Towards an Ecological Pedagogy:

Body Movement for Ecological Consciousness

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Abstract

This paper examines the moving body as a vehicle for raising ecological consciousness. Due to the modern over-preoccupation with the pursuit of rational aims, human interactions with the surrounding environment increasingly lack conscious awareness. Consequently, in the modern world people tend to lack an ecological consciousness. Nevertheless, the human body is a rich reservoir of ecological significance. From birth, humans are woven into tremendous interconnection with the world. However, humans thrive when their sensitivity to the physical world exists in harmony with their ability to pursue their rational aims. It is the combination of these characteristics that enables humans to survive in capricious surroundings and prosper in a wide array of contexts. Today, the human species faces an unprecedented crisis that threatens to collapse the reciprocality of the ecological bonds bolstering the prosperity of all worldly beings. This paper proposes that it is no longer a rational strategy for people to remain inattentive to their embodied ecological resonance, and that the moving body is an adequate pedagogical site for raising ecological consciousness. Ritualized body movements derived from Chinese traditional cultivation systems such as Taijiquan could orient practitioners to reestablish a perceptual intimacy with the larger cosmic world, thereby raising their ecological consciousness.
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Introduction

The growing zeal surrounding Eastern body cultivation forms among global audiences has led to two prominent phenomena: the increasing commodification of these bodily practices (Komjathy 2006) and their simplified reduction to the production of medical benefits. When the traditional cultural authorities which highlight the cosmic integrity of the body with the universal world are largely delegitimated by modern scientific authorities (Brown and Leledaki, 2009), the ecological significances gestated in these embodied teachings are undermined. In terms of the pedagogical nature of the moving traditions, this research proposes that the teaching of moving traditions should not be reduced to a medical therapy aiming to alleviate illness. Rather, these teaching should be infused with ecological orientations since the body is sensitive and spontaneous to external involvements and body movement intensifies such interactions. In this way, the body moving through predesigned movement schemas (Gallagher 2005) becomes a vehicle of conscious connections between the self and world. Therefore, given that embodied experiences shape one’s perception of the world, an alternative approach to the body and its moving practices is envisioned in order to uplift ecological awareness. I define ecological consciousness as a kind of self-awareness that acknowledges that human beings are planetary citizens who are responsible for the survival and the prosperity of the earth and are integrated into a cosmic order.

This essay examines the possibility and feasibility of an embodied ecological pedagogy that stems from Chinese body cultivation traditions such as Taijiquan. To
deal with the ecological crisis, which is also an ideological crisis, I argue that ritualized body movements that intentionally orient one’s consciousness towards the contemplation of the relationships between the human self and the environment can develop an ecological consciousness. Aiming to liberate people from a narrow focus on the myopic pursuit of their rational aims, the essence of this pedagogy is to locate one’s subjectivity in a broader network of relations within the cosmos beyond the secular-social frame.

Chapter one offers a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between consciousness, the body and its environment drawing on contemporary phenomenological and cognitive science studies of movement. This theory is then applied in chapter two to analyze traditional Chinese body movement practices. Chapter three discusses the effectiveness of an ecological pedagogy based on the ecologically implied body and the condition of modernity.
1. Moving Body and Emerging Consciousness

Embodiment can be understood as the mapping of the landscape of the body according to a predesigned topography. According to Gallagher (2005), the body is already structured by an innate schema which is wired by primary motor programs and perceptual capacities in the prenatal stage. Though the postnatal development of the body learning through experience is not ignored, theorists such as Gallagher contend that one is born with “a proprioceptive self that involves a sense of one's motor possibilities, body postures, and body powers” (2005), that is “meta-cognitive self-ascriptions of actions that involve conceptual and linguistic resources” (2008). However, while sufficient discussion is given to the pre-reflective and involuntary level of embodied movements and corresponding cognitive reactions, scholars seldom emphasize the internal transformations of the mind such as the allocation of consciousness when the body is intentionally moving. Less attention is paid to how a self-attending mind, a mind that is actively paying attention to itself and its environment, guides body movement; and in turn, how conscious motion heightens the awareness of the body and its surrounding. Most people direct their attention to specific goal accomplishments; psychosomatic interactions with the environment happen spontaneously and inattentively. Therefore, the first section of this paper foregrounds how motion expresses itself for its own sake and how it shapes one’s consciousness in the context of body movement traditions.
1.1 The Expressiveness of Motion

The motion of human bodies has several self-evident qualities that arise independently of human intention. An analysis of scholarly literature reveals five key qualities.

*Intersubjectivity and Embodiment*

Gallagher (2005: 83) stresses that we are “born into the world of others,” that is, on the one hand, we have an ecological sense that our sensory modules are woven in the intermodal system of a body schema working with a proprioceptive self that is always already coupled with others, that our link with others is immediate (2005). On the other hand, “to be human is already to be action-situated in the world in a way that defines the organized usefulness of the things we find around us, and then lets us think about them” (2008: 169). Motion expresses itself in the intersubjective encounters whose intentions are interpreted or evaluated by the two parties. For Gallagher (2005), we share a common ground of bodily intentionality, a pre-theoretical knowledge that is embodied in our actions and is made comprehensible to “both the perceiving and the perceived subjects” when our actions confront each other. In this sense, our primary knowing of others is first and foremost based on the shared motor capacities and possibilities. This is not to neglect the social and cultural construction of interpretable meanings embedded in our actions. Instead, intersubjective exchanges are not displayed in an independent field. Rather, they are already intervened by an embodied judgment of self-proprioception and experience. Therefore, Gallagher (2005; 248) claims that
“only in the setting of intersubjectivity, which is the ubiquitous setting of human behavior, and which is less than ubiquitous in other species, can movement be expressive”. The fact that new born infants are capable of imitating adults’ facial expressions is further evidence for him that human beings are enabled from the very beginning with motor and perceptual programs.

**Intentionality**

Bodily intentionality for Gallagher provided a pre-access ground for intersubjective communication. As a kind of non-verbal expression, the “intention in actions” (Searle; 1983) is readable in encounters with the other not only due to socially constructed experience, but primarily by a shared hermeneutic mechanism that functions through the inborn capacities of perceiving and moving. In this case, Gallagher gave an account of how the intention expresses itself in actions in a first sense. Searle (1983: 93) also points out that “one identifies the intentionality by its conditions of satisfaction, which is the movements.” This means that for Searle, there are two components of action: the intentional component (the experience of acting) and the conditions of satisfaction of that component (the movement itself).

In Searle’s view, the prior intention of the subject incorporates the whole intentionality of the subject’s actions. “Subsidiary actions” (such as going out of the door and driving a car) derive from the “prior intention” (going grocery shopping) and accompany the process of the satisfying the intention, even though they are not part of the intended consciousness (the shopping list). Therefore, from an intersubjective point
of view, the reading of intention is quite contingent on action (I see you go to the car and think you will drive a car), rather the postulation of your intentions. While from a subjective point of view, consciousness and action are intention-directed; the intention expresses itself in action (I know I am going out of my home and driving the car to the grocery). No matter whether the prior intention for a set of movement is understood or not, the movement is read “locally” in terms of the contingent intention embodied in that movement.

Equilibrium

Moving is infused with a rich sense of equilibrium. This refers to three essential qualities of expression. Confronting different environmental conditions, human bodies respond with a wide variety of somatic patterns, while at the same time being constrained by a neural schema which coordinates the motor possibilities of the body with a set of bioalgorithms that estimate and produce the optimal kinematic reactions. It is clear then, that pragmatic concerns orient the expressiveness of the movements. Specifically, the main operations of the equilibrium mechanism are the utilization of the freedom and the minimization of the energy consumption in mobility. Secondly, the more mature the mechanism becomes, the more optimal kinematic patterns the body adopts. For example, Cheron et al. (2006: 133) concludes that “children increasingly adopt a kinematic pattern that minimizes energy expenditure as they approach adulthood”. Secondly, Feldman (2006: 7) describes how the “neuromuscular system minimizes the discrepancy between the actual and desired positions and readjust
referent endpoint trajectory in second comparison for the prefect accordance”. This is to say, with the improvement of the neuromuscular system, the moving body is able to achieve a growing state of equilibrium through the high imitation of the ideal accomplishment of body movement and the incessant refinement of such an imitation.

The third important quality is the non-reproducibility of movement. Equilibrium refers to a dynamic, volatile and random flux rather than a peaceful and static state. It is formed from a web of delicate counterbalances within multiple interconnections of beings. Since equilibrium is always achieved temporarily, no element of it is replicable. Being in the present moment is no longer the same as in the previous second, and because time is irreversible, being cannot be duplicated in each successive instant. For example, when Feldman (2006: 6-7) discusses the problem of how a movement can occur without triggering resistance of posture-stabilizing mechanisms, he explains that “posture-stabilizing mechanisms, including muscle reflexes, are readdressed to a new posture rather than inhibited when an intentional movement is produced. … The previous position becomes a deviation from the newly specified one”. In other words, the body adjusts simultaneously to different postures and positions according to the environmental variables emerging through the unstable space, hence the movement is unreproducible.

Speed

In On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary, Koepnick (2014: 10) looked at the “impact of speed on our sense of time and mobility, our structures of
memory and anticipation, our notion of place, subjectivity, and community” and addressed slowness as an “alternative to approach to our present.” In contrast, a “contemporary speed” tends to abbreviate much of our attention towards the diachronic meanings of the life and compress the duration of sensory receptivity. In traditional bodily cultivation practices likewise, slowness is valued over speed because, firstly, more attention is required in order to monitor the coordination of the bodily parts in an unstable environment. In this way, one renews the self-knowledge of the body and takes chance to modify the incompatibilities of the one’s proprioceptive somatic pattern with the shifting external conditions. Moreover, slow movements discard what Koepnick (2014:14) phrased as “mindless progression” and provoke meaning in the present through attentive engagement to the interaction between the body and the surroundings. In turn, one enriches the senses of the self, the body and the world as a whole.

Secondly, Shusterman (2012: 208) indicates that our primordial proprioceptivity that instructs our sense of movement is “inaccurate and dysfunctional,” which means that one has to be attentive to one’s motions in order to overcome habitual deficiencies accompanying our inattentive mobile modes. Given that “motor behavior tends to follow practiced or genetically predetermined motor programs that integrate with intentional action” (Gallagher 2005: 99), slow movement is thus capable of uplifting the awareness of one’s motion and thereby refining the body’s motor program. In a nutshell, movement expresses itself differently at a different velocity. While those who perform movements have a strong sense of their intentions and a weaker sense of their
bodies in motion, the reverse is true for those those who are observing the motion of others. For this reason, the contemporary speed which ecstatically urges people on at ever faster rates, makes obsolete people’s capacity for self-examination. In this way people are alienated from their own bodies as well as their environments. The more rapid the movement the less able it is to express itself to the agents, who are every more pro-occupied with attaining their rational aims. In contrast, the reverse is true when the agent slows down the pace of movement: the agent’s knowledge is reconfigured towards the moving body and induces transformative motor patterns at the conscious level.

_Spatiality_

By spatiality I am not simply referring to a body contoured in a three-dimensional space; rather, a constellation of dynamic variables bound up with the performative body in movement complicates the visualization of this spatial relationship. Movement is not observed in isolation in terms of any bodily parts or a motor disposition; instead, movement is captured in sequence woven in a multiplicity of efforts, which, according to Bartenieff and Lewis (1980), include Space, Weight, Time and Flow, which are demonstrated within every movement (53; the authors capitalize these key terms). These elements function in constant competition with each other to constitute a complete movement sequence. This is to say, within a fluid movement, the main responsibility among different elements is constantly changing so as to deal with the challenge of the environment as the body moves forwards. According to Bartenieff and
Lewis, “the body/space/effort triad reaches a greater degree of balance or cohesiveness, with none of the elements taking a lop-sided constant over-dominance” (88). In this way, a simultaneous and constant recomposition of these elemental forces enables the body to maintain a balanced movement.

Moreover, the body navigates through space in a frequently precarious way generating and reacting to tensions between the body and the space around it: “Moves are processes of radiation into space creating the kinesthetic experience of spatial tensions” (1980: 29). Such a tension also emerges at the dynamic interface between the skin and the physical world. Though the manifestation of tension largely precedes the awareness of the mobile subject, in reality the body needs to consciously respond to and deal with unpredictable encounters as they occur. The space that the body dwells in is not a superimposition of predesigned schemas. Every second of it tends to be irreproducible. The nature of this randomness and creativity drives the somatic program towards a state of greater adaptability and toleration. In this way, the movement becomes expressive to its agent as it reacts and learns in these unpredictable real-time encounters.

1.2 Consciousness and Body Movement

Even in moments of relaxation some effort is present, although the degree of exertion is greatly reduced. In all activities, there is a constant play for proportionality among the Effort elements (Space, Weight, Time and Flow) to “balance exertion and recuperation for most effective function and expression” (Bartenieff and Lewis 1980:}
The exertions and recuperations of the Effort elements best manifest the dynamic and shifting nature of the body’s movement. Even the most seemingly motionless body reveals subtle locomotive displays. For example, a meditative person who sits still keeps expanding and contracting his/her body by breathing; after a long time of sedentariness, though the practitioner’s mind might be immersed in a state of mystery, his/her body would automatically be making fine adjustments within the interworking of muscles in order to make the posture more bearable and sustainable. Furthermore, the variable external conditions easily induce the immediate corporeal reactions: a sudden blast of wind could result in uncontrolled muscular tensions, in which the body shrinks and trembles to produce heat. The body, bracketed by its environment, synchronizes its possibilities for movement to the extent that it is continuously interacting with the physical world. Thus a motionless body has already embraced a kind of pre-dispositional awareness that is always ready to move. Such a locomotive consciousness, which remains underneath one’s attention in most cases, stays alert to the inner/outer fluctuations and meanwhile accesses proprioceptive responses to kinaesthetic commands. In discussing the “movement possibility,” Lloyd (2012: 32) has pointed out that the climber’s ability of “dancing on the wall has more to do with a receptivity to depart from that which is pre-rehearsed and embrace the unknown, the possible, a readiness to move on and with the wall.”

When the body starts to move, the locomotive readiness converts to the overt effort of alternating limbs, moving torso, shifting postures and positions. However, this
does not mean that the invisible kinetic power is totally assimilated into the motor exertions. Instead, the conversion is temporal and ever-changing from one end to the other. This is to say, in a series of movements, an intention of preparation for sequential postures has to be withdrawn from current bodily expression simultaneously, through which the following movements join the former smoothly without interruptions and thus an episode of somatic performance succeeds. Within this vital process, the locomotive consciousness of the self is also fragile. This is because the consciousness is directed to the goal of the intentional actions instead of the actions per se. It is rather implicit and vague, though not impossible, for one to realize how one’s limbs move forward to a door, or what exactly the posture one takes to reach a cup of tea.

In two cases body movements demand our conscious attention. In *The Phenomenological Mind*, Gallagher (2008: 138) describe the case of acquiring new skills:

In acquiring new skills, for example, we may begin by paying close attention to certain rules of performance, and when doing so we typically focus on and monitor our bodily performance to an unusually high degree. But a successful acquisition of this new ability will lead to performance without explicit monitoring of bodily movement; the skill becomes fully embodied and embedded within the proper context.

In this situation one has to review one’s motions either panoramically or in detail in order to build up new intimacy between the body and the attainment of certain expressions. It is not until the meaningfulness of a genetically coded body born with a collective experience and the required abilites reinvents itself in the new environment
that the individual is able to update his skills and adapt to different contexts. In terms of bodily training and habitual correction of body movements, Shusterman (2012: 199-200) adds that

> to refine the spontaneity and to enhance self-understanding, it is important to integrate the unreflective and reflective body consciousness for improving the quality of our experience and the efficacy of our self-use. … Improved, reflective body consciousness is therefore necessary for correcting such bad habits and achieving better control of the use of ourselves.

He also tagged spontaneity with the term “blind” (201) to emphasize that it is not sufficient to rely on non-reflected body consciousness in order to navigate through a changing world.

Secondly, the interruption of a moving body demands conscious attention. Bartenieff (1980: 109) gives one example such as encountering a hindrance:

> Sometimes, a negative happening will alert a skilled performer to the discovery of his/her body as a total shape. For example, when some part, even a very small or minor part, is injured: a foot, a shoulder, a hand or a finger. It is not that that part does not work; the injury often engenders an awkwardness that hinders the whole body. The unity of the whole moving body Gestalt is affected in some way.

The noncompliance of any particular body part disrupts the wholeness of body movement. This on the one hand accounts for the irreplaceability of single motile components, that though the proportionality of each component in initiating the movement actively changes in every instant, they can never be assimilated to the others.
On the other hand, it is startling how alert and unstable our locomotive consciousness is that a minor breakdown of a part could disturb the unity of the whole movement. Even a sudden thought that emerges from our chaotic mind can deviate our locomotive rhythm and trace, such as making us stop and pause.

In fact, stopping the flow of movements also risks hindering flourishing that comes from pursuing values and meaning beyond securing basic living conditions. There is a delicate economic order between movement and consciousness that can be traced through the following facts:

a) The moving body is not only excited by the inner desire, but, including its desire and its motility, is moulded by the extremely contingent historical conditions in certain ways. In other words, if we look at all the events in the human history that concluded why and how human beings started to move, we are not surprised to find that the movement is not simply some expressive acts or postures conveying meanings intra/intersubjectively in particular context, but rather is inescapably the products of causal and coincidental precipitations from the past and present, and thereby extend to the future as the body moves.

b) Human awareness is always bounded in a limited scope. The way it fluently incorporates itself into nature’s abundance and takes advantage of this to survive and thrive has to do with the support of the tacit processing and handling of the body/environment reciprocity at the unconscious level. It is
clearly inefficient if we fail to deal with the routine tasks habitually without conscious introspections on the acts and the thoughts. Therefore, the secret of the success of the body moving through fluctuating space with restricted awareness is derived from two strategies: the strategy of consciousness and the strategy of unconsciousness. The former pursues a growingly resilient body/mind synthesis in the temporal surroundings, while the latter assists the fulfillment of that goal by taking over tasks that fall out of an intentional scope.

c) The roles of consciousness and unconsciousness in a moving body are always interchangeable. “Conscious wakefulness” of locomotive happening occurs throughout the whole body and can only be tracked in specific space/time intervals when the body moves. Often the environment (with which the moving body confronts expected and unexpected hindrances) acts as a catalyst for one sort of awareness out-competing the other and thus earning a status of being conscious. Therefore, in body movement there is no permanent, sustainable consciousness that could ever escape being displaced at some point.

I have stressed how body movement and its consciousness are biased by the physical conditions. However, the inner drive of reflecting on bodily style and the surrounding environment where the movement blossoms is equally important. An urge to integrate the space with a more malleable body constitutes a constant part of the natural will of human beings. Humans manage to survive and thrive through generations via coordinating their experiences and capacities with the changing world;
they internalize the temporal externalities into mindsets that are regulated by the environment while in the meantime reserve considerable autonomy to utilize these sources of experience and capacity for living; they learn to reform the disorder of the chaotic moment and to arrange better ways to lead a meaningful life. As Laban (1971: 99) notes: “man has added to this struggle for moral and spiritual values.” Action and counteraction appear in the reciprocal relationship of the body and the environment, as Gallagher (2008: 138) states:

The environment directly and indirectly regulates the body, so that the body is in some sense the expression or reflection of the environment. The environment calls forth a specific body-style so that the body works with the environment and is included in it. The posture that the body adopts in a situation is its way of responding to the environment. The body finds itself already with feelings, drive-states, kinesthetic sensations, etc. and they are partially defined by the environment in which it must function.

It is also the case that when there are changes in the “internal” environment, the “external” environment can suddenly take on a different significance, i.e., the environment can become experientially different.

Therefore, a precise analysis of movement only makes sense if it sees the moving body as dwelling “within the beautiful chaos of the living moment” (Lloyd 2011: 12); conversely, the significance of the environment can only be expressed through a momentary and dynamic bodily wholeness.
2. Body Movement in Chinese Cultivation Traditions

Chinese cultivation traditions, including Taijiquan, Daoyin and other martial art forms, introduce multiple ways of the body inhibiting the world. These practices direct the cultivator to examine themselves through repetitive and slow motile patterns as well as mind-calmness instructions, during which highly attentive efforts are paid to monitor and control the somatic motions in order to attain physical and spiritual co-harmony. It is worth noting that though forgetting the self and the world and thus returning the chaotic mind to the pure and empty peacefulness is the highest goal of traditional body cultivation, one has to firstly purify the self by isolating oneself from the blind indulgence in desires, refining and reconnecting to the self before dissolving it into the larger wholeness. In addition, this process of cultivation does not follow a single-minded route; rather a discursive mode of teaching via words and images is integrated into the physical movements creating constant back-and-forth between thought and action.

Due to the fact that consciousness is alert and sensitive to external interference, it is not surprising that the way of appropriating the symbolic and embodied materials of the body cultivation lead to different bodily expressions and psychological constructs. In this section I discuss the purposeful attentions brought into the process of ritualized movement forms by the engaging practitioners and how these kind of attentive movements inconspicuously intervene in the outcome of the practices. The goal is to
understand how the body movement practices can sharpen the conscious reciprocity between the body and its dynamic environment.

2.1 The Pedagogical Value of the Moving Body

“One moves to learn” (Lloyd 2012: 23). In moving the self-perception of the body integrates spatial dynamics that not only upgrades the ways the body responds to and reacts to its surrounding but also informs alternatives for decision-making regarding motor performance. The former enables more spontaneous coordination with movement consciousness, while the latter demands some degree of reflection. However, these two are not absolutely demarcated processes, but are interchangeable with each other as discussed in Chapter One in the case of acquiring and habitualizing new motor skills. In every new movement consciousness established through the process of movement, the body has preconceived an anticipated attainment of the motor possibility and has already embraced a readiness to adjust and to transform to it. Likewise, while the body is able to dictate a large variety of motor responses (its proprioceptive and unreflective dealings with the world) regardless of the waxing and waning of the movement consciousness, the course and the effects of such immediate motility stimulated by the external world is largely synchronic with the perceptual and cognitive processes. In terms of this reciprocal relationship between the consciousness and the body movement, Gallagher (2005: 56) noted that “anything that might upset his perceptual or cognitive processes has an effect on his movements.” And on the counter side, he went on to stress that “whenever consciousness begins, it will already be
informed by embodiment and the processes that involve motor schemas and proprioception” (80). As a result, due to the fact that the change on either the mental or the physical state has an effect on its counterpart, the pedagogical values of the moving body can be illustrated in three ways with different centers: affect-centric; allocentric; and ego-centric.

*Affect-centric Pedagogy of the Body*

The first way, concerning the affect-centric point, is discussed within the context of medical health. In a study done by Michalak, Rohde and Troje (2015), positive evidence was obtained on whether the style of physical activity affects depression related processes. It confirmed that while “the fact that emotional processes affect bodily states seems to be almost trivial, … bodily processes can also influence affective memory” (122), that is to say one’s recollection of positive or negative moods. In particular, “the happier the person walks the higher is the affective memory bias” (124), the propensity to recall positive words rather than negative words. The happier the movement style, the bigger the bias to the positive recalled word compared to the negative. They conclude that “taken as a whole, our results indicate that manipulating walking style can change a central pathological mechanism of MDD [major depressive disorder], namely biased processing of negative self-referent material” (124). This evidence supports Bartenieff’s (1980: 151) view that movement process is “a statement of feeling and thinking.” Though he follows an inner-outer path suggesting that the movement is the expression of projected feelings, Michalak, Rohde and Troje’s study
also suggests that movement can be understood as a communicative feedback process that has an impact on affect, either reinforcing the existing mood or counteracting it. As a malleable substance, the body moves to change so that it learns to evolve through the vagaries of the world. Consequently, the body movement process founds an embodied ground from which affections and feelings stem. And by manipulating this foundation, we now know that unwanted mental states may be transformed into the opposite.

A second example of this affect-centric point can be drawn from Bertenieff's dance therapy. In *Movement: Coping with the Environment*, Bertenieff (1980: 149-151) analyzes how action is able to rewrite experience, with a view to healing mentally ill patients through dance movement:

Sometimes, traumatic shocking experiences are stored as fixed, isolated gestures or symbolic representations of an experience. Dance therapy can sometime release these fixations and, sometimes in conjunction with verbal therapy, expose and help to dissipate their cause. The verbal associations, usually after the experience, maybe minimal or they may become major aspect of the total recovery.

The therapist serves as a movement catalyst, creating an environment in which the patient can relate-in movement-to others, from whatever level is possible for him/her, and then grow toward an expanded level, and eventually, work through immobilization and out of it.

What it (dance therapy) attempts to offer are many physical paths toward the restoration of the creative use of the self, individually and in the community of the others.
The therapeutic function of movement is to break the rigid memory and to return a fluid mentality. In dance therapy, the flowing body strengthens the stream of minding through the aid of a stream of motions and thus sweeps away the stubborn trauma stuck in one’s experience, just like the way the stone in river is flushed away by the constant flow. The fluid mentality enables connectedness and wholeness of the individuality with which one is able to relate the self to the other and thus to the larger community. It also enables the “restoration of the creative use of self” (151) because the mobilization of the mind stream converges on the numerous potentialities offered by many physical paths. The way the movement reaches people’s affection is that the movement flow acts as an impulse on the obstructed mind stream and thus breaks the fragmentation of the patient’s traumatic mentality.

This relationship between movement and affect can also be seen in Allot (1992) who writes that “the system of developing language was isomorphic with the system that resides the motor program.” Here he explains that language and motion are likely to share similar communicative functions: when language with its symbolic and representational power exerts material effects on the mind, the motion is also expected to project substantial influences on the mental conditions. Consequently, the pedagogical value of movement is evident in recovering from psychic abnormality.

Allocentric Pedagogy of the Body

The second example is based on an allocentric perspective derived from a Confucian altruistic tradition. Courtesy (li 礼) is one of the central ideas of traditional
Confucian values. With a set of social and individual regulations, the advocation of courtesy is to maintain a strict social hierarchy especially within the unit of imperial dominance and the unit of family. One of the performative aspects of such regulations is that of individual behavior. In ancient China, Confucian tradition asked people to behave in a way conforming to the requirements of courtesy, such as dressing neatly, a respectful appearance and decent comportment. This set of guidelines was infused with rich moral and social meaning that both promoted an ideal of citizenship and helped stabilize the imperial dominance through disciplining the body and in turn the mind. From a Foucauldian perspective, we can say that this kind of pedagogical orientation of bodily behaving functioned so as to subsume individuals into components of the social order which served to the greater good of the nation. In other words, the individual behavior was modeled beyond its own benefit; rather, this aspect of somatic pedagogy produced knowledge of the body as submissive and dependent force that was expected to align with the mainstream social ideology.

After the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, the allocentric mobilization of individual bodies took place in new ways. During the Great Leap Forward (1953-1956), the government ignited the ecstasy of a great population to devote themselves to economic development. During this period the liberation of women from the household setting to the workplace took place not because of a progressive awareness of gender equality; blind to the diversity of forms of human existence, bodies were indiscriminately organized into a homogenous pool of economic
productivity. When China began a new era of market reform and economic development in 1979, it also released its one-child policy to regulate the population, further subjecting the body to administration and management in accordance with the goals and priorities of the national project.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (19XX) defines an era of “biopower” as “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations.” In these cases, the mobility of body is steered towards the collective and national benefits in order to build up the foundation of a society. These techniques constitute an allocentric pedagogy of the body in which the subject’s habits, movements and styles are oriented towards some external goal.

*Egocentric Pedagogy of the Body*

In final example, an egocentric point of view could be explored through the teaching of Daoist body cultivation. This view is to direct one’s consciousness back to the inner state of the self, through which one is able to readjust and refine the synchronization between the physical and the mental and ultimately attain the spiritual plentitude. In Daoist scriptures, the subjective self is often understood through in two terms: mind (*xin* 心) and spirit (*shen* 神). Kohn (2004: 49) refers to classical acupuncture texts in which the mind has “two meanings: the first is a general term for all the various aspects of consciousness and mental activity; and the second is specific term for the evaluation of the world in terms of good and bad, likes and dislikes, based on sensory stimuli, emotions, and classificatory scheme.” In the second sense, the mind
is contrasted with spirit, which is “primordial and is in connection with the physical body causes human beings to be alive.” Similarly, the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi Neijing* 黄帝内经) notes that spirit dominates the human body and its condition determines the life or fate (*ming* 命) of the human (Kohn 2013: 107). Here we can see the mind is in a sense acquired through conscious cultivation, while the spirit is inherent within the body. In other words, “minding” is a conscious act to perceive, judge and determine the action in the world. The spirit, on the contrary, is preconscious, embodied and shaped by the body/mind’s activity. However, it should be borne in mind that both the mind and the spirit co-exist with the body. Therefore, the division of the mind and the spirit here is not to rank them in a hierarchy, but to comprehend the creative and transformative process of the body cultivation.

Moreover, the mind is closely associated to the idea of virtue (*de* 德). Different from the kind of virtue advocated by the Confucian, for whom virtue is a social construct fulfilled by individual compliance and collective order, Daoists understand virtue as the function of Dao (Lin 2009), the fundamental cosmic power intrinsically existing in every being. Virtue is at the same time both cultivatable and inborn Li Pengcheng (2007), therefore, understands virtue not in terms of the social order, but as the premise of a healthy body and long life (2007). Li Jianhong (2011), drawing on Zhuangzi’s view that virtue is the essence of the body, further understands that virtue is developed through the existence and cultivation of “essential qi” (*jingqi* 精气) or “primordial energy.” Because, according to Chinese cultural traditions, qi is
fundamental to all natural beings it is not hard to understand that virtue also constitutes the reality of the body. However, just like the mind, the moulding of virtue requires cultivation. Otherwise, from a Daoist perspective, there would be cases of excessive emotions or negative qi-patterns leading to the loss of virtue; while from a soma-psychological perspective, bodily cultivation gets people to reflect on their mentality and behavior, which prevents the obsolescence of virtue. Similarly looking to Zhuangzi, Qi Linhua (2013) believes that virtue embodied in the Dao is universal in all beings. At this point, virtue is believed to be inherent rather than to be cultivated. Nonetheless, no matter whether virtue arises naturally or from nurture, when it is embodied in human being, it is a part of humanity. Thus Lu Bing (2005) contends that to achieve longevity, humanity should incorporate the divinity, the Dao of heaven (tiandao 天道), because “Dao is eternal” (2005). Therefore, the cultivated body, for these authors, is to be harmonious with the natural course and to reach a long life.

Daoist body cultivation demands an egocentric perspective that monopolizes one’s attentiveness and directs it inwardly. It is indifferent to the disturbance of the secular world and is active in examining the self-contained reality of the inner life. By doing so, the practitioner can invoke new ways of thinking towards the tripartite relations of the self, the body and the environment. The sublimation of the humanity to the long-lasting divinity following the assimilation of the divinity into the humanity is the mean and the end of the cultivation. Moral progress, as one of the core components of the process of attaining immortality, mirrors the positive engagement of one’s
consciousness in harmonizing habitual ways of perceiving with an inner perception. One of the famous inner prospect of the body is the Neijingtu\textsuperscript{1} (picture of the innerscape 内景图). It depicts mountain and river, along with these natural figures are some lively episodes including a man driving a cart on the hill road. This vision of seeing the body is largely different from the unimaginative view towards the body, which sees the body as mere a constitution of flesh and blood. Meanwhile, by embedding the body into the natural landscape and the dynamic metaphors, one learns to transcend a limited boundary of the body and the self and to be conscious of positioning himself into a boarder relation to the world. In this way, it becomes easier for one to align with the higher morality, as it is rooted in the Nature, according to a Daoist perspective (virtue is inseparable from Dao, the way).

\footnote{Neijingtu is said to be a symbolic guidance for Daoist body cultivation, depicting the vision of inner-alchemy.}
The effort of harmonization reflects a sense of alertness that one starts to interrogate the world one used to take for granted and its parochial scale compared to what he had been enlightened via the inner-vision of the body. The truth one holds onto
regarding the world and its relationship to oneself is futile if one does not see the 
contingency and volatility of the nature of events which are constituted of and constitute 
multiple layers and procedures. Moreover, the single or multiple truths are not isolated 
from their positions and moments; on the contrary, the appropriation, disintegration, 
composition, contradiction and transformation of one event, are at the same time the 
causes and the effects of the other events. This is to say, “truth” is a plastic and unstable 
surface upon which different encounters exert shaping force, and these 
encounters/events/truths/experiences, are in turned shaped by the others they contact. 

To put it bluntly, we can imagine an array of cells that is densely and compactly 
arranged on the flat, with their membranes attached to each other. As their boundaries 
are malleable, the change in one cell’s shape affects the other cells’ shape nearby it, 
and in turn, we can see a chain reaction happening in this array of cells, with every 
shape changed more or less. This example illustrates the interconnection of truths in 
our lives. To sum it up, an egocentric standpoint is able to teach us to rediscover the 
vast diversity of movement initiations and responses consciously that lead to a 
psychosomatic building of an animated body and the cosmic intimacy.

2.2 The Origin and Inheritance of Chinese Moving Traditions

Several logics have long dominated the imagination of Chinese moving traditions. 
Firstly, the human body is fluid; skin is a porous boundary where qi circulates within 
and without. In traditional Chinese cultural and medical knowledge system, qi, as 
intangible as it is, composes all worldly being in the universe, and is interchangeable
between the single entity and the larger cosmic domain it resides in. Moreover, the circulative qi inside the body is sensitive to the external change and could be affected easily, and so does the wholeness of the body. Wind, signifying the altered state, is frequently referred as a correlate to the corporeal anomaly or imbalance. Kuriyama (1999: 257) beautifully writes that “the full story about the body and the wind involves the rootedness of human being in the world, the confluence of cosmic winds and personal spirit, and despite that, the body remained separate from the world around it.” In other words, though wind “sculpted the shape and possibilities of the body, molded desires and dispositions, infused a person’s entire being” (235), the body itself also retains a decisive power for its form and inherence. This could be examined through two ways of contextualizing body in Chinese traditions.

Firstly, the body is a dynamic process at the micro-level. Apart from qi flowing through the meridian routes mapping the somatic innerscape, the zang 脏 and fu 腑 organs play principal roles in the body. Opposed to the anatomical view of the bodily organs, Kuriyama (1999; 2) indicates that “in ancient Chinese medicine, the [zang] and the fu weren't tools of some controlling source; Instead, they both referred to repositories (hollow), and stored qi, vital breath.” Hence nothing in the body is self-closed, because qi is unstable and it would become excessive, depleted or balanced according to the changing time and space. In Health and Long Life, Kohn (2004: 9) notes that “each part of the body is in a process of constant exchange with all others, and also with everything else in society and the greater universe. All is in a state of
dynamic flow, in an ongoing process.” Seeing human being as a body-mind totality, Kohn posits the body as a dynamic process that reflects a larger cosmic cycle physiologically. For example, the meridians are theoretically not only in correspondence with the various organs, but also more generally “with a range of cosmological processes, including colors, tastes, animals, musical instruments, planets, and so on” (67). Moreover, qi, the fundamental concept in Chinese healing theories and practices and regarded as the root of human being and nature, flows along the meridians and determines the human health by its movement and quality. In this way, the condition of human body is not destined merely by the flesh and bone, but also an immense and invisible complexity that poses a great impact on biological performance.

In terms of the lived body, Wang (2009) provides specific examples of the practice of female inner alchemy (kundao 坤道) created by Sun Buer 孙不二 (1036–1125). Analyzing the processes of transforming the female body from incomplete and imperfect to complete and excellent in Sun Buer’s work, Wang identifies that the female body for Sun was a valuable laboratory for physical and spiritual transformation; it is the dwelling place of the basic components of human existence, qi and spirit; “a gateway to harmonize with the universe (tiandi 天地) and ultimate void (wuji 无极)” (289). From these points of view, the body is to be cultivated and to be worked on to attain the perfection of the physical and the mental space. But it is not mere an object to be passively refined, nor “simply the means to encounter objects” (290). Rather, the
local reality of a dynamic body requires contingent dealings from the cultivation practices.

Secondly, the body is an integrated force at the macro-level. According to Kohn (2006), the underlying cosmic continuum (Dao 道), as both the root of creation and manifest in the phenomenal world, is the location of the unity of the human mind-body. In other words, the mind and the body are integrated complex of cosmic forces. However, how is it possible for a materially existent body to achieve a state of transcendent unity with the cosmos? There are two main methods.

Conscious body cultivation transforms the mind from being occupied by “foolish imaginings” and “ordinary thoughts to a means for penetrating the mystery of the all-encompassing source” (Kohn 2004). Purifying the mind by expelling excessive emotions paves the path to reach the ultimate meaning of the being: Dao. Specifically, Li Jianhong (2011) states that Dao expresses itself through the virtue in one’s mind, which manifests humanity and aligns with benign individual behavior in harmony with society and the universe. In this way, one is able to transcend the physicality of the body and perceive a wider sense of self in the world.

Secondly, the unconscious attainment of spiritual transcendence is also worth noting. Kohn (2004: 49) explains that in Chinese medicine, the mind is contrasted with the spirit (shen 神), which is understood as the “primordial, formless, and ever-changing force of life.” Mind, in Daoist body cultivation, is associated with emotion, which is fluid like qi. And its direction could result in sickness or health. In this sense,
due to the close relation between the body and the mind, the cultivation of the body means not only to mold or shape the physical form, but also to control the emotion and practice the mind, leading the qi in a proper direction. Spiritual attainment, however, is opposed to the conscious body/mind refinement. This is because the spirit as a primordial existence is universal and intrinsic in human body. To cultivate the body and the mind is to ultimately return to this primordial state and achieve freedom from mental disturbance. In this sense, the goal of Daoist body cultivation is to abandon the mind, which is localized as humanity, and to return to the spirit, which is universalized as divinity, which is the Dao. In Daoist teachings, this is the way human being becomes immortal by integrating the self into the divine, non-secular order. In terms of this point, Lu Bing (2005) argues that as immortality is the ultimate goal of body cultivation practice, it becomes important that the process of body cultivation aims not only to facilitate the psychosomatic unity, but also to syncretize this unity with the Dao, which is eternal.

With the booming of health care industry, a desire to practice and to teach Eastern body cultivation skills such as Yoga, Qigong and Taijiquan has been spread among a wide range of global citizens. However, it seems that this stream of “Eastern Revivalism” does not emerge from an intellectual desire to explore the philosophical wisdom and the mystical experience constituting the core of the movements; nor is it motivated to preserve the ontological foundations which sustain the spiritual vitality of the movements. Instead, the imperative for national modernization coincides with the
need to find alternatives to biomedicine. On the one hand market economies emphasize the religious and traditional origins of the movements to “make them more appealing and more consumable to a wider segments of population” (Komjathy 2006: 209). At the same time, “the practices were disembodied from their charismatic and traditional authority and were replaced by a scientifically validated authority” (Brown 2010: 136). As a result, we see the production of isomorphic medical forms with different natures, which are censored through mechanisms of legitimacy, scientization and secularization.

Specifically, there are three main shifts in the narratives of deploying those practices including Qigong and Daoyin in both China and in the West. According to David Brown and Aspasia Leledaki (2010), the shift from self-cultivation to corrective therapy has been one distinctive feature, and forms a prominent part of what Campbell (2007: 135) refers to as “the New Age movement’s adoption and inventing of Eastern cultural traditions.” Further, the authors identify that while these practices are potentially positive in their therapeutic and transformative impact, they appeal to Western scientific validations that can “disembed these forms of charismatic and traditional authority and gradually replace them with a scientifically validated authority” (136). Likewise, Komjathy (2006: 224) comments in Qigong in America that spiritualists frequently make claims about the connection between Qigong and “Daoism,” with the latter stripped to a large extent of its historical and religious characteristics. Kohn (2004: 210) adds that “although Qigong continues many exercises that go back far in Chinese history, the term is quite recent and the main thrust of the
practices in China has been more medical than spiritual.” Also “terms related to Qigong such as Qi-circulation have been integrated with modern medical concepts: the vehicle for Qi-circulation becomes blood vessels instead of meridians, because the former is more measurable than the latter” (210). In addition, Burschka et al. (2013: 182) research the data of Taijiquan practice, and find that “the growth of interest in the health benefits had replaced the original idea of self-defense.” The over-dominance of the pursuit of modernity is evidently replacing the traditional insights of those movement practices.

Secondly, Wile (2012) argues that “new fantasies are being churned out.” Fantasies, such as magical healing phenomena and mystical personal experience, lead to a craze of faith and devotion. Ironically, there is no exact evidence to align the practices with a divine origin, and the popular viewpoint indicating the relationship between Taijiquan and Daoism is not verified yet. Yet in many scholarly and hereditary esoteric texts, Taijiquan is given a supernatural genesis. The reason given by Brown and Leledaski (2010: 139) when they referred to Karate, a Japanese movement, was that “the commodification of the martial experience is often combined with strong reinforcement of Orientalist discourse for the purposes of making the movement form more commercially appealing.” The remystification of the Eastern movements is a marketing strategy that appeals to global audiences. As a result, the voices of rationality grow smaller and smaller in a marketplace where fantasy is the ultimate product (Wile 2012).
Thirdly, new group identities are created. Kohn (2004: 214) notes that “the prevalence of Qigong in Western society has created a new kind of patient—educated, informed, self-aware, critical, and very selective.” They refuse to be swayed by the medical authority and its system, and try to keep themselves alive and healthy through practicing Qigong. The other is the group of leaders, teachers and advocates of Eastern movement forms addressed by Brown (2010: 135) who demonstrates that “many in the West seized the opportunity to validate, and therefore legitimize, their claims to the beneficial or transformative effects of practice by embracing Western scientific studies of their practices.” These teacher-practitioners use scientific studies to justify the positive effects of the movements and attract larger audiences, which undoubtedly is connected with market economy and business relations. Furthermore, while examining the origins of Taijiquan and its different groups, Wile (2012) notices that in order to make their school appealing, the successors of different Taijiquan families endeavored to make connections between a supernatural genesis and the Taijiquan clan. As a result, he suggests (2012: 28) that we can “witness the reemergence of lineage and free markets, with a return to family business and the rise of Taiji tourism.” Therefore, it is apparent that the family inheritors of Taijiquan turned themselves into businessmen in order to help their groups thrive.

These three main shifts in the deployment of narratives of tradition are further problematized by internal Chinese issues of the historical reception of texts and the inheritance of core terms. In particular, it is noticeable that the inheritance of the written
texts on instructing cultivation skills often involves misquotation and misappropriation. Shen Shou (1992: 30) illustrates that the classics of Zhuangzi and Laozi were not monographs for cultivating health (yangsheng). However, some of the Daoists and practitioners tended to pick up equivocal sentences and notions to propagate their practices, which was a deliberate distortion of history. Further he criticized the misinterpretation of historical materials. Shen examines the the practice of “embryo respiration” (taixi 胎息) in a few texts, pointing out that taixi does not mean that breathing is no longer needed; rather it means to breathe extremely naturally, slowly and softly (236). He argues that the practice of abstention of food (bigu 辟谷) as described in Scripture of the Yellow Court (Huangting jing 黄庭经) does not precisely correlate with previous meanings, and so the historical inheritance of these practices is always doubtful. Moreover, Western scholars who present essentialized version of Chinese cultivation traditions, can rely only on existing texts and may be unaware of historical transformations in the inheritance of Chinese terms. In contrast to Shen Shou’s argument that taixi should be understood as slow, natural breathing, Kohn (2004: 202) for example, describes taixi as practice in which adepts no longer needed to breathe or eat. “Instead,” she writes, “they can regulate and nurture the qi within, creating a closed world of energetic transformation.”

Despite the problematic historical and cross-cultural inheritance of these moving traditions, the inherent values of Qi, virtue, mind and spirit, remain significant for
thinking about the pedagogy of the body, and in particular its relevance for recollecting the intimacy between the moving body and its environment.

3. Developing an Ecological Pedagogy out of “Moving Modernity”

3.1 The Ecological Implications of Body Movement

To further clarify the relationship between the movement and the consciousness, I would like firstly to draw on Gallagher’s (2005: 107) description about consciousness:

Consciousness, as it emerges ontogenetically, consists of a proprioceptive awareness that is already embedded in an ecological framework, and is in intermodal communication with another exteroceptive sense (touch). It is already structured as a pre-reflective, non-conceptual self-consciousness, and involves an experiential differentiation between self and non-self.

He illuminates how consciousness sprouts physiologically and in connection with the other. While the ontogenetic nature of consciousness secures the stability of the self within a world of turmoil, it also results in a blind faith in the over-empowerment of individual will, that human being plays a predominant role in relationships with other forms of worldly existence. Kuriyama (1999: 151) acutely points out that “there is a fundamental schism in Western self-understanding: the split between voluntary actions and natural processes.” The disjuncture of will and movement leans on two mechanisms: one is the proprioceptive, pre-intentional functioning of a somatic schema which, according to Gallagher (2005), is embedded innately; the other is the preferential
selection of motile screen on cognition. A precise understanding on the latter mechanism can be drawn from Bartenieff (1980: 53):

Most people have predilection for particular Effort elements. Their movements may consistently reflect some more active Effort elements or particular range of Effort elements and almost indifference to others. Such predilections define the movement styles of the individuals, and, consequently, their character traits.

Bartenieff indicates that “every movement has some degree of a Space, Weight, Time and Flow effort” (53), and “it is the Effort attitude that determines the quality of movement, the message conveyed” (56). These statements lead to a conclusion: that though movement and movement-consciousness cannot be divorced from their environment, a considerable autonomy is retained in human mind so as to process internal impact on the disposition of movement preference. It is true that scholars researching the cognitive mind are unlikely to deny the environmental influence on the body and thus the embodied cognition. Gallagher (2005: 173), for example, mentions that “perception is less the result of an internal processing of sense information, and more the result of an interaction between the body and its environment.” However, the environment that we are interacting with today is no longer the one millions of years ago, when human being just began to walk upright. The physical space has mingled with rich cultural signs and the confrontation with objects is endowed with meaning beyond something of physical impediments or motile excitement. When spectacular cultural history and idiosyncratic life experience syncretize, predilection for certain elements and thus particular movement styles as well as the individual characteristics
have come into being with it. From an ecological perspective, this causal link results in a contemporary dilemma for environmental redemption: if a person moves without reflecting on the surrounding environment, he is indifferent to it. And even worse, we in modern times are prisoners of a culture that discourages this kind of reflection, and thus maintain and even exacerbate the long-denounced bias of body/mind split via increasingly incorporating the human with machines and by objectifying subjective agents by making them discrete and tradable. Meanwhile, because the integrity of the human being is dissected through the sophisticated and sectionized mechanical intersecting processes, the necessary foundation which enlightens the intimacy with a larger cosmic world is thus undermined. All this runs counter to the notion that the body/mind whole is, according to traditional Chinese culture, a microcosm of the universe.

Based on a critique of the negative idea of the body brought by technology merging with human life, Gallagher (2012: 139) foresees that,

> [O]nce the subject is habituated to the tactile stimulation the technology itself ceases to be an object and is incorporated into the body in a way that discloses the world. Such technologies, which are clearly objective pieces of engineering, can capitalize on sensorimotor contingencies and brain plasticity and become part of the body that we live.

Technology is intrinsically mechanical; engineered by a series of data and algorithms, its main principle is to follow specific patterns and conditioned movements. This is in stark contrast with the sentiment of nature, whose superiority is found on
more of a random ground that brings creativity and vitality to genetic optimization; each moment of breakthrough of the evolution is non-duplicated and extremely contingent. Imposing mechanical rhythms on human body disrupts the creativity and vitality of the lived ability of the human being. Bartenieff (1980: 75) adds a comment to this modern phenomenon as follows:

New technologies may introduce new rhythm possibilities, but when they confine themselves to actions without recuperations or attempt to fit the actions totally to machine, the human element on which the next levels of creativity depend is abandoned.

Though consciousness is by nature ecological, its ecologicality is not self-aware; neither is its moral bearing, which is to acknowledge that human beings are planetary citizens, integrated into the cosmic order, and responsible for the survival and the prosperity of the earth, well comprehended. Then what does movement bring to the change? The answer is that moving de-naturalizes the kind of taken-for-grantedness by retrieving individual integrity from the larger conscious framework. The differentiation between the self and the other becomes evident as the tension is enhanced with the body moving through the space. In other words, the movement incites conflicts with a multiplicity of spatial variations that the body has to pay more active response to. Tantamount to the extent that the sedentary consciousness gives rise to an autocratic view of self’s position in relations to other, with some degree of sensitivity, one recovers a more equal status of the independent self withdrawn from the movement. This is one facet of the ecological implication of movement.
More clues in terms of the value of ecological teaching of body movement could be glimpsed through cultivation practices such as Taijiquan. To practice Taijiquan is to engage in a series of slow, fluent and continual movements that requires the practitioner to be equipped with a tranquil mentality and balanced postures. It doesn’t involve thinking through movement, but rather it moves to think, letting the motion direct the mind and the body. Just like the river flows into the sea, the inner-landscape becomes visibly broadened through concentrating on bodily postures. This is because, as Cheron (2006: 127) puts it, while “standing and balance functions must work in conjunction in order to constantly assume antigravity muscle contraction to hold the body in upright position and to maintain the projection of the centre of gravity in the sustentation base avoiding falling over,” the slow and cyclic movement forms speed down the process of concurrent postural junctions and make the efforts of coordination explicit. In bringing purposeful attention to bodily motility. Lloyd (2011: 5) has mentioned that “repetitive motions experienced in practice that might otherwise be experienced as automatic will be explored with a ‘bracketed attitude’ in that they will be explored with enhanced, present moment and kinaesthetic awareness,” which would in turn, lead to the spiritual and virtual attainment as mentioned above.

Moreover, symbolic associations including words and images are indispensable in the teaching of body cultivation: “for Daoism, it was the symbolic description of the body that was viewed as the spatio-temporal locus of a system of mutations and correspondences with the outside world and the spirit world” (Despeux 2005: 10).
Though the bodily practices such as Taijiquan and Daoyin could not be historiographically traced to a Daoist origin, they share with the Daoism the fundamental guidelines on the way of perceiving and approaching the human body in relation to a cosmological network. In her article discussing the visual representations of body in specific Chinese historical periods, Despeux (2005: 49) argues that “a bounded view of body is inevitable” in order to make the image of the body meaningful and readable to its readers, which is to locate clearly the part of the body and its relation to the whole, to depict the external movement of the body in practices, or to identify the internal circulation of the body. She also observes that the figure of the body in Daoist ceremonies and individual practices “is not bounded by any kind of outline, and the distinction between inside and outside is almost effaced” (42). Figurative elements including the running river, flowing sea, palaces and spirits are central in visualizing the body as a mountain. As a result, we can see that in Daoism the body is viewed as a microcosm of the larger cosmos; its cultivation is no different than the cultivation of other natural beings and aims to preserve the vital energy of the environment and achieve spiritual value.

3.2 Reflecting on Moving Modernity

Do we think about movement? Athletes certainly do so. We can assume that to pursue every tiny element of progress, they must develop extreme sensitivity to the muscular textures, the spatial conditions, and how different sets of variations (both somatic and environmental) interact with each other in order to calculate best
combinations for best records. The next step is to install sophisticated machines to capture seconds of change and predict most workable schemes. After the machine figures out the appropriate data and pattern, the athlete is trained to meet the criteria. Gradually, the human body for sport competition is preferred in certain shapes: long waist for high jumping; sturdy thigh for running; extreme height for basketball, and so on. And the kind of movement response during the sport is “conditioned,” for the subject moves to achieve the ideal motility, and he or she merely does so within specific context. Bartenieff (1980: 149) has indicated that

such a repetition of a prescription leads to a conditioned response that the intent of movement of dynamics is no longer a fresh movement impulse arising from the given momentary body/mind state. Instead, it becomes mechanic and isolated from the lived and constantly fluctuating process of the whole organism. It may become frozen out of the multi-level process.

In this increasingly global and capitalized world, meanings are prescribed to something that ultimately immobilizes the vibrant inherence and isolate the objective form. Subsequently the form is utilized to serve the shallow but easily merchandizable desires, which keeps people apart from their rootedness in nature and culture. In this section will look at the danger of superficial and reductive appropriation of movement practices, which consequently fragment the movement experience and cut off the practitioners from receiving responses between movement and environment. Furthermore, a movement awareness along with an alternative discourse will be carefully explored through the ecological wisdom bred in the body movement forms.
In terms of the danger of the superficial appropriation of new materials, Bartenieff (1980: 147) has observed:

There is a frequently fragmented, indiscriminate use of yoga. This is quite widespread and can be traced to casual teaching and studying that is irresponsible and promotes misunderstanding and misuse of a valid discipline. The misuse frequently results in diminished movement responses instead of harmonious balance of action and non-action.

Four possible results out of six that are subsequently described by him are worth noting for the arguments of this article:

1. Instead of using the whole kinesphere, space may become restricted. This can be observed through the explosive springing of gyms, yoga workshops, Qigong associations and so on. It is firstly containing the body in a closed space that successively the movement sphere is limited. As the practitioner is confined to a self-contained gym or workshop space, he or she simultaneously establishes a specifically contextualized relationship between the environment, the body and the consciousness. While the space is filled with mechanical implications, mirrors, machines, and authorized figures (coach or teacher), one’s movement consciousness becomes overwhelmed by these powerful dictators. Data monitors effort, reflection urges precision, and verbal instruction induces desire. Extensive images within this finite space not only dominates our vision, but also our imagination. The more we rely on this way of workout, the more likely we are going to lose our autonomy of being the master of significance.
2. Instead of a clear spatial intent, there is a preoccupation with pushing the body into the shape apparently desired by the teacher. A spatial intent would be an initiative to build up kinetic consciousness that not only develop aesthetic feelings towards the spatial connections of the movement, but also grasp the intimacy and the unboundedness of the body and self within the scope of the tangible and the intangible world. However, as the initiative is replaced by the single-minded pursuit of a certain body shape, the significance of movement is reduced.

3. A generalized tendency toward passivity is observed, particularly in the initiation of action and of Flow. This differs sharply from the goal of a guru, who uses his physical and spiritual energy to produce clear initiations and fulfilled body shapes. Heavily relying on the instruction of the teacher and the statistical measurement of physical index to approach one’s body increases the immobility of movement. An inanimate, “dead style of acting” leads to the failure of appreciating the latent and subtle movements, and thus the ignores the tension and the challenge posed to the body by the environment. This ignorance dismisses the pedagogical value of these forces and counter-forces, which is bringing down the communicative qualities of reflection, evaluation and the experience of encounters between the body and the environment. Consequently, the body suffers a risk of losing the autonomy of thinking and acting.

4. When the positions are executed sloppily, the tensions and counter tensions inherent in them are distorted. Thus, instead of balanced tensions that produce relaxations, the performer will experience abrasive exertions or muddy non-tension.
Since the tensions and counter tensions of each position have specific body/mind effects, sloppy performance will also limit those effects. Thus, the therapeutic goals are defeated (Bartenieff 1980: 148). In terms of the therapeutic goal of the movement, Bartenieff (1980” 151) has addressed that “what it attempts to offer are many physical paths toward the restoration of the creative use of the self, individually and in the community of the others.” However, once the movement lacks of the vitality of tension, it is caught in a self-closed reality that is only capable of following the powerful dictations from others. The wholeness of the individual is not to withhold one’s own integrity, but to bear in mind a sense of belonging to the great universe. As the movement consciousness is monopolized by the negative receptivity, the foundation for that acknowledgement is absent.

When some Chinese scholars looked at the moving body, they explored it in the culture of modern physical education and inquired into the influence of Daoist ideology on sport. Wei Shengmin (2012) and Li Youqiang (2013) concluded that in Daoist body movement, it is essential to conform the actions to the principles of suppleness and flexibility. Extending to modern physical education, it is crucial to absorb these principles and develop an inward, balanced and holistic form of moving. Wei (2012) went further to compare the Eastern cultivation and the Western sport, indicating that the western way of body cultivation is specialized and professionalized on the parts of body with the technological breakthroughs on small biological modules such as cell. Moreover, the west places more attention on strengthening the physical body, with the
ultimate goal of achieving the benign circulation between the body form and the inner organs through the building of motor-muscle system (Wei 2012). This is contrast to, according to Wei, the pursuit of the psychosomatic unity in Eastern body cultivation.

In addition, both Wei Shengmin and Li Pengcheng addressed that the disposition of no action (wuwei 无为) essential in Daoist thinking has a negative influence on sports and the social progress (Wei 2012; Li 2007). This is because the idea of no action discourages the competitiveness. However, as the idea of competitiveness is central in modern physics, which is predominantly Western, it becomes contradictory for these authors to claim a “progressive” body movement while adopting Daoist cultivational doctrines that advocate an idea of concession (tui 退). Though “retreat before advance” (yituweijin 以退为进), or “mildness over firmness” (yiroukegang 以柔克刚) are still positive values in their local contexts, they are incompatible with modern physical philosophy which seeks instant and outward progressions. In conclusion, the contradiction, which is absent in the literatures of the Western scholars, reveals not only the difficulty of adaptation of Chinese cultural values to the modern ideological system, but also the dilemma of its inheritors who seek to modernize themselves while preserve their native accents.

However, we cannot afford to lose these traditional values in modern world. Chinese ecological wisdom originated when the ancestors started to make sense of the world around them. Without the assistance of sophisticated equipment, they depended heavily on the body as a scope to position themselves in world. They analogized the
universe to their bodies, corresponding each organ to a particular natural element, the inner change to the wind, the blood circulation to the natural cycles and the artery pulse to the heartbeat of the cosmos. Rather than an instrumental interpretation, it is an ontological clarification that is tightened with the concept of “the world is in me and me is in the world.” When movement arts such as Taijiquan were created, they were not created for the purpose of teaching these ways of seeing things. On the contrary, the movements had to be infused with these understandings so that doing the movement is beneficial in a way of facilitating the unity of “the heaven and the human” (tianren heyi 天人合一), which is the highest goal in Chinese body cultivation. In other words, the movement incorporating a cosmic standpoint of the human being has become a more concrete form of that standpoint, and practicing these movements elucidates the extensive inclusiveness of the universe and of the body, that the two are mutually exchangeable. Stripping the movements of those ecological standpoints renders the practice soulless.

From the Daoist perspective, virtue is seen to be the influx of divine power (mostly referring to Dao) incarnating the fundamental of humanity, which determines human to be human. This has resonated with the fact that human beings are born in nature; their existence is inseparable from the larger cosmic world at the very beginning. Moreover, the reason why the cultivation of virtue is coupled with the cultivation of unity of the body, the mind and the spirit is that the virtue, and thus the humanity, is not a self-contained reality inside the body; instead, its strength and weakness depend
on the relevance we make with the external surrounding. The more we become aware that our body is included in the larger environment and is reflecting it, the more we come to value our significance as the human being in a world of ecological connectedness. To locate and to experience Dao through movement is to recollect the knowledge of such a situatedness.

Freedom is another answer for cultivating virtue. Li Jianhong (2011) agrees that experiencing Dao through the body facilitates the unity of body and mind and the freedom of the mind. When one’s body and mind are attuned with the Dao, the underlying laws of the universe, one tends to get rid of the compulsory abidance to social laws and customs and become spiritually free, and thus attain immortality because of this spiritual transcendence.

The Chinese cultivation practices are in this sense ecological pedagogies. They are forms of ecological knowledge that people move to learn. However, the learning function of these practices are invalidated once a mechanical and disconnected intention of workout takes over the form. As the ecologicality of the movement form has readily connected with the “mystical experiences, religious visions, moral discipline, practices of combat (in the martial arts), and, even political resistance” (Palmer 2011: 91), being nonchalant to it results in movement devoid of profound meaningfulness that discloses dramatic conflicts and battles of human searching for values and beliefs. Instead the movement form is just filled with dull and simplistic repetition of actions and a short-sighted goal of the ideal body. The implication for self-
transcendence is diminished, and the opportunity to orient one’s awareness to a larger picture of one’s habitat is neglected. Therefore, an alternative discourse is in need to subvert the existing one that blandishes on building nice physical shape, improving health condition and combating esoteric disease via practicing these traditions. *The Treatise of the Most Exalted One on Cause and Effect (Taishang Ganying Pian 太上感应篇)* has powerfully pointed out that civilization tend to preserve health but ignores virtue, cure disease but disregard longevity. This results in an ecstasy in pursuing momentary pleasures. The cognitive span is compressed: people only pay very limited attention to the surrounding. The space for patience and tolerance is shrinking; everyone want things faster and shorter. The culture becomes increasingly simple, fragmented and easily take-away; most of the participants are easier to be emotionally agitated without further thinking or reflection on the issues they confront with.

As a result, the teaching of the cultivation movements is in need of attention to the ecological discourses, for cultivating ecological consciousness through body movement makes us aware of the rootlessness of our superficial cultural identities created through numerous pleasurable but ephemeral pursuits and devotions. However powerfully they generate satisfaction in one’s accomplishment, they fail to produce sustainable values and spiritual power that push people forward to a non-dependent and self-authorized regime. Without the root, people float adrift like duckweed upon a sea

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2 The Treatise of the Most Exalted One on Cause and Effect was written by Changling Li (937-1008) and its time of completion was not clear. The Treatise is a Daoist text advocating people to do good in the world.
of cultural miscellany despite their desires to the contrary. Therefore, awakening to movement is the first step to counteract the narcotic effects of the “duckweed” culture, because as movement is embedded and embodied in all of us, it boosts the interaction between the body and the environment. In so doing it reminds us that we are always threatened by the fear of falling from the throne of dominance over other worldly beings, because in reality the environment at any time poses more uncertainty and dangers to us than those we are used to. Hence if we have paid enough attention to our movement, we would have understood that human being is not over another, but is within each other. And its power is carefully balanced by a spectacular network of forces input by the overlapped, parallel, and intersectional relations. In this way, the ecological discourse reconnects us to the grounded fundamental.
4. Conclusion

The fundamental difference between the Chinese traditional notion of cultivating health and the Western physical concept of workout renders the ecological inherence of body cultivation forms ultimately incompatible with modern somatic discipline. Cultivating health through particular body movement traditionally is to preserve the cosmic energy-Qi, and to refine the chaotic Qi from within and without the body to a primordial state that comes close to the original power of the universe, the Dao. As a result, the body is revived as perfectly pure as the new-born, who in Daodejing 55 is highly praised as the ideal incarnation of the primordial Qi.

In contrast, a prevailing concept of workout today barely places any emphasis on the internal cultivation of movement. Instead, an enthusiasm to mould certain body shapes overwhelms the concern about innate qualities of the body. The cultivation of the mind and the body is totally separated; doing meditative trainings in most cases involves just a static body; and walking, running or Yoga excludes reflections because practitioners look forward to the anticipated forms rather than backward to the inner self-exploration.

Moreover, as the industry of health and beauty flourishes, the moving body has been commodified and been packaged with intriguing fantasies, medical value as well as advertisements. The plasticity and the suppleness of the body in cultivation have thus ironically symbolized the compliance of individual physicality and mentality to the market power. “Thick virtue holds lives” (houde zaiwu 厚德载物) is an old teaching
permeating through thousands of years of moral disciplinary convention in China, which basically echoes with the Daoist notion of virtue that is a self-located divinity (Dao) granting vitality to every being. A recognition to such a universal quality is important for human being to nurture the self-rooted faith in both the substantial and the spiritual world.

The ecological unconsciousness is ubiquitous and under the surface of our skin and mind, indicating in a less evident way that we are born to be wired into a extremely complex net of existence that goes beyond our wildest imagination. The motive to awaken the ecological unconsciousness is based on the need to expand our existent meaning beyond the narrow significance that voiced by the autocratic, biased and sometimes desirable but hallucinated sociocultural constructs. And the way to approach twakefulness, in this paper, is through body movement. A moving body resurfaces momentary movement awareness dealing with different impulses posed by the environment upon the skin. This primarily opens a portal for people to realize their vulnerability as “a being on the earth.” However, such a realization is not common sense due to the fact that people have limited attentive space and they prefer to focus their sensitivity according to their life histories, individual experience, social statuses and other unaccountable determinants that define them as a dependent and an independent entity. Moreover, as many traditional forms of knowledge are remolded and relegitimated into modern objects today, the Chinese body cultivation forms without exception are deprived of the ecological sensitivity that teaches practitioners to
discover their intimacy with the nature, in order to gain more market share. As a result, these traditions become something purchasable by consumers, rather than being regarded as a heuristic life wisdom.

However it is undervalued at this time, we cannot deny that body movement is able to raise ecological consciousness, if it is not torn away from its ecological implications and the movement sensitivity. In the case of moving body cultivation, the teaching and learning discourse has to be refilled with insights that constantly inquire and examine the human existence in a cosmic frame and through multiple strata of human history and experience. It is not that these insights are opposed to the expectations of the practitioners that results in their dismissal, but rather they are simply not in place. Great customer service does challenge a customer’s ideology. And the production line of practitioners and teachers allows only a few episodes of time and handouts that make sure the most fancy part of the product is being presented, which is the physical health benefits, and a little bit of infertile spirituality. This paper is not proposing a way of stopping this simplistic appropriation of the moving traditions; Instead, by investigating in how body movement and the accompanying discourse can awaken ecological consciousness, I argue that it is no longer a rational strategy to be inattentive to our embedded ecologicality in face of the ecological crisis. And moving to learn should be prioritized in our ideological revolution.
List of References


