as meaningful to the guest as it was to me (see Appendix 2 for the participant guest's feedback).

I found that practicing with another person is another way of practicing my self. For example, through our movement, speaking, awareness, and reaction during practice, I learned certain philosophies that inspire my personal practice of the self from my guest, who has an individual personality, view and background. This corresponds to what I was taught in qigong practice—all people are my teachers, all people are my familiars. How our thoughts were inspired by each other and eventually became a sort of understanding during the movement session is revealed in the DVD by adding subtitles of our spoken words to the footage of this duet.

Consequently, this movement practice was unfolded in an in-between mode in which our individual selves emerged in a felt sense of togetherness that harmonised our energy. We were not only being ourselves during the movement practice but also had a shared felt sense of being together in a mode of minute articulation. We did not have to make any achievement or effort to present our selves other than just being in the exploration.

Moreover, this duet practice unfolded by following the above-mentioned principle focusing on awareness. By being aware of unknowns that came from practicing with another individual with a different background and whose way of exploring the self was unknown to me until we met in the session, the duet practice offered me an environment that has more sensible unknowns and changes around me than my solo practices, supporting my changing states of qi like the resonance of energy. The duet also revealed to a wider extent that the unknown can bring a sense of formlessness to a movement practice.

¹ This echoes the distinction between Goldman's and my views on improvisation

discussed (q.v. Introduction).

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have developed a Daoist movement practice from a somatic view of qi. Starting from qi's features of change and the in-between, this thesis has explored the Daoist concepts of *wu*, *wu-wei*, Dao, *de*, and the self, and how those ideas and embodied experiences have interwoven and gradually created a felt sense of formlessness in a movement practice. I have suggested formlessness has a form that is constantly changing and nearly invisible, like a transparent boundary in a sense of in-between rather than ignoring the form or boundary. This final chapter will reflect upon the main aim of this thesis—formlessness in a Daoist movement practice—by locating and understanding Dao in emergent movement.

In this practice as research, movement emerges from an in-between mode of being based on the notions of *wu* and *wu-wei*. I have argued such emergence can be the beginning of improvised movement that is not a means of composition but a spontaneous phenomenon in the circulation of qi. The improvisational is inherent in the body, the self, or rather “being” due to *wu-wei* in terms of qi. Since a Daoist perspective of qi says that emergent movement in the way of *wu-wei* needs regular practices, this study reconsiders “practice” as an everlasting somatic process beyond a studio context. Therefore, movement emerges improvisationally as a somatic process of practicing the self, like the mode of *yinyang*, in this Daoist movement practice. This was addressed in Chapter 2.

I have explored and reiterated the idea that diverse in-between states can emerge in movement. Chapters 4 and 5 investigated four in-between states and a continuously transforming procedure. Drawing from the Daoist philosophy of “light,” I have explored

the meditative awareness of different centres in the body by improvising in my creative process. I have developed an improvisational movement practice as a continuous transformation of the self, a process towards *wu-wei*, from a mainly intentional motivation to a mode merely with a felt sense of being. My understanding of qi, the self, *wu*, and *wu-wei* in movement have become established through their resonance among Daoism, qigong, and improvised movement. In the three fields, the in-between as a shared territory among them has been carried out and explored.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I have proposed practicing the self with a sense of sharing in order to carry out *wu-wei* in improvised movement. Different from the act of presenting or performing, unfolding is much more implicit, like the Daoist mode of self-emergence in the way of *wu-wei*, which has no need to make any effort. The atmosphere between practicing and sharing coheres with the in-between character of Daoism. This is why some “other selves” have been invited to be involved in my individual pathway toward practicing my self in movement at the later stage, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Their voices helped me search myself.

This practice as research particularly highlights how to look at, understand, and accept the self in improvised movement, since the changing self can make the body formless in a felt sense. With the aid of Gendlin’s theory, I have looked at formlessness, beginning with an exploration of how a felt sense of qi can be activated through the body in Chapter 3. A sense of formlessness of the body comes from the ambiguous nature of qi, *wu* and Dao, and the spontaneously changing self based on Daoism. An emergence from a felt sense of qi occurs in *wu-wei*.

Having continued to probe into the changing self in an “open” improvisational form, I found that allowing movement to truly emerge from the self is not easy because there

are many confinements during improvisation, as Goldman (2010) suggests. I have argued that the confinements arising from the self might be just a felt sense, which means it comes into being because of one's own felt experience. In Chapter 6, I suggested that a felt sense of such restriction can be transformed into another sense—a formless boundary of the self—by tuning my heart or an attitude of *wu-wei* according to Daoism. If one can accept a boundary such as a personal tendency or preference in movement as part of the self, it is not a restriction anymore and it might be expressed and sensed as a new experience.

Through a practicing process of facing the boundary of my self and tuning my heart in a series of “open” improvisational sessions, I have come to understand the Daoist notion of *de* as a revelation of one's own nature of the self in terms of this movement practice. This is all about the heart, a trust in any emergences of the individual self during an unfolding session. This understanding has been transformed into a principle of improvised movement that focuses on awareness, as discussed in Chapter 6. From a session in the form of a duet, I have come to understand *qi* as a subtle felt articulation of energy between our selves.

Searching for Dao in a movement practice

This thesis can be concluded with the principle of emergent movement developed at the end of this practice (which has been discussed in Chapter 6): being aware of subtle emergences, changes, and articulations of the inner and outer as a holistic world. This principle demonstrates how improvisational movement emerges in view of my research, which is inspired by the Daoist concept of *qi*. Since a spontaneous emergence from a state of *wu* can begin an improvised movement, concentration on practicing the self can be the simplest mode of attention or a way of being for emergent movement based on

wu-wei.

Through the duet session of practicing the self at the end of this research, I came to understand the meanings of *de* and Dao for this movement practice. I also realised the depth of *wu-wei*, which can allow an awareness of being to emerge without active interference, from a Daoist perspective. In this practice, formlessly emerging states of the in-between, the nature of being in Daoist terms, can be revealed spontaneously when there is a heightened awareness and felt experiencing of Dao. This signifies the fluent circulation of qi, which is the condition that *wu-wei* requires. Since Dao is constantly changing, it is like the minimum “rule” that allows beings to reveal their essential qualities as much as necessary. Such self-emergence is the meaning of *de*, a way of cooperating with *wu-wei* to actualise Dao, because no external assistance, discipline, rules or extra action are needed; instead it involves handing everything over to the nature of the self (Laozi, n.d.). In other words, Daoist self-emergence is in a mode of *wu-wei*. These Daoist concepts are reflected in the practice developed in this research.

Similarly, in the duet session, the guest participant and I could uncover different aspects of our selves through reacting to our subtle awareness of changes and emergences, including the inner and outer, based on an implicit principle with nearly no rules. Consequently, the principle that focuses on awareness of subtle changes and emergences both within and without can be regarded as the Dao in this movement practice that I understand at this stage.

Like Dao, the principle is a way to return to a simple exploration of awareness as a beginning of emergence. I found the minimum necessary for a movement to happen is an awareness of subtleties in and around the self, which is also a starting point for an improvised movement in terms of qi. I also realised the nature of movement, or the most

fundamental or essential element, is being; awareness is the way to begin a sense of being. The emergence and unfolding of Dao in this research has been so minimal and simple that it was invisible before being unveiled by other relatively complicated or visible issues. This is the reason for this thesis. An exploratory process is needed before Dao is discovered.

Although this thesis has understood Dao as an awareness of subtle changes that appears so easy for humans, there is still a “technique” in this movement practice. That “technique” is letting various states of the self emerge spontaneously. This research process of developing a movement practice has enhanced my improvising abilities, by which I mean changing states of consciousness, being, the self or qi-energy in a way of *wu-wei*. It takes practice to allow the nature of being, or the changing self, to emerge. This is also the aim of a Daoist meditative practice. Since changing states can be acquired through practices, I think of it as a technique. A technique may look simple but it needs regular practice to maintain. In the case of this practice, the difficulties are in developing an awareness of subtleties and the heart, leading to *wu-wei*, which is necessary to foster the changing self. Those all took time to practice in the course of my research. This argument corresponds to Goldman’s suggestion that an improviser’s intuitive and spontaneous reaction comes from accumulated experiences and efforts, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Corresponding to Dao, the simplicity of the principle reveals the minimal requirements for movement to take place while allowing the largest space for diverse emergences of being to occur. This movement practice is not a movement method that other people can learn or represent. Instead, I believe a movement practice can be a practicing process unique to the self, as with meditation. Influenced by Daoism, this principle can remind individuals of their own inherent ability to be aware of phenomena; it is by following

their selves that they will learn my particular way of improvising. Everyone has their own procedure or path, and they need to learn by themselves how to let movement emerge.

Formlessness in this Daoist movement practice

Formlessness can be conceptualised within this movement practice by thinking in terms of layers. The first layer is in the variety of states that spontaneously emerge from the self, leading to a sense of formlessness within the body. The body image becomes formless based on a felt sense of qi, a view different from seeing the body as an anatomical structure. Since Daoism sees the body and the self as composites of qi, they are thought of as nearly the same. The changing self means the changing body. Besides, the formlessness proposed in this thesis features a mode of *wu-wei* which makes the change, emergence or movement spontaneous; since qi is experienced via a felt sense, the formless manifests more as a felt experiencing (how a mover feels her or his self or body), rather than through a physical shape. Formlessness concerns the constant change in the heart that leads to an attitude of *wu-wei* toward one's own body.

The second layer is the diversity of self-emergence of individuals. The simplicity of the principle developed at the end of this research allows complexity and variety to emerge to an extent of formlessness. Each individual nature of being is respected and allowed to arise. Formlessness comes into being through participants' unique personalities, backgrounds, and inclinations to move, feel, or experience.

The third layer is in practicing itself, an everlasting search for the self. This practice suggests that improvisation does not only mean the presence of movement, shape and energy but also what is learned philosophically from the self in the process. Practicing

the self is a constant and endless process. Improvisational movement, reflective thinking about the self, and embodied Daoist philosophy emerge together in this practice. A process of practicing the self in improvised movement may not always look “attractive” or “perfect,” as we are accustomed to seeing sometimes in performance. Yet what matters is the awareness underpinning the appearance of movement such as my philosophical understandings discovered through practices unfolded in reflective words. This represents a shift away from the importance of aesthetics to that of experiencing the self, and shows that improvised movement is an experience of practicing the self.

Therefore, formlessness is flowing, defined dynamically when a session of practicing the self in improvised movement is happening. It may not be settled yet when a state of the self has just passed. This mode corresponds with my intuitive doodles displayed in this thesis or the unfinished movement that may emerge from a *wu-wei* attitude as discussed in Chapter 3. There is always a felt sense of unknown in every moment in in-between states, and there is no definite form or meaning to encapsulate formlessness in this Daoist movement practice.

A felt sense of formlessness begins from an awareness of subtle qi-energy flowing as the beginning of an in-between state. From this point, states of the self and movement can emerge and change in their own right. Various states of the self may emerge when the felt formlessness is instantaneously defined by the self in exploration. Corresponding to Peters’ opinion cited in Chapter 5, a sense of freedom emerges through a search or exploration of the self during improvisation instead of leaving one state for another. This change, search and “in-process” freedom will never stop if the subtle awareness arising from the self continues. Therefore, formlessness unfolds from the self. And a formless mode of being emerging from the self is Dao.

Such formlessness refers to a true opening to all possibilities; there may be great potential from the self. It suggests that practitioners should respect, accept and welcome changes and differences (of other selves) in the self, while searching for subtle resonance amongst diversity.

There is no particular form or quality of energy that indicates qi or a meditative experience. This thesis has pointed out a certain subtlety as a specific quality of qi-energy, and this tendency can be found in my movement as shown in the footage. However, this does not mean that subtlety is the sole quality of qi. The fact that my body tends to give rise to subtle movement and energy more often than wilder qualities relates to my specific experience of practicing Chinese qigong, which aims to practice qi-energy inwardly and quietly like a form of meditation. The subtlety shows that qi is capable of attaining a great sensitivity in the body, along with other qualities. In reality, the distinctive characteristic of Daoist qi-energy is the attitude of *wu-wei* in heightened consciousness rather than definite qualities. Furthermore, considering formlessness, I suggest not having a defined pre-image of the subtlety of qi but rather keeping the image of qi blank, leaving it open as an unknown.

Moreover, as I have argued, everyone may have different experiences or sensations of qi-energy owing to an individual's constitution, personality, and disposition. Therefore my movement tendency cannot be generalised to everyone or set as a standard quality of qi-energy. As long as one can focus on awareness of the subtleties of the self and her or his surroundings, and let all emergences from the self happen in a way of *wu-wei*, following Dao to practice the self, the emergent movement and energy are right for one's disposition of qi.

The same holds for formlessness in this movement practice; a mode of articulation

among different selves is also determined from a Daoist perspective of qi, although maybe sometimes not yet defined by unique instantaneous states of each self. This shows that the energy flowing around each session with a participant guest might have varied owing to their different backgrounds and experiences. Since formlessness is inherent to the self, as previously argued, individuals may have a felt sense of formlessness differently.

An end is another beginning

This movement practice takes the same path as Daoism: Daoism suggests the heart is prior to an external expression, and over the course of this research, I found my attachment to a specific form or the appearance of my improvised movement and energy lessened. Yet, I must stress that what was reduced is not a tendency to move or a habit but a felt sense of confinement shaped by my heart.

However, this does not mean this thesis is my end of practicing the self in movement. In Daoism, reducing the desire to attain a definite form is a lasting process in practices of the self. The “ultimate” in Dao is infinite. This form of modesty helps maintain an attitude of *wu-wei*. However, Daoism is not an ascetic practice. Every understanding in a practicing process can be seen as a sort of achievement of the self, and a sense of freedom can appear in that moment. Achievement and freedom both come during a process rather than after the attainment of a “perfect” stage. Another refining process may unexpectedly arise in the future, and this is a repeated, endless process. There is no end in practice. The understanding discussed in this thesis means my progress of practicing my self in Daoism, qi, and improvisation.

This Daoist movement practice proposes a particular cultural view of somatic

movement predicated upon qi. It focuses on the ambiguity or the unknown of the in-between itself, contributing to somatic knowledge by uncovering a principle of movement that focuses on the subtle awareness emerging from qi, a distinct perspective from current movement-based practices. This practice works on the in-between states that can only be probed by the subtlety of qi through movement. Finding that such subtle awareness is Dao, this research connects up somatic practice and Daoism. This thesis thus interprets some of the main concerns of somatic practices, such as the self, consciousness and being, from a perspective of qi, which has been less explored within the field to date. This Daoist movement practice can also contribute to the field of improvisation practice as a detailed exploration of the emergence of movement. It explores the subtleties of the in-between, offering diverse stimuli for moving improvisationally. My investigation of the very moment of emergence, how movement emerges improvisationally in view of qi, can further develop into an improvisation approach different from current techniques, that is, improvisation via qi. Moreover, this research demonstrates how heightened states of consciousness arisen by qi can enhance degrees of spontaneity and intuition, which is beneficial to improvisation. Learning from the Daoist notion of *wu*, this research highlights the importance of the unknown and ambiguity in improvisation.

Besides, the principle concluded in my research has potential for wide-ranging application. It can be expanded in other areas related to movement that are outside of the scope of my thesis. For example, awareness of subtle emergences and changes can be a starting point for developing movement in individual ways in education. The principle could be repeatedly practiced like meditation to allow participants to find their own ways of practicing their selves and exploring more possibilities from their selves. The principle could also be directed to a specific aspect of performance to create and develop a particular style of improvisation. There is some potential for turning the

principle of subtle awareness into a performing method of free improvisation, developing an improvisation practice or a performative practice based on emergent movement, or blending practice and performance. This will raise issues such as multiplicity or other meanings of self-emergence different from the focus of this thesis. The principle of subtle awareness could be applied as a starting point for an interdisciplinary approach to collaborative modes of practice as research. Therefore, the principle concluded in this research can be another beginning of research in performing arts, somatic practices, another disciplinary form, or other possibilities. Further research in these fields will raise issues different from the focus of this thesis.

My view of my body and the way to improvise keep changing

This practice as research as a journey to Dao went through explorations including diverse in-between states, a continuous transformation towards *wu-wei*, and practicing the self, through improvisational movement extending from the emergence of qi. This study is a search for the self, states of being, freedom, and Dao in emergent movement. It offered me the ability to return to the “beginning” of improvised movement with new understanding. For the changing self, the “beginning” does not just mean a fixed point in the time scale or the start of a thing. It can be change itself, or rather becoming itself as Dao. As the changing nature of being, Dao is implicit in every moment of being as a felt sense, like the continuous flow of qi, although it may be too subtle to discover. This thesis finally suggests that an awareness of subtleties and emergences – the central principle of this movement practice - is where Dao can be located and how Dao can be experienced. Such subtle awareness is the source of emergence of qi-energy that can formlessly and endlessly flow into movements. Being formless thereby means a bodymind state of becoming, sourced from the subtle awareness, in light of qi in this

practice.

Appendix 1: Workshop structure and approaches

Week/date	Session	Structure and approaches
W1 (2 Feb)	Attending to the body: Exploration of an unknown image	<p>A. Unknown image of the inside</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Imagine the structure of the body, such as organs and bones, with eyes closed. Trace the inside of the body from the top of the head to the feet by means of meditation. b. Draw the structure of the body that was created in meditation. c. Be aware of the body and the inner parts of the body (that is, organs, bones, muscles, etc.) by touching, pressing, and moving. The ground can help the participant to be aware of the body parts that hands cannot reach. d. Revisit the drawing and rub out or blur the parts that feel unknown through movement or add parts that were just realised through movement. e. Move with the blurred image of the body parts on the drawing and explore more unknowns throughout the body with eyes closed. f. Repeat step d and step e twice. g. Put aside the drawing and move with the blurred image in space. h. Keep moving with the unknown image and open eyes to be aware of where I am as if a new body image bearing unknowns makes first contact with the outer space. <p>B. Including the unknown image of the outside</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Find a thing that feels unknown in the space and approach it. Create the unknown image on the thing and explore it by movement in the same way that you explored the inside of your body as if exploring the unknown on another body. Be aware of both the inside and outside unknown images at the same time. Be aware of an unknown relationship between the thing and the body during this exploration. b. Move with the unknown images of the inside and outside alternatively or simultaneously.
W2 (9 Feb)	Intention-led exploration of the in-between space of the body by means of the unknown	<p>A. Central line</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The toucher puts his/her hands on the mover's three <i>dan tians</i> (that is, the forehead, chest, and lower abdomen). The mover is aware of the inner space between the toucher's hands. b. The toucher traces the mover's central line from the mover's back to front via the top.

	image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. The toucher brushes the mover's central line. d. The toucher places his/her hands back on the three <i>dan tians</i> and stays on one body part for a long time. The touch can be lighter or harder. The mover is aware of the unknown inside of this body part through this hands-on activity and moves with the unknown sensation. e. The mover tries to let the <i>dan tian</i> lead the movement. f. The mover tries to keep the <i>dan tian</i> fixed and move the other parts freely. g. The mover moves with the sensation of the central line. <p>B. Sensing in-between space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The toucher puts his/her hands on the two sides of the mover's body part. The mover senses the inner space between the toucher's hands and explores the unknown with movement. The toucher's touch can be heavy or light. b. The toucher puts his/her hands on two points that are located on different body parts. The distance between the toucher's two hands can be shorter or longer. c. The toucher can shift hands to other body parts with different rhythms as a duet with the mover. d. The toucher explores the unknown of the mover's body as if exploring the unknown of the outside (that is, like the last task in the first session). The mover keeps moving with the unknown that is inside the touched body parts. <p>C. Moving with sensation of in-between space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The toucher puts his/her hands on symmetrical body parts and neighbouring parts. The mover is aware of the two touched points and the space between them at the same time and can slightly move with the sensation of the wholeness. b. The toucher brushes the mover's whole body to activate sensation on the skin. c. The mover moves the imagery of the middle of the symmetrical body parts from top down. d. The mover expands the imagery to the outer space between neighbouring body parts. e. The mover expands the imagery to the skin as the border in between the inside and the outside and imagines the whole body involved in the space.
W3 (16 Feb)	Subtle quality of inner unknown material: A shift to image-led movement	<p>A. Quality of the unknown image</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Find the imaginary central line from the proprioception of the ears, shoulders, and hip joints rather than sensing the spine. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep eyes closed and sense the symmetrical body parts first and then their central point. - Trace up and down a few times.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Link up the three points as the imaginary central line. - The line may not be straight; just let it be as it seems. <p>b. Redo the state of sensing the in-between space in the body by using the added qualities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep eyes closed and imagine that the ears, shoulders, hip joints, and ankles are articulated by something unknown. The articulation between the two body parts is implicit and light. - Respond to the sensation of the image with movement more than actively exploring it. Let the image lead the movement. - Describe the quality of the unknown image that connects the two body parts, such as “sticky”, “fuzzy”, “light”, etc. - The unknown image provides the minimum support or articulation for the two symmetrical body parts. If the joints are too loose to support, let them be; just maintain awareness of the central line to protect the body from injury when it drops since this awareness can guarantee that the body drops vertically. - Expand the quality of the unknown image to the asymmetrical body parts. - Expand the quality of the unknown image to the in-between space between neighbouring body parts. - Expand the quality to the whole body as if the image is wrapping the body and between the body and the outside. - With eyes open, take some time to adapt to participation of the outside. Try to keep the sense of the quality inside and outside as if the surface of the body is made of the unknown image. <p>c. Stop movement and return to the neutral position. Sense the central line again. Do you sense any difference?</p> <p>B. Calmness: Imagining the unknown as inner material</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Breathe deeply to the lower belly a few times. b. Keep eyes closed and move with the image of the unknown material very slowly and subtly to give the minimum response to the image. Let the image lead the movement. c. Imagine the unknown material shifting very slowly to the other body parts. Pay attention to the subtleties of sensation and movement when the unknown material shift (that is, on a continuous route). d. Movement follows the flowing of the consciousness. If consciousness stays on one part, movement may cease. The movement can be done in very slow motion. e. Also respond to the sensation of a discontinuous body part that attracts attention with slow movement (that is, the unknown material may divert).
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		<p>f. With eyes open, imagine the unknown material flowing from the inside out or shifting back from the outside in. Respond to the imagination in relationship to the body and the surroundings (e.g., the air, the floor, etc.). Continue to move very slowly.</p> <p>g. Move slowly with the unknown material inside the body as well as between the other mover. Sometimes make contact and sometimes separate. Keep making solo movements and remain aware of the other mover as part of the surroundings.</p>
W4 (23 Feb)	Reacting with unknowns: Flexibility, felt intuition, and openness	<p>A. Melting body: Flexibility as a whole body image</p> <p>a. Keep eyes closed and imagine that the unknown material that were explored in the task of calmness during the last session have filled the body (that is, awareness of the whole body). If awareness cannot be released, imagine the unknown material slowly spreading out or dispersing to other parts.</p> <p>b. Imagine the unknown material as a whole picture, gathering and spreading throughout the body. Move with the image of the whole picture of the flowing or shifting unknown material on any scale and speed. Let the image lead the movement.</p> <p>c. The dynamics of the unknown material may come from the conscious imagination and sensation or rather remain in the in-between state.</p> <p>d. Sense the quality of the unknown material when they flow or shift in a holistic view in which detailed sensations will become blurred.</p> <p>e. Keep eyes closed and imagine the unknown material throughout the whole body gathering and dispersing into the external space.</p> <p>f. Let the unknown material shape the body.</p> <p>B. Felt intuition</p> <p>a. The mover keeps eyes closed. The guide leads the mover to a particular place and asks the mover to open eyes.</p> <p>b. The mover responds to the first thing that he/she sees with a simple movement or action before recognising what it is.</p> <p>c. Repeat steps a and b a few times. The guide brings the mover to several different places that contain diverse items to test how the mover reacts to those items intuitively.</p> <p>C. Openness</p> <p>a. Walk and look around to sense the self or the body as situated in the space.</p> <p>b. Sense the body as part of the space. The inner space is part of the outer space.</p> <p>c. Imagine the inner material of the body becoming similar to the outside as if they are made of the same material, such as atoms, particles, and energy. They both interweave the known and the unknown.</p> <p>d. Move with the sensation of the boundary between the inside and the outside, melting</p>

		<p>and becoming transparent.</p> <p>e. Accept the outer and the inner together. Have a felt sense of the two as one “world”.</p> <p>f. Sense any fluctuation or information rising from the “world” to unite the inside and the outside, such as felt senses, sensations, images, desires, sounds, and/or sights, and respond to that directly and immediately with movement before recognising what it is. The information should include the other mover in the space.</p> <p>g. Be more aware of the other mover while continuing the solo task.</p>
W5 (12 Mar)	A felt sense of unknown being: Return to the initiation of movement	<p>A. Warm-up (being relaxed and calm through practice) Keep eyes open and do the practices of the unknown, the in-between space, and calmness from previous sessions as warm-up to review the three different kinds of experiences in the body.</p> <p>B. A sense of holistic being</p> <p>a. Keep eyes open and imagine a light in the body that gradually illuminates one point to the whole body and extends to the space the self is in. The illumination is not harsh but mild. Be aware of the world, which means maintaining unity of the inside and outside, embracing them as one, and being aware of both. You do not need to perceive both but just be aware of both. The self has both naturally. They are there already.</p> <p>b. Move with the felt sense of being in the world. Accept the world and all the happenings in the world. Feel free to let anything emerge to give rise to movement. Do not resist their happenings.</p> <p>c. After moving, express feelings or reflections from this experience in poetic words or a drawing.</p> <p>d. Redo a to c, but replace imagery of light with unknown material in the world. The body is full of unknown material. The unknown material shapes the body and also shapes the space.</p> <p>e. Let the unknown material lead movement so that movement may happen before awareness.</p> <p>f. The unknown material seems to be able to shift in the world by itself and harmonically cooperate with the world. They can react to something perceived.</p> <p>C. Transparency</p> <p>a. The initial movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep eyes open and experience being in the world. You do not know what will happen next. The only thing known is being here at the moment. Be relaxed, calm, and open. - Let any movement happen when it feels like it is coming about. You do not need to

		<p>know or think about the origination of a movement although that may be realised after the movement emerges. Do not think about the shape of the body or how the movement looks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After one movement happens, return to the neutral position, and wait for the next happening as the beginning of movement. - Do not force action. If no movement occurs, that is fine. Accept it. Be patient to wait for the emergence. - Maintain this exploration for a few minutes. <p>b. A sequence of movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow a sequence of emergent movement to happen. Take every movement and every moment as the first move. - Poetic quotations from Daoist classic books are used as instructions in order to support, inspire, and maintain the mover in the in-between state of <i>wu-wei</i> during the practice. <p>c. Unknown relationship with the partner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep doing the solo Transparency task with awareness of your partner moving around. - Pay more attention to the sense of an unknown relationship with the partner. You do not know what will happen between the self and the partner. Let movement emerge from the felt sense of the unknown relationship.
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Appendix 2: Reflection from a participant guest in a duet session of unfolding this movement practice

By Lotti Gompertz

(Personal communication on 27 May, 2012)

I sent you a vimeo message but if you don't get it. I wrote a response to our moving you can use in research:

I remember in starting how I had to leave where I had just come from - a kind of latency - residue from the mornings work - echo's of comments in sensual form left riding around the soma. This became part of a tuning process. Tuning the body, not in ridding myself of the latency but to give it a place between us, enough to make space for something new. In the extension of my left arm - I notice the very end of my fingers and the undulating rhythm of movement waves altering their form. I wondered if these waves of movement travelled beyond the peripheries of my body - I began to think of 'endpoints' 'horizons of the body' and then I noticed how the start begins with my body and moves outwards into the world, moves outwards towards the other through space. I sense the other at this point but wonder if its possible to start from any other place? Suddenly I felt our energies glide together - not like clashing but gentle merging to the point of slight infusion. Without touch I feel an intimacy of bodies in space and that our movement dynamic reflected this. I wondered how we had got here - sometimes I can be such 'a bull in a china shop' both physically and in thought and the arrival at this place seemed to have come from nowhere as a seamless shift from my tuning. And then I noticed a subtle drift like a parting - letting go. It was time to let go. You are aware in conversation of this - and I know at a more-than cellular depth this letting go is 'right' or a 'need to be' part of our process. Although I feel an overwhelming desire to retain moment - I notice I have no control over retaining this as the moment appears to have moved away.

The moment of stepping back coming out and watching is a brief but important encounter with periphery again to watch you come to almost stillness as we watch each other. There is a touching in our watching - I have a visceral sense in our watching. I sense also at this point the tension in my body in the form of indecision. I am on the edge of practice - I can choose to step in or am I even out? I don't know - but following - that's a matter of a meeting of action and will as intention. This becomes a beautiful and fractious moment of not knowing or unknown.

The change from that point of choosing to move is childlike exploring energy that ran around and giggled and leapt and darted around you in carefree silliness. This way of being distant from adult inhibition provides a sense of freedom. The end point - where is the end you ask - again I am aware of the unknown and of my need to retain beautiful moments. Then reluctantly I suggest we finish. Thank you for this experience.

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