

**'INNER MOVEMENT' BETWEEN PRACTICES OF MEDITATION,
MARTIAL ARTS, AND ACTING: A FOCUSED EXAMINATION OF
AFFECT, FEELING, SENSING, AND SENSORY ATTUNEMENT¹**

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Sensing is this living communication with the world that makes it presents to us as the familiar place of our life. The perceived object and the perceiving subject owe their thickness to sensing²
[Merleau-Ponty 2012: 53]

To be sentient is to open up a world, to yield to its embrace,
and to resonate in one's inner being to its illuminations
and reverberations [Ingold 2011: 12]

THE LATIN *SENTIRE* MEANS «TO FEEL». To be sentient is to be opened to «feeling», i.e., to «sensing» and thereby experiencing «a world». But precisely how many senses there are, how they are understood, and how a «world» of sensing/experience is defined varies widely across cultures, histories, and religious-philosophical perspectives [Classen 1997; Elberfeld 2003; Guerts 2005; Howes 2003, 2005]. As noted in the two quotations above, and as Giovanna Colombetti [2013: 2] argues, «the activity of sense making is simultaneously also affective».

Specific sensory/experiential «worlds» are potentially opened by long-term, in-depth practice of meditation, martial arts, and

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² Donald A. Landes [2012] in his recent translation of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* uses the «more active 'sensing'» rather than the less active «sense experience» to translate *le sentir*.

acting/performance³. Within many approaches to embodied practice there exists the potential to gradually elaborate or unfold a certain complexity or «thickness of sensing» that constitutes the living «world» of that practice⁴. There is available – if one attends to it and opens one’s awareness to it – the experience of «what it is like» to inhabit/sense/live within that specific «world». How does one learn «to be sentient» and «to open up a world», yielding to the resonance «within» offered by that specific «world»? What are the «illuminations and reverberations» afforded by particular processes of embodied practice within a specific context?

Given that one of the primary concerns of phenomenology is examining what it is like to experience specific phenomenally conscious states, i.e., with what it is like to perceive, attend to, imagine, feel, sense, remember, etc. [Thompson & Zahavi 2007: 75], I will primarily use a phenomenological approach to examine selected aspects of attention, sensory awareness, and affect/feeling that can be experienced as part of the «inner movement» in these related but diverse practices⁵.

³ In this essay I use acting/performance interchangeably to refer to the «work» of the actor/performer, i.e., how the actor/performer deploys her bodymind focus, consciousness, awareness to enact and experience a specific performance score. The actor’s performance score may be defined as that structure or sequence of actions determined in part or in full by conventional performance techniques, and/or through rehearsal processes (sometimes responding to and embodying a dramatic text), and/or through devising/making processes. The score provides the performers with a repeatable template or map that guides her embodiment (through movement, enactment, vocalization), the deployment of her consciousness (attention/awareness), senses, and experience of that score within each live performance. For a more detailed discussion see Zarrilli [2013a].

⁴ Conversely, for some practitioners of Indian yoga (for example), the ultimate purpose of their practice is to control the senses, cease all mental activity, and literally withdraw from the «world».

⁵ My approach to the study of experience, sentience, embodiment, affect/emotion, and consciousness within bodymind practices [Zarrilli 2015b] is interdisciplinary as I draw upon comparative philosophy, anthropology, cognitive science (especially that branch best known as dynamic systems theory [Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991; Thompson 2007], and recent interdisciplinary studies utilizing neuroscience [Walach, Schmidt & Jonas 2011; Schmidt & Walach 2014]. Similar concerns are found in Paterson’s study of touch [2007], and Richard Shusterman’s «somaesthetics». Somaesthetics «highlights and explores the soma – the living, sentient, purposive body – as the indispensable

Example 1: Opening breathing exercise

I stand with my feet comfortably open to the width of my shoulders, my knees slightly released (*not locked*), my arms comfortably at my sides, my mouth gently closed. My external focus is directed through a point at eye level across the space from where I stand in the studio. I am «looking» *through* this point from *dantian* – from a place in my lower abdomen about two inches below my navel. That is, I have (imaginatively) «moved» my external visual opening to the world from the physical eyes «in my head» to *dantian*. [The «feel» of choosing to «look» or «visually attend» to the point ahead from *dantian* is decidedly *different* from an ordinary/everyday mode of perceptual visual scanning].

As I settle into this position, I sense down through the soles of my feet, opening my awareness to and inhabiting the «grounded-ness» available to me in this «ready» position. On the impulse of the next in-breath, while keeping my external gaze focused ahead through a point, I focus my «inner eye» on following the in-breath from the initiation of *this* in-breath in *dantian* as it travels upward through my lower abdomen, torso, neck, and eventually out through my nose into the surrounding space. Then, on the impulse of the out-breath, I follow the breath with my «inner eye» as it travels from the surrounding space, in through my nose and downward, returning to *dantian*. On the «cusp» of the completion of each in-breath and each out-breath, I allow myself to sense the space/time «between», i.e., I open my awareness to and sense the completion of each in-breath,

medium for all perception» [Shusterman 2012: 3]. A major concern within the overall project of somaesthetics is better somatic self-use, and therefore the well-being of the individual. Shusterman's project originates from a philosophical pragmatism which insists «on the body's central role in artistic creation and appreciation» [Shusterman 2012: 3]. He focuses on somatic practices that increase «our powers of awareness, focus, and feeling through better mastery of their somatic source» [Shusterman 2012: 3]. See also Shusterman [2009, 2008, 2000, 1997]. I agree with Shusterman's criticism of Merleau-Ponty's at-times «essentialist phenomenological approach» which assumes that «all normal people enjoy the same primordial level of spontaneous perception and action... I think the situation is more complex. Many (if not most) of us manage to get by with habits of sensorimotor spontaneity that have various minor defects that do not disqualify us from being normal in the sense of having more or less average functioning...» [2009: 139] Shusterman's important point is that «Some people have better skills of perception and performance than others, and training is one way they have acquired them» [2009: 139].

and the subsequent initiation/impulse of the ensuing out-breath as it arises. There is a space between to be inhabited.

In addition, while keeping the external eyes focused ahead, and while following the breath with the «inner eye», I also sense an «opening» of my awareness to the periphery both right and left, as well as behind me.

SOME INITIAL TERMINOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CAVEATS AND QUALIFICATIONS

For purposes of this essay, I assume that there are ordinary states of consciousness (or modes of conscious awareness) and that there are transition or borderline experiences between and among these ordinary states of consciousness [Austin 1998; Tart 1975b; Cardaña 2009]. Cardaña explains how we «transit» between and within these states of consciousness and that such states organize experience, cognition, physiology, and behavior. Considered from a phenomenological perspective, meditation, martial arts, and acting may all be described as modes of embodied practice whose purpose is to shape socio-culturally, aesthetically, and/or historically specific forms of *extra-ordinary*, non-dual phenomenal consciousness that are somehow *different* from one's ordinary states of consciousness and experience. Austin [1998: 306-307] describes these as «*extraordinary discrete altered states of consciousness*» that «are rare, highly valued, distinct states that represent a *sharp break from other states of perception or intuition*». For example, one of the most common and important phenomenal dimensions of in-depth, virtuosic practice of various forms of meditation, martial arts, as well as acting is that the practitioner usually attains through specific training and/or hard-won experience, a heightened ability to *sustain their attention* even if the «object», quality, shape, and type of attention is extremely different. When embodying a particular discrete altered (or alternative) state of consciousness, «new logics» and «new ways of perceiving» [Tart 1975b: 28] are nurtured and developed. In addition, as I will argue here new modes of deploying one's sensory awareness and/or active imagination are also shaped and experienced [Zarrilli 2015b].

But *meditation*, *martial arts*, and *acting* are all highly problematic general categories. Each could be described as a *catch-all* term that includes such diverse techniques, purposes, approaches, socio-cultural histories, and styles/lineages of teaching that it is difficult if not impossible to provide a definitive definition⁶.

But from a phenomenological perspective, are strict definitions possible or even useful? As Stefan Schmidt [2014: 140] argues «it is almost impossible to draw a straight 'demarcation' line which separates the practice of meditation from other techniques» As anyone who practices «specific» types of meditation (such as yoga), martial arts (such as *taiqiquan*, Wu style), or acting (such as Michael Chekhov technique) knows, there is *tremendous* variation in how any of these specific types of practice are taught. Therefore, it is not the «label» (*yoga*, *taiqi*, *Chekhov technique*) that is important, but what techniques the teacher uses, how each teacher engages the student and approaches the specific process of transmission in a specific context, and how an individual's experience is shaped by that practice⁷. Too often studies of meditation simply name the specific tradition which their participants practice rather than examining the very specific context, tech-

⁶ As Stefan Schmidt [2014: 139] reminds us, the term *meditation* is of Western origin, deriving from the Latin *meditari* (to consider; to think over) «used in the Middle Ages to describe the continuous mental dwelling on a spiritual or other topic, and later a discourse about a certain topic». *Meditation* has become an increasingly popular subject of neuroscientific research [Walach *et al.* 2011; Schmidt & Walach 2014; Awasthi, 2013]. Major definitional problems have yet to be fully addressed [Awasthi 2013; Schmidt 2011, 2014]. Awasthi [2013: 4] reports «conflicting results» in many studies of meditation, which may be to a «lack of consensus on the definition of meditation», the huge diversity of techniques/procedures (chanting, mental imagery, following the breath, etc.), and the fact that subjects may be at very different stages of practice (some neophytes; some masters). Lutz *et al.* [2008: 163, emphasis added] argue that it is «essential to be specific about the type of meditation practice under investigation».

⁷ As I have explained at length elsewhere [Zarrilli 1998: 1-10, *passim*], to understand the context within which embodied practices both are shaped, and in turn «shape» the experience of practitioners in particular ways, a complex nexus of four interactive arenas should be examined: the literal arena or context of practice (such as the specific place of training/performance); the social arena; the arena of cultural production in/around that practice; and the arena of «experience» and self/other formation potential within that practice in that space/context.

niques, and specific state(s) which it is the aim of any practice to achieve. Schmidt [2014: 141, emphasis added] concludes that «it seems advisable not to insist on a definition which separates meditation from other practices but rather to *develop a system to describe in detail what a certain practice entails*». Therefore, examining any specific state of attention or deployment of one's sensory awareness should include identification of the specific embodied practice/process, the discourse/teaching process used by the instructor through which actualization of that state of attention or awareness is ideally achieved, as well as the historical and philosophical origins and traditions of a practice.

Clearly, to phenomenologically open up any experiential «world» within practices of meditation, martial arts, or acting, and unfold the potential «thickness to sensing» within that world requires *specificity*. Therefore, I focus on specific examples of embodied practice between meditation, martial arts, and acting in a specific context, and the optimal state(s) of attention/awareness arising within specific moments of practice. In keeping with phenomenological methodology, I utilize a first-person account of the experience of sensory/experiential states (such as Example 1 above) by focusing on «the *first person givenness*' of that experience» [Schmidt 2014: 141, emphasis added], i.e., the qualitative nature of what it is like to be having that experience⁸. The first-person accounts I provide are based on the in-depth modes of bodymind attention and sensory awareness training I have practiced, developed, reflected upon, and utilized over the past thirty-plus years as an actor, director, martial artist, and teacher [Zarrilli 2009]⁹. When using first-person accounts I am aware that

⁸ This quality is known *ipseity* – the constitutive way in which there is a sense that experience is always to or for «me» and not for someone else.

⁹ William James [1918: 185] focused on the importance of subjective/first-person experience as a basic source of knowledge when he announced that «Introspective observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always». A relatively recent approach which draws equally upon quantitative research of neural activity and first-person/introspective reports on a subject's experience is neurophenomenology [Depraz *et al.* 2003; Lutz *et al.* 2008; Depraz 2009; Awasthi 2013:9; Hasenkamp 2014; Shear 2014]. For several first-person accounts of performance see [Zarrilli 2015b; 2013: 20-22; 2012: 143-145]. Some

we must avoid a naïve form of introspection [Walach 2014: 12] since «verbal reports about inner experience can easily be biased» [Lutz *et al.* 2008: 167], and that «an explanation of a subjective content of mind, such as a feeling, an emotion or a particular subjective phenomenological experience, is not identical to that experience itself» [Walach *et al.* 2012: 55].

My focus in this essay on «inner» experience reflects the phenomenological experience of an embodied practice when it presents itself as having both «inner» and «outer» dimensions. Even in practices where the world-view is monist, and where the problem of extreme forms of dualism are not present, there is often an articulation of both the «inner» and «outer» dimensions of the experience of practice. For example, in traditional practice of *kalarippayattu* – the yoga-based Indian martial art that developed in Kerala during the 10th-11th centuries and is still practiced today – students are understood to gradually progress over time by obtaining «competent knowledge of the body», i.e., by mastering both the physical, fluid body of humours and saps (*sthula-sarira*) as well as the «subtle (yogic) body» (*sukshma-sarira*). The student first learns «the outer forms» through which the physical body becomes extremely flexible/fluid, and only later through assiduous daily practice does one actualize «that which is internal» (*andarikamayatu*) – «the inner secrets» of the practice [Zarrilli 1998: 84-153]¹⁰. At very advanced stages of practice inner/outer

actors resolutely refuse to reflect upon and/or discuss their own process and experience of acting, often declaring that to do so would break the «magic» or the «muse» that inspires them. Other highly experienced actors choose to reflect in-depth on their own processes and experiences, and do so with the type of depth, reflexivity, and specificity characteristic of life-long practitioners of specific forms of meditation.

¹⁰ Elisabeth Hsu [2007] carefully articulates the historical variability and diversity of the use and meanings of *qi* («breath, vapour, air») in Chinese history, especially with reference to its use in Medical texts. She notes that as early as the third and second century BCE key Chinese texts focused on self-cultivation as well as medicine «distinguished between *qi* and *feng* as inner and outer winds» [2007: 119]. See also Mroz [2011] for a discussion of practice. Here again the «outer» and «inner» dimensions of experience of practice are culturally and phenomenologically recognized and marked.

are no longer differentiated, but there exists the feeling of what it is like to inhabit a state of non-differentiation.

The above example of initial differentiation between «inner» and «outer» dimensions of one's experience of embodied practice reflects the fundamental, intractable «problem» of attempting to reconcile our inhabitation of the physical body, and our «inner» experience of that embodied practice--the feeling (or «inner movement») of what it is like to be «inside» that experience, the state(s) of «consciousness» we inhabit in that process, etc. The phenomenological/ methodological recognition of «inner» and «outer» dimensions of our experience in no way condones Western, Cartesian body-mind dualism; rather, it reflects how our experience sometimes presents itself to us. Recognizing «inner» and «outer» dimensions points toward one optimal state of accomplished embodiment in which a practitioner senses that she has transcended this type of differentiation.

HOW MIGHT THE «BODY BECOME ALL EYES»?¹¹

As explained in my monograph on the practice of *kalarippayattu* in Kerala, India,

...*kalarippayattu* [is] a «body art» (*meyyabhyasam*), and the only way to learn it [is] through «daily practice». «Daily practice» is *the* phrase used with mantra-like repetition to emphasize the fact that only with repetition can the practitioner begin to develop the proper «body expression» (*deham bhavam*). As his bodymind begins to assume this appropriate expression, a student gradually begins to embody the ideal state of accomplishment assumed in practice – a state where, according to the popular folk expression, like Lord Brahma, the thousand-eyed, «the body becomes all eyes» (*meyyu kannakuka*). This is an optimal state of [attention], awareness and readiness,

¹¹ This specific metaphor marking the ideal state 360-degree awareness of the *kalarippayattu* practitioner obviously emphasizes visual. But such a state optimally includes heightened awareness of auditory, tactile, and proprioceptive senses. As Christel Weiler [2014] noted in a response to a draft of this essay, «expanded awareness [...] integrates the ear in a sensible way». As explained below, it is essential for performers to fully a multi-sensory awareness.

often compared to the intuitive, instinctual state of an animal in its natural environment where it is ready to respond to any stimuli in that environment [Zarrilli 1998: 18-19].

Working as an actor, actor-trainer, theatre director, and martial artist, over the past thirty-plus years, I developed a composite process of pre-performative bodymind training for actors that includes intensive daily practice (two to three hours five days of week) of *kalaripayattu*, hatha-yoga (including simple yoga-stretching), and *taiqiquan* (Wu style)¹². While developing this process, I asked myself:

What specific studio-based discourse and what modes of «hands-on» instruction might «best» help cultivate and attune actors to specific heightened, extra-daily, non-ordinary «inner» states of attention and sensory awareness «available» in these embodied practices and of immediate use for the actor's work?

By the mid to late 1980s I had assembled from my primary and secondary teachers of *kalaripayattu*, yoga, and *taiqiquan* a specific progression of bodymind exercises responding to the above question¹³. I gradually articulated a specific discursive

¹² I began training in *kalaripayattu* in 1976-77 with Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar of the C.V.N. Kalari, Thiruvananthapuram. Between 1976 and 1989 for intensive periods of three to twelve months at a time, I lived and trained in Kerala for a total of seven years. During those seven years my *primary* practice was with Govindankutty Nayar, but I also underwent additional training with C. Mohammed Sherif, Raju Asan, and Mohamedunni Gurukkal in other styles/forms of *kalaripayattu* and *varma ati*, and hatha-yoga training with Dhayanidhi (Thiruvananthapuram) and Chandran Gurukkal (Kannur). In 1980 I was fortunate work alongside and train with A.C. Scott in a short-form of *taiqiquan* (Wu-style) for an intensive year. In all of the above, my own training was primarily mimetic observing the teacher or an advanced student and then attempting to embody each form. Teachers observe and correct. Occasionally in *kalaripayattu* training Govindankutty Nayar would place his hands on a student to help correct a form – such as keeping the lower back lengthened.

¹³ For the most complete account of this approach to training actors, see Zarrilli [2009]. As with any attempt at «good» pedagogy or process of directing actors, the discourses I use in training and the insights I bring to work with coaching individuals doing the training and/or when working with actors continues to evolve. This specific reflection on the training and the states of consciousness/experience it evokes will not doubt subtly influence precisely how I work with practitioners in the future.

formation and set of metaphors that to help actors more fully experience specific states of attention and sensory awareness which contribute to the possibility of the body «becoming all eyes» when acting¹⁴. To compliment the studio-based language that I use to initially guide practitioners toward elaborating the «inner» dimensions of the training, I also developed specific forms of «hands-on» partnering to enhance and help the practitioner discover and attune herself to the specific sensory awareness or «inner movement» or «feeling» available when practicing the pre-performative training. Finally, I created a series of bridging exercises known as «structured improvisations» which are a set of very simple psychophysical tasks organized into increasingly complex rule-based structures played in a workshop setting. The most essential elements cultivated in pre-performative training – focusing attention, sensory awareness, and the felt-sense of the circulation of *qi*-energy – are applied to these tasks. They provide a bridge between the ongoing pre-performative training and acting [Zarrilli 2009, Chapter 6].

The language I use to guide practitioners through the sequence of pre-performative exercises is intended to «open»

¹⁴ This optimal state of heightened attention and awareness is similar to but also *different* from that embodied and actualized by a traditional *kalarippayattu* practitioner. In this state for both actors and *kalarippayattu* practitioners one inhabits a 360-degree bodymind awareness that is active/passive, and therefore is able to immediately respond within that environment to whatever is happening and to be active in response. However, for the martial artist when in combat with (for example) sword and shield, there is the extra rather extra-ordinary element of extreme danger in the actual use of lethal force and the literal release of «power» (*sakti*) in slashing cuts that have the potential to «kill». Until the introduction of firearms and the creation of a modern army, the life of a *kalarippayattu* practitioner *literally* depended on getting as close as possible to attaining this optimal state of attention and awareness. For an extended discussion of this optimal state of «doubtlessness», «mental power», and transformative «fury» in the martial practitioner, see Zarrilli [1998: 201-214]. It should be noted that today in Kerala, and 99% of the demonstrations one sees in public and video-clips available on-line of *kalarippayattu* emphasize the external, highly gymnastic flexibility of the physical body performing exercises done as fast as possible, and the speed of exchanges with weapons rather than the subtler «inner» dimensions of fully heightened attention, awareness, and release of deadly lethal force discussed here.

them to a number of *states* of attention and awareness. I use the term *state* to mark the experience of what it is like to enter and inhabit the specific «world» being opened through these modes of bodymind practice as they are discursively elaborated in the studio. As emergent, these *states* are not absolute or fixed, and as I discuss below one's attention, awareness, and consciousness is often working not in a single *state* but rather dialectically between and among the following states:

- *attention states*
 - 1) concentrated/focused attention
 - 2) open attention/awareness
 - 3) «dialectical» engagement of attention between concentrated/focused and open/awareness
 - 4) «dialectical» engagement between «inner» and «outer» focus/awareness
- «*feeling*» the form(s) of training: inhabiting the subtle nuances of specific forms of training--«feeling» the form as its «inner movement»
- *sensory awareness states*: elaborating and opening up one's sensory awareness in a variety of modes such as «deep listening», or opening to touch/being touched [elaborating modes of visual focus—direct and indirect; elaboration of ways of focusing (outward or inward/indirect)]
- toward an «optimal» state where «the body is all eyes».

These states of attention and awareness are in some ways «progressive» in that each individual must begin by learning to focus their attention in a concentrated way, as well as how to keep an «open» attention/awareness; however, the «states» are also being developed *simultaneously* during the training process. How and precisely when specific practitioners experience these and come to inhabit and attune themselves to these states can be idiosyncratic.

The process of actor training I have developed might productively be viewed as a specific form of «perceptual apprenticeship» [Downey 2011b: 24; see also Downey 2011a] through which the actor learns increasingly subtle and complex modes of directing one's attention and opening one's sensory awareness in/to/through the specific tasks, actions, and qualities that constitute the horizon of a performance score actualized in a specific theatrical

environment¹⁵. Using a series of examples of embodied practice, I will elaborate further on the above states of attention/awareness, and on how one deploys attention/awareness *between and among* these states, especially in practice of martial arts and acting. To initially help describe each «state» of attention or awareness, I have adapted and expanded on a set of questions suggested by James H. Austin [1998: 296-297] that focus on the phenomenal qualities or dimensions of states of attention/awareness:

- What specific field is one attending to or opening awareness toward?
- What is the degree of intensity or amplitude of attending/opening?
- What is the structure or organization of a state?
- What are the properties of the state, i.e., is it «clear or indistinct, expanded or contracted»?
- Is there fluidity/movement or «flow» within that state? Even when seemingly still, is there still inner movement?

ATTENTION STATES 1-4

Example 1 above provides a description of the first of four breathing exercises that begin the pre-performative training process¹⁶. Most important for purposes of this discussion, is that the practitioner *begins* to develop what is usually described as «concentrative» [Austin 2014: 24], «focused attention» [Lutz *et al.* 2008: 164], or «contentless awareness of the mind» [Fontana 2007: 155] i.e., the ability to direct and sustain attention on a specific object – initially, the point ahead at eye level directly ahead¹⁷.

¹⁵ Following the work of psychiatrist Jeffrey Schwartz, anthropologist Greg Downey [2011b: 21-22] calls our attention to the importance of considering «directed neuroplasticity» in discussions of skill acquisition, and therefore to forms of «perceptual learning».

¹⁶ For a complete description and analysis of these breath-control exercises, see Zarrilli [2015b].

¹⁷ Fontana [2007: 154] differentiates between «two major strands» of meditation although there is «considerable overlap between them»: 1) «meditation with ideation» which is sometimes described as «meditation with seed» and 2) «meditation without ideation» (sometimes described as «meditation without seed»). My focus here is on the latter.

But given the structure of the exercise, there is already *complexity* within this initial «state» of attending to. As described above, even on the first day of introducing individuals to these apparently «simple» breath-control exercises, I invite participants to not only attend to the point ahead, but simultaneously to relocate their «external eyes» from their heads to *dantian* (located approximately two inches below the navel) to begin to exercise their «inner eye» on following the in-breath and out-breath, *and* to begin to open their peripheral and back awareness. Therefore, the «structure» of these exercises is quite complex as one is invited to work *between and among* attending to the point ahead with the external eyes, «looking» from *dantian*, following each in-breath/out-breath with the inner eye, and developing an ability to openly attend to and be aware of the space one is inhabiting. All four are specific ways of learning to still the mind, direct one's attention, and thereby quiet a too often naturally busy-brain, «monkey-mind», or «squirrel-like» mind that races here and there [Austin 2006: 33].

Unlike some forms of meditation where one focuses in solo practice exclusively on entering and visualizing a single image within and withdraws all other awareness, for the practice of the martial artist and actor it is essential to learn to direct attention while *simultaneously* keeping a completely «open» awareness to anyone/everything in that environment. Two aspects of the experience of practicing these exercises stand out. In being attentive with the inner eye, in being attentive through the point ahead with the external gaze, and by opening one's sensory awareness both outward and inward, one is stretching both attention and awareness «*toward* something. Attention reaches out into the environment as well as 'out' within one's own bodymind. We attend *to* things, orient toward them, face them» [Austin 2006: 38], while simultaneously sustaining an awareness of *the from*, i.e., keeping open to the subtler modes of awareness available to us from which the «to» emerges.

«FEELING» THE FORM AS «INNER MOVEMENT»

Given the primary purpose of the opening breath-control exercises – to help the individual initially still the mind, attend to, and open awareness – the intensity and amplitude does not overtly vary greatly as one continues the exercises daily. What *does* alter over time is the degree, type and quality of the «felt» sense of connection within to what inhabiting the exercises is «like». When one begins, there is little «that it is like» since sufficient repetition and experience have not as yet attuned one to what is possible within the exercises. «What it is like» only emerges over time, and changes in the sense that – like learning to have a discriminating sense of smell for the perfumer or taste for the expert wine-taster – the subtle ability to discriminate and «taste» or savor the quality of the «feeling» is enhanced. It is like a process of sedimentation – the «depth», «clarity», and «quality» of: a) «concentrated attention»; b) «open awareness» are both enriched. Likewise, depth, clarity and quality are simultaneously enhanced as one c) *dialectically works between* single-point focus and open awareness, and d) *between* «outer» and «inner» focus.

Attending to in-breath and out-breath is an essential or «base-line» part of the ongoing training as overt physical movement is added in the additional breath control exercises, as well as when practicing yoga and *taiqiquan*.

Example 2: The opening movements of taiqiquan (Wu-style, short form)

Using the type of attentive-breathing described above I «settle» into the opening standing position from which I will begin a repetition of short form of Wu-style *taiqiquan*. After several cycles of attending to each in-breath/out-breath, on the *next* in-breath, while simultaneously keeping my external gaze ahead through space and while continuing to focus my «inner-eye» on tracking this in-breath, I allow the impulse/movement of breath-as-*qi* to travel up through my torso, out through my shoulders and eventually out through my two wrists, «moving» both my arms in a gentle upward arc as they rise together (elbows *not locked*) to about the height of my shoulders. Sensing the completion of this in-breath, on the cusp of the space/time between this «in-breath» and the impulse/initiation of the next out-breath, I attend to and inhabit the transition space/time «be-

tween» this completion and the initiation of the exhalation with the simultaneous initiation of (now downward) movement of the wrists/arms returning toward the place where the arms began at my sides.

Long-term practice of *taiqiquan* is understood to internally cultivate *qi* via an even pattern of inhalation and exhalation while in constant motion—the give and take of complementarity, of up with down, out, and in, of balance and counter-balance in the flow and transition from one moment to the next. *Qi* arises when the «so called ‘principles’» of *taiqi* practice are «complied with, i.e., the right posture of head, shoulders, torso, legs, knee, feet, etc., keeping the mind still, being relaxed, etc.», [remark made by Christel Weiler]. Following Yuasa Yasuo [1993, 1987], I define one’s awakening to this inner energy that can be circulating within as the development of *qi*-awareness, i.e., one becomes aware that *qi* is present and can travel within, as well as outward through the bodymind into the environment. There is a «felt»/sensory quality when *qi* is present.

Having practiced this short form of Wu-style *taiqi* for over thirty-plus years, also available to me throughout the approximately twenty minutes it takes to complete the entire form is the inner «feeling» generated by each movement of breath/*qi* in relation to each physical movement within the form. Attentive practice offers further modes of opening one’s awareness to and attending to the «feel» of the «inner movement» available in practicing the form. In the transition between the «upward» movement of the wrists/arms/breath-*qi* and the «downward» movement, there is what might be described as the felt quality of an «echo», «inner vibration» or «resonation» of the «up» with the «down». That is, there is the felt quality of the energetic continuation of the «upward» movement as I begin the «downward» movement described above.

Once practitioners have gained sufficient experience with the basic forms, one strategy to help open and sensitize inner awareness is the use of side-coaching through *short activating phrases* and/or verbal prompts to utilize one’s *residual awareness* or continuation of *qi* from the previous movement. For example, while doing the opening movements of *taiqi* described in Exam-

ple 2, I invite them to «sense the residue of the up in the space between, and as the arms are traveling down». Or I might prompt practitioners to «sense the downward movement of *qi* through the entire body, i.e., downward through the soles of the feet and simultaneously extending upwards through the top of the head».

The following vivid, subtle description of *taiqiquan* practice is offered by master Chang San-Feng, dating from approximately 1200 CE. The description encapsulates some of the the underlying psychophysical principles informing *taiqiquan* practice:

In all of this, you must emphasize the use of mind in controlling your movements, rather than the mere use of the external muscles. You should also follow the *taiqi* principle of opposites: when you move upward, the mind must be aware of down; when moving forward, the mind also thinks of moving back; when shifting to the left side, the mind should simultaneously notice the right side – so that if the mind is going up, it is also going down [...] [Liao 2000: 87-93]

In master Chang San-Feng's text, the Chinese term *hsin* has been translated as «mind». While the translation is technically correct, in the context above his use of mind in the phrase «when you move upward, the mind must be aware of down» does *not* refer to analytical, propositional, discursive consciousness. Rather, «mind» refers to the «felt» (cognitive/mental element) present when the practitioner fully engages *qi*-awareness *while in movement*.

SENSORY AWARENESS STATES

Awareness is further and more specifically elaborated in the pre-performative training by inviting participants to open alternative sensory modes *while performing specific exercises*. One of the most important and difficult parts of the body to awaken and attune are the soles of the feet.

Example 3: Attaining a «thickness of sensing» in the soles of the feet

Fig. 1 shows one of the basic «animal poses» in the practice of *kalarippayattu* is the «lion pose» (*simhavadiyu*). Notice that the right and left heels are in a single line, that the knees of each leg are situated above the ball of the foot, that the weight is slightly forward over the

right foot, that the palms are open with the fingers slightly extended, and the eyes are wide open. When moving forward from one lion pose to another, the back foot slides inside next to the stationary foot, and then as it slides forward the stationary foot pivots on the ball of the foot to the outside.



Fig.1. Lion pose. (Image courtesy of Phillip Zarrilli).

Instructing participants while moving forward from one lion to another, I invite them to «sense down through the sole of the back foot...as you slide the foot forward deep keep sensing through the sole of the foot...sense through the sole of the opposite foot as it pivots to the outside». Optimally, vital energy/awareness (*prana-vayu*) is «driven» down through the soles of both feet from the lower abdomen (*nabhi mula*). The soles of the feet are gradually awakened. There is the sense of a line of vital energy moving down through the soles of the feet. The practitioner can attune oneself to the *tactile sensation available through the skin*.

For very advanced practitioners, the degree of tactile/sensory awareness available through the soles of one's feet as well as the palms of the hands is most fully and subtly developed when one learns the unique form of *kalaripayattu* massage (*uliccil*). The massage is given by using the soles of the feet (Fig. 2) while holding onto ropes suspended from the ceiling, and with the palms/hands. This extremely intensive massage is traditionally given over a fifteen-day period only to students of *kalaripayattu* when a special oil is liberally applied to the entire body. Just as the practitioner gains the ability to control one's vital energy (*prana-vayu*), raise his internal power (*sakti*), and channel both out through his hands/arms during the preliminary exercises or in armed and unarmed combat, likewise he controls and applies his vital energy and power through his palms and soles of the feet for healing.

Kalaripayattu uliccil massage is understood to effect both the humoral balance and the alignment/tone of the physical body, as well as the channels and centers of the subtle «inner» body. The massage originates and terminates at the small of the back opposite the navel region (corresponding to *muladhara-cakra*) at the point of confluence many of the major channels of the subtle body. Administering massage strokes out from and back to this region with the palms and soles of the feet stimulates and circulates the internal wind (*vayu*) to move through the channels (*nadi*) of the subtle body, and thereby enhances the student's gradual embodiment of correct form through which strength and power emanate outward from lower abdominal region¹⁸.

For the practitioner giving this massage, one gains an extremely subtle ability to circulate the internal wind (*vayu*) while simultaneously controlling the intensity and amplitude of pressure/energy released into each stroke of the palms or feet originating from the lower abdomen. Giving the massage leads to a further sensitization of the entire bodymind. One learns to simultaneously touch while «being touched»¹⁹.

¹⁸ For a full description, see Zarrilli [1995].

¹⁹ For an extensive discussion of [touching], see Paterson [2007].

In addition to inviting tactile sensory awareness in the feet discussed above and the palms/hands through other exercises, I eventually also invite opening one's auditory awareness during repetition of the preliminary training – especially the opening breathing exercises and yoga. I invite practitioners to «open your ears to each in-breath and out-breath». Attending to the subtle resonance/sounding of the in-breath and out-breath leads to a process of «deep-listening» especially important in the work of the actor [Zarrilli 2012].



Fig. 2. Kalari foot massage (Image courtesy of Phillip Zarrilli).

Opening these modes of subtler sensory awareness in the pre-performative training attunes the practitioner to the types of heightened sensory awareness that can be discovered in psychophysical training which is crucial to full embodiment in their work as actors. One of the most crucial dimensions of the actor's work that differentiates it from meditation is that actors must not only become sensorially attuned within themselves but must do so inter-subjectively. Therefore, as part of the training process I gradually invite practitioners to open their visual and auditory awareness to the others with whom they are working²⁰.

²⁰ For an account of work on inter-subjectivity in this process, see Zarrilli [2013d].

As a final example I provide a description and analysis of enacting one specific part of the performance score for *Told by the Wind* in which heightened tactile/sensory awareness through the palm was crucial to the full embodiment of this moment of performance²¹. In this production there are two «figures» on-stage throughout the approximately fifty-three minutes performance—a MALE FIGURE (Phillip Zarrilli) and FEMALE FIGURE (Jo Shapland). Throughout the performance these two FIGURES simultaneously inhabit the playing area, but never once do they look to each other nor do they overtly interact. The production is inspired by «quietude» [Boyd 2006, 2012]. Except for incidental noise in the performance space, MALE FIGURE delivers fragmentary/suggested text during about ten minutes of the total performance time. Otherwise, most of the performance is in «silence».



Fig. 3. *Told by the Wind* (Image courtesy of Phillip Zarrilli).

²¹ *Told by the Wind* was co-created by Kaite O'Reilly, Jo Shapland, and Phillip Zarrilli and produced by The Llanarth Group (Wales). It premiered in 2010 at Chapter Arts Centre (Cardiff) and continues to tour internationally. For further discussion of *Told by the Wind* see Zarrilli [2015c, 2012].

Example 4: «a hand» – touching a chair

In Fig. 3, MALE FIGURE approaches a chair located downstage centre left. Moments prior approaching the chair as MALE FIGURE, I had been standing at a writing desk, looking out a window frame suspended in air, sensing the «presence» of someone...but who that «other» is I do not know. Is this «other» out-there in the space through the window, *or* is this other *behind* me? My performance score consists of a series of what might be described as a series of «questions» – but these questions are *not* formulated in my mind, nor are these questions literally shaped into words or thoughts that are verbally expressed. Rather, these «questions» are formulated in my body-mind «sensorially». While looking out the window, I begin to sense through my back the possible presence of this «other»...and so, I turn looking across the playing space behind me...but no one is «there» (for/to me).

What the audience sees/experiences is that there *is* an «other» present – FEMALE FIGURE. From their perspective, I stand up suddenly and look out the window at the very moment that FEMALE FIGURE arrives and suddenly stops at the upstage threshold to a square of earth in the playing area on-stage. While I am looking out the window, FEMALE FIGURE eventually steps *across the threshold and onto the earth* – entering the «space-time» demarcated by the earth and its four thresholds.

When I am sensing that there might be a presence behind me and turn, I do not «see» this space-time she has entered. I am looking beyond her as I cross the width of the playing area upstage of the earth square «she» inhabites. She is *not* part of what I «see», although I «sense» that some «other» may be present...somewhere in that space... but where? While standing looking into the upstage left space toward what might be there, this «where»? *moves* me again...I turn facing downstage...and see *the chair* in Fig. 3.

I begin to approach the chair – it is a chair I «know» but equally do not know. It seems familiar, but at the same time «strange». It possesses me in the sense that it invites me to touch it...to inhabit it...But why, I do not yet know. The «why» has not as yet revealed itself to me in this moment of time. And so as I approach the chair, I *sense it sensing me*, inviting me...inviting the palm of my left hand to sense it...to reach toward it...slowly, and finally, to touch it... slowly, and finally, to touch it. Before I literally touch the chair, I am already «touching» it...or is it «touching» me...through the palm of my hand. Words come to me, and I speak.

A hand [*my palm makes contact with the chair*] conducting (*sits in chair*) striking the air.

Stroke...beat...stroke...beat.

Through my palm as it touches the chair, there is a moment of re-remembering—the reverberation...echo...or «feel» of each «stroke» and each «beat» of my right hand when it was «conducting...striking the air» a musical score I had been writing in an earlier structure of this performance.

Before I literally touch the chair, I am already «touching» it...or is it «touching» me...through the palm of my hand. Words come to me, and I speak,

A hand [*my palm makes contact with the chair*] conducting (*sits in chair*) striking the air.

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The process of enhancing the actor's subtle modes of (visual, tactile, auditory, etc) awareness elaborated during the pre-performative training is—in the above example at least—deployed in this specific moment of performance. The extension of «vital energy» (*qi/prana-vayu*) through the palm when approaching the chair provides a «felt» bodymind connection that leads to re-remembering, i.e., a visitation of the embodied «feel» of the «past» in the present moment.

In terms of actor training, the great Russian director and acting teacher Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) was primarily concerned with the actor's ability to inhabit the stage environment as a living/sentient being when he said that

...all our acts, even the simplest, which are so familiar to us in everyday life become strained when we appear [...] before a public. [...] That is why it is necessary to correct ourselves and learn again how to walk, move about, sit, or lie down. It is essential to re-educate ourselves to look and see, on the stage, to listen, and to hear. [1980 [1936]: 73]

The examples of pre-performative training briefly outlined above have the potential to offer a constant process of re-education which «thickens the senses» and invites an opening up of the «world» of performance where there is, as Ingold [2011: 12] suggests, the potential for resonance «in one's inner being to its illuminations and reverberations».

THE BODYMIND «AS ALL EYES»

The overall/optimal state of the martial artist and actor is when the bodymind «is» or «becomes all eyes» – an apt metaphor for the optimal state of sensory awareness to the immediate environment. In this type of extra-ordinary state, it is a state of being-doing in which there is no-thought and in which «*the self drops out*» [Austin 1998: 296, emphasis in the original]. The ultimate «aim» of the training process for the actor is to become attuned to the possibilities offered her as a sentient being, i.e., one who perceives, attends to, opens one's awareness to, feels, re-members, reflects, senses, and/or imagines as appropriate to: 1) the performance score; 2) the aesthetic that has shaped the creation of a performance; and 3) in response to what is available within the immediate performance environment at each moment of performance.

As Evan Thompson [2007: 19] explains, one gradually suspends «one's inattentive immersion in experience» and develops «meta-awareness» – an «awareness of awareness». What develops is one's ability to constantly «reinhabit» the flow of experience «in a fresh way, namely, with heightened awareness and attunement» [Thompson 2007: 19]. Secondly, there is an integrated, inter-sensory relationship between, and engagement with our other senses, including proprioception, *as a gestalt*. The bodymind ideally operates as an integrated whole as one dialectically engages attending to and awareness of what one is doing as it is done. In achieving heightened attention there is equally an «attending 'with' and attending 'to' the body» and to the body in the act of its deployment of attention and awareness. Over time this heightened mode of somatic inhabitation can become a form of tacit, practical knowledge informing how one utilizes attention and awareness in performance.

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