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► **To cite this version:**

Evelyne Micollier. Control and Release of emotions in qigong health practices. China perspectives, Hong Kong : French Centre for Research on Contemporary China, 1999, pp.22-30. <ird-00448856>

**HAL Id: ird-00448856**

**<http://hal.ird.fr/ird-00448856>**

Submitted on 2 Feb 2010

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# Control and Release of Emotions in *Qigong* Health Practices

Evelyne Micollier

“EXERCISES of the vital energy”, “*qi* practices” or again “*qi* work”: contemporary *qigong* is a comprehensive system of corporal techniques with a therapeutic purpose, a system that is rooted in the Chinese tradition. *Qi* may be translated as “breath, energy, vital energy circulating within the body in conformity with cosmic energy, force, vital force, influences, air, or substance”. *Gong* signifies “exercise, practice, work, artistic talent, merit, quality, technique, art or time”. The meanings associated with the two characters *qi* and *gong* are selected according to the context. These practices are of a “psycho-physiological” nature, as they might be translated from the point of view of Western categories. They are aimed at promoting better health, longer life and the regression of pathological states. The basic principles are the exercise of relaxation (*fangsong*), breathing (*huxi*: inhaling or exhaling), rejection and assimilation (*tuina*)<sup>(1)</sup> and thinking (*yinian*)<sup>(2)</sup>. Health practices that lay their emphasis on precise respiration techniques are in no way original: on the other hand, a practice using the *yi* concept (defined as a system of conscious mental elaboration including ideas, emotions, thoughts, intuitive knowledge and products of the imagination) is unique to *qigong*, which thus

becomes an exercise of the mind. When intensively pursued, it leads in successive stages to a real transformation of the being, made possible by the regular exertion of the *qi*: the first results of such training are the acquisition of a state of health, of its preservation, of the absence of illness—results that should not be underestimated when we consider their effect on people’s lives. They lead gradually to relative longevity and, with perseverance, to the development of the person<sup>(3)</sup>.

*Qigong* presents another original feature, again, not in the area of technique, but in the social dimension and the socio-political stakes associated with it. The political stakes are obvious today with the current political campaign launched in the PRC against the group *Falungong*. Offering as it does an apt portrait of contemporary Chinese society, it may be considered as “an expression of Chinese modernity”, according to the title of an article by C. Despeux<sup>(4)</sup>, as an area in which local contradictions are expressed and negotiated. A multi-faceted social phenomenon has grown up around these practices: in China, in their traditional or neo-traditional forms with innumerable variations; and in the West, in forms that have been “exported”, “re-interpreted” or completely “invented”. In China, the dynamism of this phenomenon may be measured by *qigong*’s diversity of forms, by the development of various forms of social organisation centred on activities

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This research was carried out in 1995-96 in Taipei (Taiwan), with the support of the Lavoisier Programme, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also in 1991-92 in Canton (People’s Republic of China), supported by a doctoral research grant from the French Ministry of Research and Technology.

related to *qigong*, and by the number of specialised publications (books, educational materials, magazines) both academic and popular<sup>(5)</sup>. Citizens of all social categories have, for the past fifteen years, been taking a growing interest in *qigong*. On the national scale, *qigong* has appeared in several thousand different forms, in hundreds of associations and in a dozen specialised magazines. According to official estimates, by the start of the 1990s, 50 million people were engaged in activities related to *qigong*<sup>(6)</sup>. Of these, 20 million are members of related social organisations, these being official, semi-official or popular. Of course, in a Chinese context, official data must be handled with caution. Ten years ago, *qigong* probably had far more adherents already, and it seems that their numbers have been rising steadily ever since. Simply by recalling the stirring events recently witnessed in the streets of Peking, we may judge the breadth of the phenomenon, and its socio-political impact. More than 10,000 members of *Falungong* (a Buddhist form of *qigong*), seated in the "lotus" position, demonstrated in front of government buildings to claim recognition for their group and to demand that the publishing ban on the latest work by Li Hongzhi, the founding master of their group, should be lifted. This peaceful and well-organised demonstration is the biggest anti-authority rally seen in the Chinese capital since the Peking spring of 1989<sup>(7)</sup>. According to official estimates, this movement has more adherents in China than the Chinese Communist Party, which has 55 million members... (See B. Vermander's article in this issue.) Starting from July 1999, a harsh political campaign, aimed at suppressing the whole movement using the method of adept's autocriticism at a nationwide level, was launched: *Falungong* was banned and, according to official discourse, all publications, images and objects referring to the organisation were confiscated and destroyed. An overwhelming majority of its members (98%) have withdrawn from the movement and the crackdown has been successful<sup>(8)</sup>. The organisation had infiltrated the Chinese Communist Party at all levels: the CCP-*Falungong* members were the first target of the official campaign being forced to quickly quit the group of *qigong*. It is still too early to understand the motives and political stakes justifying the virulence of the repression.

This research borrows its methodology from the discipline of ethnology. The ethnographic data was collected by means of participative observation. The analysis of discourse was based on a body of recorded interviews and on the biographical method. The latter, consisting in gathering the stories of people's lives, supposes the cre-

ation of privileged relationships with the subjects, built up over frequent and lengthy interviews and thorough questioning. The studies of *qigong* practices, seen in their therapeutic and social dimensions, were carried out in Canton between 1991-92 (seven months) and in Taipei in 1995 (seven months). The terminological review is founded on data drawn, in Canton, from recorded interviews exclusively with *qigong* adherents and, in Taipei, from interviews with both adherents and non-adherents.

The aim of this article is to show that the handling of the emotions by the various social actors present—the leader, the group and the individual—is a treatment technique in the context of *qigong* practices. The first part is about the vocabulary of the emotions, studied in the light of three key ideas that may help us to understand the process of conceptualising the emotions in China's cultural context: 1. *qi* ("vital force") 2. *shen* ("body-person") and 3. *ganjue*, *ganqing*, *jidong* (three terms designating "emotion"). The second part tackles the sociability and subjectivity of emotions in the light of an analysis of the conduct of *qigong* adherents. The third part focuses its attention on one of the aspects of the practice—specifically, the trance-like states engendered by the exercises in certain conditions—because it appears to be the subjective and social expression of controlled or released emotions.

### Terminological review

Two linguistic aspects justify the interest in a terminological review: language serves the people using it as a vehicle for their view of the world; users are not aware of its implicit meaning. In order to grasp the exact sense of terms and expressions, the relevance of the context is another feature that is particularly meaningful when applied to the Chinese language. To underline the difficulties of translation and to explain the criteria for selecting one meaning rather than another, we should point out that the Chinese language is extremely polysemic. The translator must undertake a process of contextualisation, consisting in considering the whole range of possible connotations, and sometimes even then a difficult choice confronts him: in such a case the present writer has preferred the word in translation that is the least precise and the most "polysemic", so as to conserve that aspect of the Chinese language.

The explanation for terms meaning "emotion" have been gathered exclusively from Taiwanese sources, from both adherents and non-adherents of *qigong*, of various levels of education. The sample numbered 20 people.





The object of the research, being linked to the perception of the body and the expression of emotions, was not disclosed to those collaborating. Aspects of everyday life were brought in via the themes of family and work because they bring into play basic moral values and can be a way of gaining access to people's private lives. A conversation about the family, with particular emphasis on filiation, ascendants and descendants, can lead indirectly to the subjects of illness, life and death.

*Qi* is a basic concept of traditional Chinese medicine and, in a wider perspective, of the conceptualisation of life. From a distinctive point of view, it is a dynamic element of the life-giving person. The current usage of the term refers to four semantic notions<sup>(9)</sup>:

- *qi* has a connection with fate and so is intrinsically the bringer of life. The disyllabic word *yunqi* means, literally, "*qi* in movement", the usual translation being "luck, fortune": the expression "you must accept the *qi* that you encounter" should be understood as "you must accept things as they are" (*nei zhong de qi lai, mei you banfa yinggai shiying*);
- *qi* is a force, a dynamic element;
- the vibrations emanating from someone, the impression given by someone, is the most frequent meaning of *qi*;
- the emotions are *qi*.

In this article, only the fourth notion will be studied in detail. The emotion most frequently associated with *qi* is anger. In Chinese, the term *shengqi* usually means, "to be angry" or, literally, "*qi* is born, is produced". The emotions are perceived as *qi* in movement, as is shown by the disyllabic word *qifen* meaning "anger, rage" (literally: "*qi* rises like steam"). An emotion is in a relationship with the movement of *qi* in the body: if, like anger, it has a negative connotation, *qi* does not circulate in the regular way, or does not circulate at all. If the person feels well, the circulation is regular and fluid. In the basic theory of traditional Chinese medicine, the *jiu qi* are the nine morbid states of vital energy caused by excess of the Seven Emotions (*qi qing*)<sup>(10)</sup>. In this interpretation, *qi* is the dynamic element that brings a person's emotions and qualities to the surface. The ways in which it is described

refer to an open or latent state, beneficial or pathogenic, the realisation of which is a constituent part of life.

*Qi* is, then, a life-enhancing element, brought on by fate, and a modality of the inner person. In the area of emotions, *qi* is the dynamic element of the affects, being at the same time the impulse that accompanies the emotional state and the dynamic element that produces an emotion. *Qi* is spatially diffused in the "body-person", because it is always the driving force of an emotional state. It contains the idea of being a modality of life.

The body-person (*shen, shenti*) refers to the identification of the body to the person, the most frequently expressed idea. *Benshen* is used at the beginning of a phrase preceded by the personal pronoun *wo* (I) to lay the emphasis on the subject, "I" (*wo benshen*, "I myself"). To the question, *shenti hao bu hao?* (literally, "is your body good, in good health?"), one replies, *wo hen hao* (I am very well) rather than *wo shenti hen hao* (my body is in good health).

The meanings put forward in this terminological review are not peculiar to the followers of *qigong* or to the initiates of bodily techniques. The study by M. P. Y. Tung and the data collected by us in Taiwan make it clear: the preferred criteria for respondents are independent of any interest they may take in traditional Chinese medicine, in martial arts or in corporal practices. The definitions supplied in most dictionaries support this idea of the identification of the body with the person<sup>(11)</sup>: the nominal headword for the monosyllable *shen* offers the meanings, 1. the body; 2. life; 3. myself, personally; 4. the main part of a structure, the body (for example, the body of a car: *cheshen*).

Four definitions for the disyllabic terms built on the monosyllable *shen* appear as generic:

1. "physical-body" (*shenzi*: "physical body"; *shenqu*: "body, stature"; *shenchang*: "a person's build"; *shencai*, *shenduan*: "stature, outline"; *shenshang*: "on someone's body, physically"; *shenxin*: literally, "body and heart, body and soul"; *shenxin jiankang*: "healthy in body and mind");
2. "body-person" (*shenbian*: "alongside, with a person"; *shenshou*: "a person's talents"; *shensi*: "a person's biog-



- raphy”; *shenjiao*: “to teach from someone’s example”);
3. “position, a person’s status in society” (*shenfen*, *shenjia*: “social status”);
  4. *shenti*: “health”.

Idiomatic expressions in four characters have a single generic meaning, the body-person.

The body, *ti*, appears in the disyllabic *shenti*: the nominal headword has three meanings having to do with the physical constitution of the body: 1. body, part of the body; 2. substance; 3. style, form.

In its verbal sense, the notion of person reappears: 1. to experience something personally; 2. to put oneself in the position of someone else.

The two generic meanings, “physical constitution” and “personal experience” are present in an equivalent way in the disyllables built on *ti*.

The three terms *ganjue*, *ganqing*, *jidong* (feeling, passion, emotion) are used in the sense of emotion: nuances of meaning are spelled out as far as possible. *Ganjue* is used to refer to sensations, processes that are produced in the body: the term is associated with the notion of “body”, *shenti*. In a standard dictionary, *ganjue* bears the definitions of “sensation” and “perception”. *Ganqing* means “feeling” and, possibly, “emotion” when the feeling arouses emotions. Emotion is therefore conceived as the expression of a feeling. *Ganqing* is readily associated with what is produced in the heart (*xinli*). Analysis of such discourse leads one to three semantic notions:

1. The heart of the seat of the affective states: *xinqing* (literally, “the feeling of the heart”) means “mood, state of mind”; *xinli tou hen nanguo* (literally, “in the heart, very sad”) indicates that the person is very sad. In Chinese, most of the characters referring to emotional states contain in the written form the radical “heart” as in *si bei, kong*. The character *si* covers two meanings: the one, “contemplation”, refers to one of the techniques that lead to a person’s development in the practices of *qigong*, and has a positive connotation; the other refers to a pathological state, “anxiety, melancholy”, and bears a negative connotation. The emotions are considered, then, as symptoms of an illness.

2. The concept of heart has a moral connotation. The expression *xin li bu hao* (literally, “in the heart, it is not good, it is not well”) indicates that the person is not to be recommended.

3. The heart is the recipient of the mind. The act of thinking is associated with the heart and not with the brain, as is shown, for example, in the expression, *shenxin jiankang*, (“healthy in body and mind”).

The heart is attached, like the body, to the notion of the person, adding to it a moral connotation and the function of controlling thought—and, therefore, of the acts ordered by that thought. In relation to the life-giving *qi*, the heart regulates life and governs it. Traditionally, the heart is the recipient of the mind, the emotions and feelings. The representations underlying the discourse of our informants are in keeping with the traditional concept. A normal dictionary gives two definitions for the term, *ganqing*: 1. feeling, emotion; 2. affection, love<sup>(12)</sup>.

The third term referring to emotion is *jidong*, associated more exactly with a very visible and sometimes violent expression of emotional states. This demonstrative way of expressing the emotions suggests transformations of the body and the person: *shenti bianhua*. *Jidong* serves to describe emotions related to passion (*jiqing*)<sup>(13)</sup>. In a usual dictionary, the monosyllable *dong* is defined as “movement” or “agitation”. The verb *jidong* means “to excite, to stimulate, to agitate, to stir”. The monosyllable *ji* has the meanings “to spring up, to stimulate” and, as an adjective, “violent, ferocious, sharp”.

### The approach to the emotions in *qigong* practice

While the adherent’s aim is to maintain good health, controlling one’s emotions is necessary in order to be attentive to the processes taking place in the body. They are experienced from a distinctive point of view as corporeal. The *qi* must be guided by thought (*yong yinian*) in individual or collective practice. In this context, it constitutes the vital element, in the literal sense of “giving life”, circulating in the person according to a precise route in correspondence with cosmic energies: the person must be receptive, then, only to the processes taking

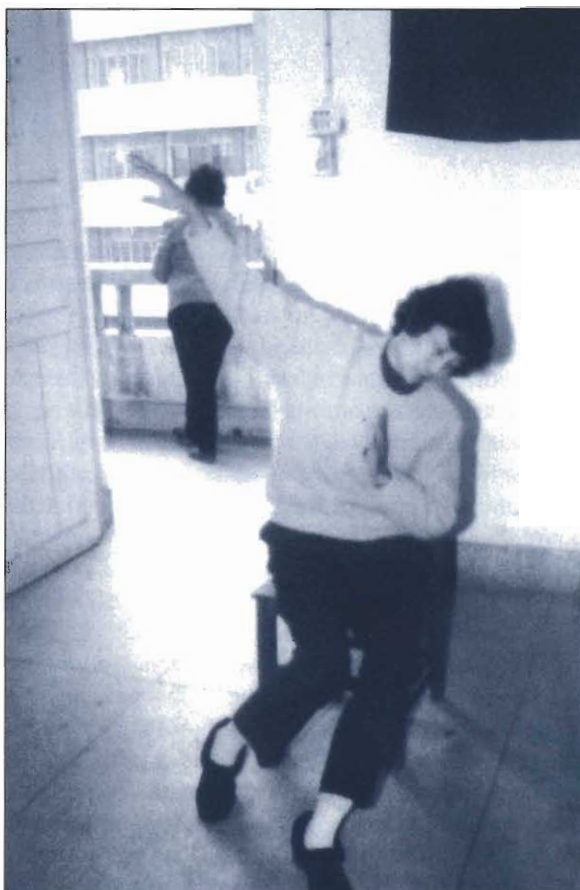




**Collective consultation and *qigong* therapy: the patients are in a "qigong state": half awake, half asleep**

effect within the person: there is no visible process of interaction between the adherents. While the aim is therapy by *qigong*, the beneficial *qi* of the master is transmitted into the patient's body. This technique, of treatment at a distance (*faqi*, *fagong*: "to transmit the *qi*"), is part of the standard practice of *qigong* therapy. Liberating the emotions is a necessary form of behaviour to be receptive to the master's *qi*: adherents must show their emotional states without control or inhibition. Let us listen to the words of Master X<sup>(11)</sup> as he projects his *qi* during a session of collective treatment: "Relax. If you want to shout, then shout. If you want to laugh, laugh. If you're sad and you want to cry, then cry; to dance, then dance; to move, to practise movements, go ahead."

If the action of the master's *qi* in the patient's body has undesirable effects that can be detected by "disorderly" (*luandong*) emotional expressions<sup>(12)</sup>, in the master's opinion, it is he who must keep things from getting out



**Involuntary movements of the body in "qigong state" under the influence of the Master's *qi***

of hand. Practice is often collective because, as the master says, his own *qi* is more effective if it comes in contact with the *qi* of every person in the group. *Qi* effects are cumulative. In this context, the communication between those taking part is visible. The "patient-adherent", according to the context or to his motivation, must be able to control or to liberate his emotions. On the one hand, he expresses what he feels in a process of interaction with the outside. By practising together, each individual makes a connection with the others. That connection becomes part of the collective practice and contributes to its effectiveness. On the other hand, the adherent expresses himself by "spontaneous" uncontrolled behaviour linked to unconscious motivations: the subjectivity of each person is implied here.

Whereas it is the master who guides the liberation process, listing exactly what emotions to express, when it is necessary to control the emotions it is the patient

who must take responsibility and is not directed in what he does. The means of control are not visible; only the end result counts.

The expression of the emotions must therefore be envisaged in twin dimensions, both social and individual at the same time. P Dumouchel explains this double aspect as an attribute of the body: the emotions are “the body to the extent that it is indissoluble from personal identity. Not only does the body close in the self: it is also the irresistible projection of the self into another person’s universe”. The emotions are social: “To have a body is to be in communication, and that is an integral part of the experience of the emotions. The sociability of the emotions is the heart of the affective phenomena. The emotions are the shared creation in which several people take their part<sup>(16)</sup>.”

According to R. I. Levy, “Behaviour that expresses the emotions is at the same time a symptom... and a communication with those looking on<sup>(17)</sup>.”

In his definition, the socially constructed component of the emotions is decisive: “The emotions are sensations or feelings connected to relationships outside the self. And this self... is intimately constructed, starting from group processes and interpersonal relationships<sup>(18)</sup>.”

The capacity to adopt two types of conduct formerly assumed to be contradictory shows that, in the end, the adherents of *qigong* are masters of themselves, and can adapt the expression of emotions by a single person according to context and motivation. The master’s attitude is different from that of his patients: his emotions are constantly controlled in personal practice, like those of a medical practitioner, because he must guide the whole group’s behaviour.

### **Qigong and the state of trance: a subjective and social expression of the emotions, the control or liberation of the emotions<sup>(19)</sup>**

J. Cosnier sees the emotions “in an extended acceptance of all the events and states in the affective range, characterised by a whole gamut of specific psychic experience and accompanied, in variable intensity and quality, by physiological and behavioural manifestations<sup>(20)</sup>”. The trance, as G. Rouget defines it, may be considered as a way of expressing the emotions: “a state of consciousness with two components, one psychophysiological, the other cultural. The universality of the trance means that it corresponds to an innate psychophysiological disposition of human nature, more or less developed . . . according to the individual. The variability of

its manifestations results from the diversity of the cultures through which it is put into effect”<sup>(21)</sup>.

The personal state created by the practice of *qigong* lies between waking and sleeping, *banshui banxing*: “To use thought has a connection with the state of wakefulness. So it is between waking and sleeping<sup>(22)</sup>.”

The accepted terminology indicates a “state that leads to the absence of thought”<sup>(23)</sup>: the reference to the notion of “absence” is an inheritance from tradition; to reach that state is the ultimate goal of all high-level meditation practices reserved for initiates and passed on by the Taoist masters, the Buddhist monks, the Confucian scholars, the masters of the martial arts and the practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine. Such an aim is a shared ideal among the adherents of all schools of *qigong*. The study by K. Miura is based upon the biographies and the writings of the leading masters of *qigong* in the first half of the 20th century; recent speeches by a certain number of adherents, masters and enthusiasts are taken from my ethnographical data. In these two categories of sources, people’s experiences when in this state are described as taking place in the following sequence.

- When one goes into this state, a white light with a coloured spot the size of a button appears before one’s eyes;
- when one is in this state, points of light become blurred, and one experiences the sensation that one’s body is disappearing;
- the capacity for control over oneself increases; the practice may be prolonged, and is accompanied by a sensation of well-being;
- the resistance of the skin to electricity is reduced<sup>(24)</sup>.

These assertions support the hypothesis that the practice of *qigong* favours the experience of modified states of consciousness: A.M. Ludwig defines a modified state of consciousness as “a mental state... representing a deviation in subjective experience or in psychological functioning with regard to certain general standards of consciousness in the state of wakefulness”<sup>(25)</sup>. According to G. Lapassade, modified states of consciousness are “potential trances”: “They become effective trances when a society chooses to ‘cultivate’ one or another of these states”<sup>(26)</sup>.

The study of social links, systems of belief and rituals shows how a modified state of consciousness is transformed into a trance phenomenon<sup>(27)</sup>. The processes as a whole that are at work in this state may be represented in the form of a polarities continuum, rather than in the form of an opposition between the two polarities “trance

and ecstasy". Table 1 applies to the *qigong* techniques.

The "trance" column corresponds to the collective practice of *qigong* used as a therapy technique; whereas the "ecstasy" column refers to individual bodily practice aimed at maintaining a state of health. The behavioural modalities shown in the "trance" column tend to liberate the emotions; while those in the "ecstasy" column lead to controlling the emotions. The above diagram indicates useful tendencies to describe the process; but real conduct and perceptions lie on the side of intermediary states. Two categories of signs enable one to recognise the state of trance: the symptoms are "signs that are only the crude and unelaborated expression of a certain anxiety experienced by the subject on the animal level". Behaviour is "the signs that are no longer only a reaction... but an action, full of symbolic value. They always symbolise the intensification of one or another of the faculties affected by actions of an extraordinary or astonishing aspect"<sup>(28)</sup>.

The followers of *qigong* fall into a state of trance, according to the behaviour described by G. Rouget, at certain moments of the practice: "The person is not in her normal state; her relationship with the world around her is troubled; it is prey to certain neurophysiological disturbances; her faculties are increased—whether in reality, in imagination or deceptively; this increase is shown by actions or behaviour that are outwardly observable"<sup>(29)</sup>.

Are these involuntary movements of the body that the practice produces—are they an expression of the emotions? A typical experience of behaviour that stimulates involuntary movements of the body is described in a book published at the beginning of the century: "The Meditation Method of Master Yinshi"<sup>(30)</sup>. This method is considered among *qigong* followers as an example that sets out exactly the behaviour to adopt and the sensations that must be experienced for a practice to be effective. The writer Jiang Weiqiao is one of the great masters who were the precursors of the present movement. He became a therapist after curing himself of tuberculosis and pulmonary haemorrhage by means of meditation; he described this experience of curing himself in the same book. Liu Guizhen quotes some extracts from it:

Suddenly I felt an intense trembling in the lower part of my abdomen. I was sitting in the meditation position, calm as usual, but this time something happened that I really could not control. It stirred me right through, irresistibly. Then an unbelievably hot source of energy began

to grow at the base of my spinal column, spread upwards, higher and higher, until it reached the top of my skull.<sup>(31)</sup>

The account mentions the repetition of the experience, ending with the day when this very hot *qi* becomes an integral part of himself: the *qi* rises along his spine to his head, then returns by way of the face and the chest to the base of the abdomen. He describes the circuit of the microcosm (*xiao zhou tian*). Thus he has experimented with his own body the "microcosm-body" as described in the Taoist treaties of bodily alchemy (*neidan*). The very hot energy is known, traditionally, as the energy of the primeval heaven, the inward energy. The movements and behaviour observed in people deep in the state of *qigong* are in conformity with the accounts given by traditional Chinese medicine and its explanatory model<sup>(32)</sup>. Indeed, the variations of behaviour shown under the influence of the *qi* correspond to types of pathology affecting the Five Viscera (*wuzang*)<sup>(33)</sup> and the Six Organs (*liufu*)<sup>(34)</sup>. The principle of the system of correspondences underlies the links between the Seven Emotions and the "Five Viscera/Six Organs": patients who tend to be affected by laughter when in the state of *qigong* are subject to cardiac illnesses; those affected by tears have a liver condition, and so on<sup>(35)</sup>.

The vocabulary of the emotions offers us clues to understanding the representations of the body and the person from a distinctive point of view. However, it would be wrong to overestimate its contribution towards formulating a unified theory of the emotions: recently, specialists have challenged the idea that emotions can be classified as though they were a homogeneous group<sup>(36)</sup>. For example, the Chinese term *qing* means, on the one hand, "affection, feeling, desire, love"—definitions that come under the heading of emotions—and, on the other hand, "circumstances, real fact, situation, truth, reason, origin", definitions that fall under several other headings. Thus, according to Hansen Chad, "If Chinese thinkers shared the ideas of Western popular psychology, then emotions and feelings ought to be paradigms of inward and subjective phenomena, semantically the exact opposite of 'circumstances, fact and truth', which are considered as outward and objective<sup>(37)</sup>." For P. Dumouchel, "Everyday language about the emotions does not form a coherent whole on which one might base a unified theory. A theory of the emotions must be built partly in opposition to everyday vocabulary, while taking account of the intuitions about the emotions that it does illuminate and of the way in which the language of the emotions is itself a



Practice of Qigong		
	Trance	Ecstasy
Forms	Collective	Individual
	Passive	Active
Aims	Therapy techniques	Corporal practice, health preservation
Modalities (taken from G. Rouget's table)	Movement	Immobility
	Noise	Silence
	Society	Solitude
	With a crisis	Without a crisis
	Sensory over-stimulation	Sensory deprivation
	Amnesia	Sense of recall
	Absence of hallucination	Hallucination

Source: G. Rouget, *La musique et la transe*, Paris, Gallimard, 1980, p. 52.

component of the emotions<sup>(38)</sup>. Can one offer a definition of the emotions that would go beyond the cultural relativity and that might appeal to a consensus? This question is a subject of controversy, to which arguments both ethical and scientific are being directed<sup>(39)</sup>. Structurally speaking, emotions are mental states with a physiological component and social productions that fashion their nature. To what extent do culture and society give shape to the expression and representation of the emotions—without, for all that, challenging the generic definition including the terms “mental state” and “physiological component”, themselves culture-bound categories? The key question is that, if the emotions do not constitute a homogeneous group, an intercultural comparison based on the vocabulary of the emotions is no longer applicable. In the example of *qigong* practice, the expression of the emotions is modified by the subjectivity of the individual and by the effect of social connections in this therapeutic context. The control or liberation of the emotions is governed by a conscious attitude directed towards a precise purpose. The expression “reasoned”, when applied to emotions—liberation or control being laid down as a principle—is a means of attaining the ultimate goal of personal development. Its realisation implies a transformation of the personality; and the prescribed attitude to confront emotional states is a basic transforming element. In *qigong* practice, manipulating the expression of the emotions is a basic therapeutic technique, and one constantly used by the “master-practitioners”.

*Qigong* is the object of a growing craze in Western countries and figures highly among those therapeutic practices

broadly known as “alternative medicine”. For example, the *Falungong* movement, whose founding master is currently residing in America, numbers among his followers some 50 million people outside China. Numerous studies of *qi* work have been published in Western languages; *qigong* associations have proliferated in Europe and North America. Moreover, among alternative medicine techniques, *qi* practices are of particular interest by virtue of their link to the biomedical sciences: it is an energising treatment that is now the object of experimental research on an international level<sup>(40)</sup>. *Qigong* may be assured of a great future, and certainly of a long life, among the peoples both of China and of the West. ☯

Translated from French original by Philip Liddell

1. *Tuina* refers in this context, not to massages in the usual contemporary sense but to the whole range of breathing techniques. The idea: “Reject everything old and assimilate everything new” appears in chapter 15 of *Zhuangzi*, Taipei, Dongda dushu, 1988.
2. *Yinian* has a practical meaning and refers to the action of thinking, operating thought, the will, a concept that is the opposite of *siwei*, abstract or discursive thought.
3. Already in the *Huainanzi*, a work of political philosophy dating from the second century BC, the control of the emotions appears as the work of regulating the *qi* and a necessary condition for the state of “wisdom”: “The difference between the wise who act in an autonomous way [that is to say liberated from their emotions] and the unwise who do not, is presented as a difference in the way of regulating the movements of the *qi* within their bodies”, cf. G. Vankeerberghen, “Emotions and the actions of the sage: recommendations for an orderly heart in the *Huainanzi*”, *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 45(4), 1995, pp. 527-544 (p. 540).
4. Cf. C. Despeux, “Le *qigong*, une expression de la modernité chinoise” (*Qigong*, an Expression of Chinese Modernity), in J. Gernet

- and M. Kalinowski eds., *En suivant la Voie Royale. Mélanges en hommage à L. Vandermeersch* (Following the Rotal Path, Miscellanies – A Tribute to L. Vandermeersch), Paris, EFEO, *Études thématiques* 7, 1997, pp. 267-281.
5. For an in-depth study of *qigong* practices, forms of social organisations and publications in the Chinese language, cf. E. Micollier, *Un aspect de la pluralité thérapeutique en Chine populaire: les pratiques de qigong. Dimension thérapeutique/dimension sociale*, Doctoral Thesis in Anthropology, Aix en Provence, Université de Provence, 1995.
  6. Figures obtained from *Annual China Review*, "The Call of the Past: *qigong* and Clan Revivalism", Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 1991 and *China Review*, December 1988, p. 39.
  7. Cf. *Asian Wall Street Journal*, April 26th 1999, pp. 1-2.
  8. Cf. *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily) and *Zhongyang dianshi tai* (CCTV), Peking, August 8th 1999.
  9. Oral extracts from informants who are not necessarily adherents of *qigong*. The analysis of the collected data is in conformity with the results of a study by M. P. Y. Tung (1994), who questioned people of Chinese culture living in California (San Francisco Bay) having completed their secondary education in the People's Republic of China or in Taiwan, able to read and to speak Mandarin fluently, cf. M. P. Y. Tung "Symbolic Meanings of the Body in Chinese Culture and 'Somatization'", *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* vol. 18, no. 4, 1994, pp. 483-492.
  10. According to the basic theory of Chinese traditional medicine, the influence of the Seven Emotions on a human being varies according to the circumstances. 1-*xi*, joy, happiness, excitement, 2-*nü*, anger, irritation, 3-*you*, anxiety, chagrin, 4-*si*, meditation, contemplation, worry, 5-*bei*, affliction, suffering (characterised by a guttural sound without tears), 6-*kong*, fear, extreme anxiety, 7-*jing*, fright, sudden and intense fear, cf. F. Liu F. and Y. Liu, *Zhongyi mingci hui bian* (Chinese Medical Terminology), Hong Kong, The Commercial Press, 1980, p. 18. The Seven Emotions correspond to the Five Viscera *wuzang*: liver-anger (*nü*), heart-joy (*xi*), spleen-worry (*si*), kidney-fear (*kong*) and fright (*jing*), lung-chagrin (*you*) and affliction (*bei*). On the one hand, the emotions induce or aggravate illness and generate somatic problems: they are therefore pathogenic factors, cf. T. Ots, "The Angry Liver, the Anxious Heart and the Melancholy Spleen. The Phenomenology of Perception in Chinese Culture", *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1990, pp. 21-58. On the other hand, they are also symptoms: excessive anger is a symptom of a disorder of the liver. On the ambiguity between pathogenic factor and symptom, cf. C. Despeux, F. Obringer "Conceptualisation d'un état pathologique dans la médecine chinoise traditionnelle: exemple de la toux" (Conceptualisation of a Pathological State in Traditional Chinese Medicine: The Example of Cough), *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences*, 1990, vol. XLIII, no. 1, pp. 35-56 ; C. Despeux, F. Obringer eds., *La maladie dans la Chine médiévale: la toux* (Illnesses in Medieval China: Cough), Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997.
  11. The dictionary used here: Cowie A. P., Evison A., Zhu Yuan, Wang Liangbi, Wu Jingrong and Mei Ping, *Concise English-Chinese, Chinese-English Dictionary, Jingxuan Han-Ying/Ying-Han Cidian*, Hong Kong, Oxford University Press and The Commercial Press, 1986
  12. Cf. A. P. Cowie et al., op. cit., 1986.
  13. Other terms serve to designate passion: *reqing* and *qinggan*.
  14. One of the two *qigong* masters of Canton with whom I was able to put together a life story.
  15. To move, to execute movements in a disorderly way.
  16. P. Dumouchel, *Emotions. Essai sur le corps et le social* (Emotions. An Essay on the Body and Matters Social), Synthélabo, coll. "Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond", Paris, 1995, pp. 14-16.
  17. Cf. R. I. Levy, "Emotion, Knowing and Culture", in R.A. Schweder and R. Le Vine *Culture theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 214-237 (p. 230).
  18. Cf. R. I. Levy, op. cit., p. 221.
  19. This part is adapted from the text of the present writer's doctoral thesis, cf. E. Micollier, op. cit. 1995, pp. 192-196.
  20. Cf. J. Cosnier, *Psychologie des émotions et des sentiments* (A Psychology of Emotions and Feelings), Paris, Retz, 1994 .
  21. Cf. G. Rouget, *La musique et la transe* (Music and Trance), Paris, Gallimard, 1980, p. 39.
  22. Recurrent discourse among *qigong* masters.
  23. More exactly, *wu yishi tai*: the state of "knowledge of the absence of thought".
  24. Cf. K. Miura, "The Revival of Qi: *Qigong* in Contemporary China", in L. Köhn ed., *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1989, pp. 331-362.
  25. Cf. A. M. Ludwig, "Altered States of Consciousness", in R. Prince ed. *Trance and Possession States*, Montréal, 1968.
  26. Cf. G. Lapassade, *La transe*, Paris, PUF, 1990, p. 9.
  27. *Ibid.*, p. 10
  28. Cf. G. Rouget, op. cit., pp. 56-57.
  29. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
  30. Jiang Weiqiao, *Yin Shizi jingzuofa* (Master Yinshi's Meditation Method), Taipei, 1967.
  31. Liu Guizhen, *Qigong jingxuan* (*Qigong Selection*), Pékin, Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1981, p. 75.
  32. We should remember that the conceptual system that underlies this medicine is the theory of the system of correspondences, cf. P. U. Unschuld, *Medicine in China. A History of Ideas*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, pp. 51-100; cf. S. Nathan, *Traditional Medicine in Contemporary China*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1987.
  33. Heart, liver, spleen, lungs, kidneys. Belonging to the *yin* phase, these organs fulfil the vital function of regenerating and storing up the *jingqi*, the "essential *qi* of life", cf. F. Liu and Y. Liu, op. cit., 1980, p. 26. The intestines and the internal organs are designated under two headings: *zang* and *fu*. The *wuzang* are the internal organs located in the abdominal cavity or the ribcage.
  34. Gall-bladder, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, bladder, and the "Three Burners" (*san jiao*), a group of organs identified according to the three positions in which they are located and have their functions. The aim is 1) to indicate the qualities of outwardness *biao* or inwardness *li*, as they are illustrated by the *fu* and the *zang* respectively; 2) to show the physiological relations as follows. Thus, the heart is co-ordinated with and complementary to the small intestine; the spleen with the stomach; the liver with the gall-bladder; the lungs with the large intestine; the pericardium with the "Three Burners", cf. F. Liu and Y. Liu, op. cit., 1980, pp. 26-27.
  35. The nosological categories of traditional Chinese medicine are put into correspondence with the Seven Emotions (*qi qing*).
  36. Cf. R. Solomon, "Some notes on Emotions East and West", *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1995, pp. 171-202; J. Marks and R. T. Ames eds., *Emotions in Asian Thought. A Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy*, Albany, State University of New York, 1995.
  37. Cf. Hansen Chad, "*Qing* (Emotions) in Pre-Buddhist Chinese Thought", in J. Marks and R. T. Ames eds., op. cit., pp. 181-211 (pp. 182-183).
  38. Cf. P. Dumouchel, op. cit., p. 18.
  39. For a summary of this debate, cf. R. Solomon, op. cit.
  40. Cf. J.C. Crombez, "Le Qigong au Canada, de l'étrange au familier, y a-t-il un chemin?", *Santé, Culture. Culture, Health*, IX/2, 1992-1993, pp. 281-301 ; E. Micollier, "Entre science et religion, modernité et tradition: Le discours pluriel des pratiquants du Qigong", in J. Benoist ed., *Soigner au pluriel. Essais sur le pluralisme médical*, Karthala, Paris, 1996, pp. 205-223.