



YANG FAMILY  
TAI CHI CHUAN

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The Journal of The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association

# 論

# 意

Essays  
On  
Yi

*Tai Chi Chuan*

Summer 2010 Number 27



## President's Letter

### Dear Member:

As with any developing organization, the International Association has faced many challenges these past ten years. With the support from both the Association members and center directors, the Association has gradually matured. However, we need to strive towards a new direction so as to continue our development.

Our future direction of development will be the organization and implementation of instructor training. The development of Taijiquan depends on the instructors. Without a large instructor base to teach and promote Taijiquan, our Taijiquan will not be able to flourish. We are currently developing an international training program to provide teachers with the fundamentals they need to succeed. As my ultimate goal in the future is to establish a Taijiquan university, promoting instructor training is one of the steps to achieve that goal. During the process of development, we will encounter problems, but I believe that we will learn from our experiences and refine our methods.



Traditional Yang Family Taijiquan not only needs to establish a teaching curriculum, we need to project our image and brand name. After an extensive design process, we have decided on the logo for Traditional Yang Family Taijiquan. This logo, created by Marco Gagnon, represents the art of Traditional Yang Family Taijiquan and its practitioners. The development of Taijiquan also needs a source of funding. So, in 2010, I set up a Taijiquan foundation, a non-profit organization. In the future, a portion of the profits from the sale of products with the Traditional Yang Family Taijiquan logo will be donated to the foundation. The foundation will maintain our family's historical and memorial sites, support Yang Chengfu Tai Chi Chuan Centers, encourage medical and health research into Taijiquan, compile the teaching curriculum, and ultimately, establish a Taijiquan university.

I feel I have a heavy responsibility and a long road ahead. But, every time I see a familiar face at a seminar and receive warm respect from Taijiquan practitioners, I feel a renewed sense of confidence, strength, and courage.

Sincerely,

Yang Jun  
President

Translated by Mui Gek Chan

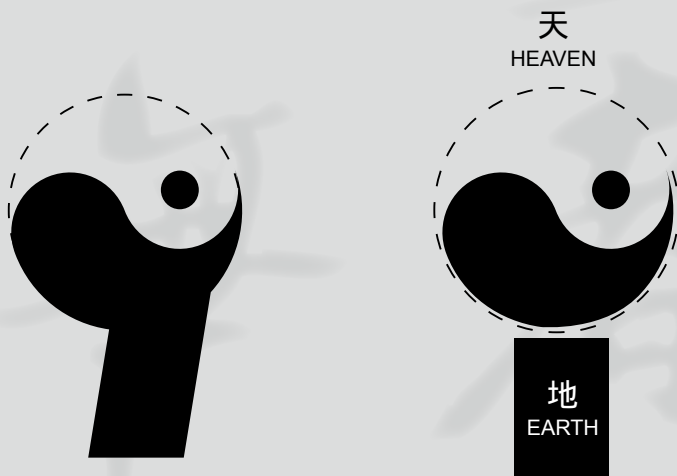
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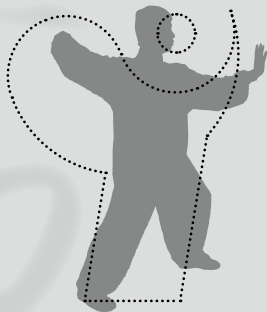


# YANG FAMILY TAI CHI CHUAN



上为圆形，为天；  
下为方形，为地；  
中为人形，为人；  
乃天人合一之意。

The upper part is circular, meaning "heaven".  
The lower part is square, meaning "earth".  
The combination is a human, meaning heaven  
and human merging together.



上方为隐形太极拳图；整体图为Y形代表了  
“杨氏”且形似杨氏太极拳架中的单鞭。

The upper part is a hidden Tai Chi symbol. The entire  
pattern looks like the letter "Y", representing "Yang family".  
Also, it looks like a person doing Single Whip.

*Tai Chi  
Chuan*

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## Taijiquan was his Passion: Remembering André Leray

*By his wife, Nelly Leray*

**B**oth of us were born and raised in Paris. I was 18 and he was 19 when we first met. He was a tall athlete with steely muscles that he had developed practicing apparatus. The pommel horse and rings were his favorite exercises and he would modestly say that he could stay in the position of the iron cross for some time when practicing the rings! We both liked sports and it was wonderful to be living in Paris at that time because we could go to swimming pools, the gymnasium, the stadium and skating rinks. We were on the same wavelength and this would last for more than sixty years.

**B**efore practicing Taijiquan, André was studying at the French School of Yoga which had just opened its doors. Every day after work, he would attend courses there to limber his muscles. Little by little, his body was transformed by these exercises. André would so perfectly master even the most difficult postures, that he was asked to pose for a manual on Yoga. André trained seriously and received his certificate to teach Yoga. Just as for Taijiquan, we used to attend training weekends or summer seminars several times a year

break, we continued participating in Master Kou's summer seminars every year and this is how I also came to learn this discipline which was so important for André. We worked hard and shared this experience together.

When André turned 48, our two sons left home, which enabled him to devote himself to his two passions: Taijiquan and Yoga. After some time, André made the important decision to quit his job as a senior executive and to leave Normandy for Pau, a town situated 529 miles away in the Southwest of France. But why Pau? Perhaps because he had been there while he was in the army; he remembered having seen wonderful palm trees and a castle as soon as he had arrived at the railway station.

We knew no one in Pau but thanks to his charisma, his bravery and his seriousness, I trusted him and loved him. I have supported and helped him as much as I could to make the most of this second part of our lives which would last for more than thirty years. André opened his own Association in Pau in 1978 and spread Taijiquan to the whole

One morning, on his way to attend a Yoga class, André noticed a student practicing with very smooth gestures and fluid motions. The trainee told him: "I've just returned from China and what you are seeing is called Taijiquan." Intrigued by this practice, André quickly got in touch with Master Kou, President of the French Taijiquan Federation in Paris and began studying diligently in order to get his certificate to teach and share this new discipline. Without any





Southwest of France. He taught and shared his knowledge in Pau and its surroundings, at the University of Free Time, went to Tarbes, to the Atlantic Coast and even to Paris. Spreading this "wonderful discipline" as he would call it, was his priority. Eventually, some of his students opened their own training centers and taught Taijiquan.

In 1984 we took our first trip to China to attend the International Congress of Taijiquan in Wuhan. We visited Beijing, Xian, Chengdu, Chongqing and then took a boat on the Yangzi River, stopped at Wuhan, Hanzhou and Shanghai. At each stop, we would meet people and exchange our experience with Chinese practitioners. It was a dream come true! During the Congress, we were amazed by the many demonstrations by Chinese Masters in several disciplines that we had never seen before. We also got the chance to meet Master Yang Zhenduo. Master Kou wanted to invite him to France but of course, it was not that easy at the time.



After two years of negotiations, the Chinese Ministry of Sports informed Master Kou that Master Yang Zhenduo would be in France at the beginning of summer 1986 and wrote: "He is the son of Yang Chengfu, founder of the Yang School and recognized in his country as the undisputed Master. We are sending to France the authentic and best Master of this Art."

We were delighted to participate in Master Yang Zhenduo's first seminar in France. He would endlessly give us precise instructions about the practice of Taijiquan and even did a sword demonstration. It was simply wonderful! To our surprise, he gave us his business card and we understood that he was inviting us to visit him in China. This business card was very tempting so after a few months, we phoned China in order to ask for a training course. On a Sunday morning, the phone rang from Beijing and we were asked how many people would like to attend. It was only the two of us, but we would come as ambassadors in order to organize a study trip for our own students.

This is how we came to stay for a month in Taiyuan. We were lodged in a Chinese hotel where Master Yang Zhenduo, his grandson Yang Jun and Mrs. Liang (teacher and judge during competitions) would come every day

to teach us. But the three of them were also trying to perfect our techniques in preparation for a demonstration at a meeting which would take place during the last week of our stay. On the stage, André, Thomas (a German student) and I demonstrated the Long Form in front of a silent Chinese audience of a thousand students. When we finished, the audience applauded us with enthusiasm and many of them asked to take pictures with us! It's true that with his great presence and kindness André would generate admiration from all.

Every year, we would attend Master Yang Zhenduo's trainings in Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Germany or in many different places of the United States. Each time we would meet Center

Directors with their students. Everyone was very nice to us. We also returned to China several times for seminars, competitions and birthday celebrations with Master Yang Zhenduo. At the end of one seminar in Sweden, we applied to Master Yang Zhenduo to open a Center in Pau, the first one in France. He accepted us and came

with his grandson for a Hand Form and Sword seminar. What an honor! We did our best to give our students and guests wonderful memories of this event.

In 2005 we took our last trip to China. Despite André's stroke that June, we decided to go with a group of French students to celebrate Master Yang Zhenduo's 80th birthday. It was also during one of these ceremonies that André received his certificate as a Disciple of Master Yang Zhenduo which recognized his more than twenty four years of dedication to Taijiquan.

During these last years of teaching, André spent a lot of time reading and tried to stay fit, maintaining his famous ability to do the splits which were admired by all. Unfortunately, his disease no longer enabled him to practice his cherished discipline. André was slowly taken from this life and left us peacefully. His face was incredibly beautiful without a single wrinkle.

Thanks to all of you for your kind words and friendship. Unfortunately, there are no words to comfort me for the loss of someone I have loved for sixty years. Even though we are now separated, our hearts remain forever bound to each other.



# The Mind's Eye: Teaching Tai Chi to People without Sight

By *Holly Sweeney-Hillman*

Center Director  
Montclair, NJ



*Holly Sweeney-Hillman*  
Center Director

## Introduction

Researchers have developed statistical methods to measure every conceivable variable that could contribute to the success or failure of students. The mountain of data that has been produced in the last decade has shown there was only one significant factor that will significantly and consistently impact student performance: the teacher to whom the student is assigned. (1)

For those who study martial arts, there has never been any doubt the teacher makes the difference between mediocrity and mastery. DVDs and the Wii can be useful aids but good teachers are absolutely essential to develop the full potential of a student.

Looking at things from a slightly different perspective, what prepares a teacher to be successful? I would describe success for a Tai Chi teacher as feeling prepared and comfortable in a variety of teaching venues, confident with students, fulfilled by the experience of teaching, financially supported by opportunities to teach and regarded by society as having a "profession" rather than a "job". I was wondering how many Tai Chi teachers felt successful when my cell phone buzzed, it was David Feinhals calling, Program director at the New Jersey Foundation For The Blind, NJFFB.

David was searching for someone to implement a Tai Chi program at the Foundation. Having studied Tai Chi himself, he was well aware that he was presenting quite a teaching challenge. I liked talking with him; he conveyed dedication to his job and genuine interest in having Tai Chi as an offering for his students at NJFFB. I agreed to meet with him.

In the meantime, I decided that this could be an opportunity to test a model for teacher training that I had been developing. The overall goal of the training was to create something that helped Tai Chi teachers be successful. The rationale of the model was to help teachers anticipate and prepare for difficulties presented by unfamiliar teaching circumstances. I felt it was important for contemporary teachers and teachers in training to have a systematic approach that could help them adapt to and be successful in the widely divergent situations in which Tai Chi is being promoted. The New Jersey Foundation for The Blind's interest in having Tai Chi classes was a perfect example of this trend.

## A Teacher Training Model

The first component is **The Frame** (Figure 1). Every teaching situation has a unique frame that has to be considered before anything else because The Frame provides the basis of all subsequent decisions about content and methods. The more information the teacher

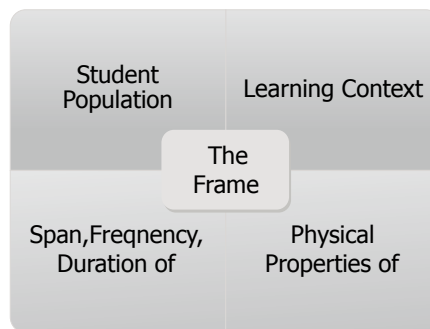


Figure 1: Every Teaching Situation Has a Unique Frame

can fill into **The Frame** before class begins, the better prepared he will be.

I used my first meeting with David, the director

of NJFFB, to fill in **The Frame** for the proposed classes at the Foundation:

**Student Population:** Adults with little or no visual capabilities. All were voluntary day students at the Foundation. They ranged in age from 30's to 80's. Some were physically frail, some had an average level of fitness and some had a high level of fitness. Tai Chi had not been offered previously at the Foundation.

**Learning Context:** New Jersey Foundation for the Blind is a non-profit organization founded in 1943 with a mission to empower adults who are blind or visually impaired to lead independent and productive lives. It offers individual and group classes on a wide variety of topics including orientation and mobility, home management, assistive technologies, healthy cooking, guitar, chorus, aerobics, studio art, African drumming, and horticulture. Students may study at the Foundation for as long as they want and many attend for years.

**Span, Frequency, Duration of Classes:** David wanted to have three 8 week class sessions: Spring, Summer, and Fall. Each class would meet one hour a week but he wanted to offer class on two different weekdays, in case a student who wanted to take Tai Chi had a conflict on one of the days the class was offered.

**Physical Properties of Class Location:** The Tai Chi classes would be held in a large room that had indoor-outdoor carpeting, a low ceiling, overhead fluorescent lights, small windows near the ceiling on one side, and large double glass doors used to enter and exit onto a long hallway. There were folding chairs and a CD player.

The second component of my model is the **Teacher's Knowledge Foundation**, (Figure 2). This is something that is difficult to capture in a simple graphic because it refers to everything a teacher knows. Central within the foundation for a Tai Chi teacher would obviously be physical and intellectual knowledge of Tai Chi forms. Although much attention is given to training teachers to have standard forms, how well a teacher can do Tai Chi forms is not necessarily an indicator of their teaching success. A strong knowledge foundation will help a teacher but it does not necessarily make them a teacher.

After I spoke with David the first time, I decided to ask two students at my center who are working toward certification if they wanted to do this project with me: JoAnne Sellars and Kate Van Frank. I knew their Tai Chi knowledge foundation was quite adequate plus both of them had a strong background in dance, which

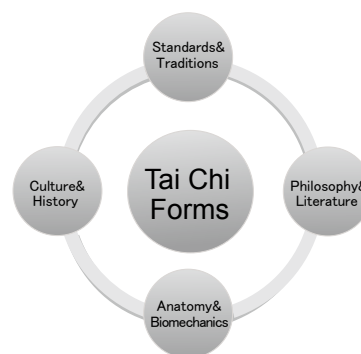


Figure 2: Teacher's Knowledge Foundation

I thought would prove to be a valuable asset in this learning frame because they were familiar with the technique of teaching mirrored movements. I knew both had experience with challenging teaching situations: JoAnne teaches weekly walk-in classes for Seniors at the Montclair Library and Kate teaches Tai Chi for Kids. I also knew they cared deeply about perfecting their teaching, worked from their hearts, and always gave their all.

When JoAnne and Kate said they'd give it a go, we moved into the third part of the teacher training model: **The Teacher's Skill Base**, (Figure 3).

### The Teacher's Skill Base

is critical to success in the classroom. As can be seen in the Figure 3 diagram, the base of the pyramid is formed by two skills: the ability to organize the classroom and communicate/relate effectively with students.

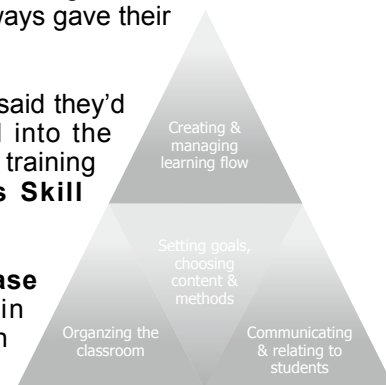


Figure 3: Teacher's Skill Base

Communicating and relating with students are obviously essential skills; "classroom organization" may not be as clear a concept. However, it is extremely important to the overall success of the class. It refers to things that can easily be overlooked: such as having materials ready that will enhance the class (handouts, props, music, DVD's); making sure all the students can see, hear and have room to move; starting and ending on time and managing class time to fit in the right amount of new content and review; working to minimize distractions or hazards in the environment such as noise or slippery flooring. Lack of classroom organization can have considerable negative impact on the student's experience in class and his attitude toward the teacher.

In the situation JoAnne, Kate and I were entering, these two skill areas were so critical to the overall success of the Tai Chi classes that





we did special training at the NJFFB to develop them.

### Communicating and Relating to Students

David, the program director at NJFFB, and Linda Groszew, head of student services offered us orientation materials and tools to help us understand the world of their students.

Blindfolded, we practiced the human guide technique (Figure 4), being led or leading one another throughout the Foundation's complex so we became oriented to the physical layout of the buildings as well as the sensations we experienced when we were blindfolded.



Figure 4: Practicing human guide technique

We were learning how to guide students with the proper etiquette, offering our arms so the student could hold us rather than us holding onto them and keeping about a half step in front to lead. We noticed the impact of touch was considerably magnified when we were blindfolded and we experienced how jarring it was to be touched unexpectedly. We knew we would sometimes want to use touch to explain movements in class, so we practiced and drilled this sequence: 1. Ask if it is OK to touch. 2. Say where the student will feel the touch, (e.g.: "I'm going to touch your elbows") 3. Then, touch with a guiding quality. We learned this was not so easy to do because we were all in the habit of talking and touching at the same time with our sighted students. However, we knew we were developing a better teaching habit by sticking with this protocol with all our students: Ask permission, explain location and purpose of touch, then, touch.

We noticed how voice volume seemed louder and voice tone had more significance when we couldn't see. It was easy to sound loud or harsh when we thought we were speaking normally. We became aware of the importance of slowing down and toning down our voices. We also noticed how disorienting and distracting it was to listen to someone who was moving around us while they talked. We needed to develop

a practice of being stationary when we spoke to the class or individuals. Interestingly, I later read that one of the characteristics that had been identified in successful teachers was that they stood still while giving directions to their students. (2) Again, we realized the NJFFB project was helping us develop better teaching habits in general.

David and Linda then loaned us special goggles to wear to better understand the visual capabilities of students who had some sight. The different pairs of goggles simulated how people would see if they suffered from some of the more common visual impairments such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and central scotoma. (Figure 5) David and Linda continually emphasized to us that even though some students had some vision, we needed to plan to teach and interact as if none of the students could see us.



Figure 5: Visual impairment goggles

### Organizing the Classroom

While we were practicing the human guide technique, we noticed drafts and temperature changes moving from one area to another, differences in acoustics between tiled and carpeted areas, and noise. Wow, did we notice noise when we did not have sight! Just the sound of a door opening at the other end of a room or people talking as they passed by in the hallway was so enlarged in our perception, we were amazed by how distracting background noises were that we didn't even notice when we were using vision to orient. We realized sound management would be a critical part of classroom organization.

However, the single most important aspect of classroom organization was spatial: keeping pathways of movement clear of chairs, guide dogs, canes, and other personal belongings; arranging seating so that the students had enough space between them to move around their chairs without bumping into anything or anyone, and choosing our placement in the room so we would be as equidistant as possible to all the students. In addition to anticipating student needs, we also needed to consider the



needs of the guide dogs. (Figure 6)

Figure 6: Classroom organization



Lauri came to class with her guide dog, Fallon.

Fallon didn't mind being apart from Lauri if she could watch her.

We were relieved to find out that we would usually have an aide volunteer in the classroom to help us with things like getting everyone into class safely and arranged optimally but we had to make the decisions about the best way to set up the class.

### Setting Goals, Choosing Content and Methods

From my first meeting with David, I knew his primary interest in having Tai Chi classes at the Foundation was to help students with their balance and confidence in moving through space.

The long-term goal was to have students able to perform a short Tai Chi form but to get to that goal we had to move through a series of smaller goals that related to improving students functional capabilities, such as ease in going from a seated posture to a standing posture.

We were only one week away from the first class and I was worried. The way I had always taught, explaining and demonstrating while students watched, was not going to convey content to the NJFB students. The technique of giving students individual guidance through the movements could be used only sparingly because the other students could not benefit from a one-on-one interaction that they could not see.

I found myself constantly thinking about the upcoming class. One day while I was shopping, I noticed the stores had already put out their summer merchandise even though it was only April and still chilly. I saw a whole box of long, colorful, small diameter Styrofoam cylinders named "pool noodles." They were intended to be children's toys: good for floating in the pool, swatting friends AND, I realized, for Tai Chi! I cut each pool noodle in half, making very

lightweight staffs. I thought these staffs would give students a sense of orientation in space not unlike the much longer walking canes with which they were all familiar. I told Kate and JoAnne my idea and we began training with the "wands." We noticed that the wands increased perception of movement when we were wearing the training goggles and made it easier to coordinate more complex patterns, like combining arm movements with body movements by using task imagery: e.g. "rowing a boat" combined with weight shifts created "push"; "draw a rainbow, draw a smile" created "wave hands like clouds"; "paddle the canoe" created part of "brush knee and push." (Figure 7)



Figure 7

The wands also gave us a way to work with the concept of intent, which made a huge difference for students who were totally without sight. (Figure 8) The other thing I liked about the wands was that they were not too far removed from Tai Chi tradition of using poles and staffs as a training method.



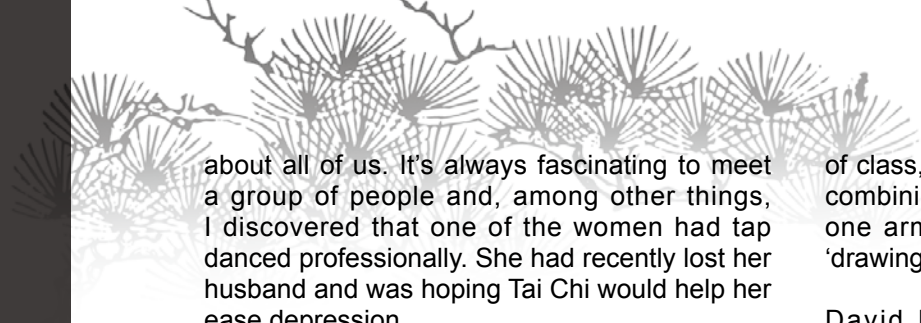
Figure 8:  
The wands helped develop intent

### Creating and Managing Learning Flow

Time had come for the first class. The plan was for me to teach the first one to test our ideas, then I would meet with Kate and JoAnne to discuss what had happened, then they would each teach one class a week for the 8 week session. I would be available to substitute teach or observe a class if Kate or JoAnne requested.

I set up folding chairs in the class prior to the students' arrival in a semi-circle creating a good distance from one another and pretty much all the same distance from me. Five students had enrolled so far but I set up a few more chairs just in case because I knew it would be difficult to set up chairs and guide students into the class at the same time. I wanted entry into class to go very smoothly to build the students' confidence. As the students appeared at the door, I introduced myself and guided them to their chairs. Everything went smoothly and we spent a few minutes finding out a little





about all of us. It's always fascinating to meet a group of people and, among other things, I discovered that one of the women had tap danced professionally. She had recently lost her husband and was hoping Tai Chi would help her ease depression.

As mentioned previously, one of the goals we had discussed with David was the ability to go from seated to standing with ease and confidence, the 'sit-to-stand' skill. I planned to work with sit-to-stand in the first class and all subsequent ones, as it would be a good indicator of progress. My plan was to use the Tai Chi concept of "center pole" to help students develop control over their central equilibrium during the sit-to-stand. Beginning with the students seated, I introduced the idea of stretching their "center poles" while bending forward at the hips. As I demonstrated the movement in my chair, I was dismayed to see that there were as many different interpretations of my verbal instructions as there were students in the room. Some were arching their backs; others were rounding their backs and some were tipping their heads back. It really hit home at that moment that the students couldn't see me AT ALL and I absolutely could not rely on demonstrating movement to convey the meaning of my words. I realized that I wasn't going to succeed that day with the concept of stretching the center pole, so I moved on quickly to have them come to standing. The sit to stand was noticeably difficult for most, so I knew it was going to be an important piece to improve upon. Once standing, we worked with weight changes from side to side, first in a "horse stance", and then, moving weight front to back by taking a small step forward and then keeping both feet planted. Mostly, I was finding out what was comfortable, what was possible, what was confusing, what was too difficult. I never took my eyes away from the students; I was looking for every possible clue in their reactions and I was also afraid of someone losing balance and falling. It was difficult to assess how the students were feeling because they were not looking back at me; I could not read them through their eyes. I mirrored all the movements I described so as not to confuse the students who could see a little bit, that way everyone was always going the same way in the room and the students could sort of feel and follow the wave of movement that was created. I thought it was premature to introduce any footwork that involved something as complicated as a concept of 45 degrees in this first lesson. When I gave everyone a wand, I could feel the students relax a bit. The wands gave everyone a sense of orientation and purpose. By the end

of class, we could do "wave hands like clouds" combining small steps with weight shifts with one arm moving with the wand, alternating 'drawing a rainbow' and 'drawing a smile'.

David had observed the first class and thought things went well. Feeling somewhat encouraged, I met with Kate and JoAnne to let them know what had happened and to work together to create an effective way of presenting the concept of central equilibrium, stretching and moving the "center pole".

Kate, JoAnne and I searched for language to develop the concept of stretching the center pole. We came up with a helicopter taking off as a way to express stretching upward in a perpendicular manner and then compared the helicopter to the image of a jet plane taking off. The jet plane image was meant to express the forward as well as upward stretching of the center pole necessary for the sit-to-stand trajectory. As it turned out, this language didn't work very well either, probably because it relied on students having had a visual experience of helicopters and jet planes taking off. 'Stretching the center pole' ended up being one of the most difficult concepts to convey and hands-on guidance as well as different language was required. Kate found that explaining that the distance between the students' heads and their chairs would not shorten when they tilted forward worked, particularly when this idea was compared to feeling the distance between head and chair shorten when heads were bowed down causing the center pole to bend. When I observed Kate's class a month later, every single student had a confident, securely balanced sit to stand. It made me want to cheer out loud.

Working with the NJFFB students, we all became more tuned to the delicate nature of managing learning flow. A teacher has to give information to the students to begin the flow and then continue just the right amount of new information to keep the flow going. Not enough new information, the students become stuck and disinterested. Too much information overwhelms and also blocks the flow. An excerpt from Kate's teaching journal describes the process of how a teacher works with learning flow:

"I really believed Tai Chi would benefit my students at the NJFFB, but I didn't know how to convince them of that. I didn't know how to convey to them what I would normally express by example, by having them watch me. I felt like I was certain to fail. I dreaded going to

the Foundation, and I was just as lost about teaching them as they seemed in regard to why they should bother being there. When I explained the benefits of practice, it appeared incomprehensible to them, and I felt completely ineffectual ... but I felt compelled to keep trying because I believed this to be a challenge that would transform my teaching skills ... in the third week, I realized I had to change my approach. In the first two classes, I had felt that I had to adhere to a formula ... I realized I had to listen and adapt as I received spoken or unspoken feedback from them ... I stopped trying to explain what I now realize they weren't ready for, like 'energy in the hands' or 'bubbling well-spring'. I did simple things that were familiar in the beginning of class and I stopped trying to cram everything into each class. When I let them feel a simple application for "opening", they all lit up a little ... after that, the classes became easier. They were getting used to the movements, so when I explained the benefits of increased balance and agility they would get by shifting weight and learning to feel 'full' and 'empty' before they moved and how power was increased by learning to link up their body as a whole; these ideas began to make sense to them ... another reason it became easier was that I was no longer afraid they'd be unstable or lose their balance ..."

Learning how to create and manage learning flow is at the apex of the Teacher's Skill Base Pyramid because it represents the highest level of teaching skill. It can only be learned from experience and from building the skills that support it: setting goals, choosing content and methods that match The Frame of the class, organization, communication, and relationship building.

### Summary

When I observed class at NJFFB one month after we started the program, I felt satisfied that



Figure 9

we were making good progress. The students

were moving confidently across the room, performing footwork that included the concept of 45 degrees as well as straight, their sit-to-stand skills were solid, and they had made the transition from using the wands to form intent to being able to express a clear intent without the aid of a wand. (Figure 9)

The challenge in the next four weeks will be to link what has been learned into a series of continuous but separate movements requiring the use of transitions. Then, the students will be able to practice a form.

This article has presented an example of using a model to create a process that could be applied to teaching in a wide variety of settings and also to teacher training. It's not meant to be read as a "how to do" formula. The purpose the model is to give the teachers involved a way of talking about their methods and choices, supporting the creativity of each teacher but allowing enough standardization of approach that another teacher could take over the class from time to time.

The ideas used to create this model are based on principles that have been identified as contributing to teaching success in academic settings. I recommend the recent book by Doug Lemov, *Teach Like a Champion*, © 2010, to read more about them.

Research on learning complex motor activities was also utilized which suggest that giving students attention-focusing cues about how to do the movement prior to performing the movement helps them perfect the movement faster than giving corrections after they had done the movement. (3) In our classes at NJFB, we used this technique almost exclusively, as every movement had to be explained in explicit detail before the students could try it.

I would like to thank in particular, JoAnne and Kate, for their enthusiasm and dedication in undertaking this project with me.

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# Mindfulness in Motion:

A conversation with Master Yang Jun about  
the role of the mind in Taijiquan

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*By Dave Barrett*  
Journal Editor





**DB** In discussing the principle of “use mind, not force” (yong yi, bu yong li) we have two Chinese words, Yi and Li. Can you explain the difference between Yi and Li?

**YJ** Yi is the mind, and Li is more like force. This principle points to what is the starting point for our motions. It doesn't mean you don't use your energy, but energy and force are different.

**DB** What is the difference between energy and force?

**YJ** In the classic sense, strength comes from your muscles. Muscles provide force, but energy comes from the tendons. Here my grandfather has said many times that force is an untrained, rough strength. Energy goes through a process of refinement, becoming more tempered and spring-like.

**DB** I recall Master Yang Zhenduo referring to a process whereby pig iron is tempered into steel, gradually adding quality and spring. What is it we are refining, our energy feeling, or quality of strength?

**YJ** The quality of strength. After you have been training it becomes energy. Energy still comes from force; you can't really separate the two. But the difference is that untrained force is blunt and has no flexibility. When we study Taijiquan we talk about energy, very seldom do we talk about strength.

**DB** In the training process we do need to use strength.

**YJ** Yes, but our focus is on the process of changing force into energy. Someone may be very strong, able to lift hundreds of pounds, but there may be another person who with training is able to control this opponent, using skill to prevent them from using their strength. This skilled person may not be as strong, but they have more energy and technique.

**DB** How do we begin the training process of refining strength into energy?

**YJ** In Taijiquan this is very clear, it starts from being able to relax and make yourself supple.

**DB** Is this done using the Yi? How do you and your grandfather explain the Yi function to your students?

**YJ** At the root, everything is connected. Consciousness is a blend of Jing, Qi, Shen; we share a reality of Essence, Energy, and Spirit. It's rooted in the body, without the body there is no Jing, Qi, or Shen. This is one aspect. Another aspect is the heart connecting with the mind, the concept of Xin.

**DB** This is an important point for Westerners,



**Dave Barrett**  
Journal Editor

because often we imagine thinking as being done from the neck up, the intellectual process is just a brain function and has little to do with the body feeling. Are you saying that the body is as important as the mind in the Chinese concept of consciousness?

**YJ** Actually one is connected to the other. Your organs have a feeling, and emotional content. In Chinese we have a saying that your body is used by your heart.

**DB** When we begin our training, is the focus on the body?

**YJ** Not really. We need to begin training our awareness. Everything starts from here. The theory is clear but maybe it is hard to understand from the Western point of view. It's based in Chinese Medicine. If you want to do anything, there is a reason, an intent, and this makes your spirit and energy go there. When you have this foundation then the energy and the body are coordinated.

**DB** The process of coordinating the body, with the energy, with the mind, is this what is meant by using Yi instead of Li?

**YJ** You have to understand why we want to use the mind rather than force. In Taijiquan we have two special requirements. One is that you must be rooted, stable, and balanced. The other is that the energy must be unified. If you want to be rooted, you have to sink Qi downwards. To unify the energy you cannot just put strength into local areas. The whole body needs to be relaxed in order to unify. That's the basic idea of why we want you to use your mind rather than force. If you want to get the proper result, your energy must be unified, otherwise it's just local strength.

**DB** How do we use the Yi to promote the rooting process? So many times we hear we should sink the Qi, sink the Qi, but not many can really explain how this is done.

**YJ** Qi sinking to the dantian is a basic principle, many teachers talk about it, but what is it practically? How do you feel it? How can you tell if it is sinking to the dantian or not? A feature of many styles of Taijiquan is to use stomach breathing. What is this? When you are sitting



naturally and you take a relaxed, deep breath, you feel the stomach expanding naturally. That is the Qi sinking down. You don't have to think about it too much, it is a natural feeling. If you think about it too much, it goes away, you lose it! Natural, comfortable without realizing it, the Qi is sinking.

The rooting process has two elements: one external and the other internal. Internally we need the Qi to sink. Physically, your body has to coordinate this process. If you lift up your shoulders, you can't take a deep breath. All the body arrangement principles are there to help the Qi sink down. Not only that, when you practice we ask that your postures gradually get lower. This will also help with stability and rooting

**DB** The actions of suspending the head, dropping the elbows, loosening the chest, etc. are physical adjustments. Should we be focusing the mind on leading the Qi through the internal parts of the body?

**YJ** No, your mind is not on the Qi. If your mind is on the Qi, it becomes stagnant, sluggish.

**DB** Here is a quote from Wu Yuxiang's, The Mental Elucidation of the Thirteen Postures, "Throughout the whole body the intent (yi) is on the spirit of vitality (jing shen), not on the Qi. If it is on the Qi, there will be stagnation." Is this what you mean?

**DB** That's right, if the Yi is only focused on Qi motion you are concentrating on a local area, not the totality of awareness. Concentrating on a local area means your mind is just there. You lose the whole picture. The door closes, you don't get information from the outside, you don't have flow and flexibility, and you are moving just by yourself, inside yourself.

**DB** How do we train the Yi to lead the Qi without it becoming stagnant?

**YJ** This question is kind of like yin and yang. You have to do it but you don't have to do it. It's tricky. How you can make your Yi lead the Qi and have the energy follow depends on your level. If your mind understands the reason of the movement, the technique, what is the activity of the opponent that makes you do the movement? In your imagination you are practicing with somebody. Then your mind will lead and the movement will follow. Everything in Taijiquan has two sides, one is the internal impulse and the other is external, what is the opponent doing? When we talk about this, it depends on the skill level of your practice.

**DB** Let me ask you about the beginner's level. How is the mind used here?

**YJ** How you use your mind at different levels keeps changing, like yin and yang. At the beginning

the mind is focused on the learning process.

**DB** I see many beginning students working quite hard, it's a real struggle to memorize, do you have any suggestions to help with this process?

**YJ** This is a big part, at the beginning, to learn the movements. Not only that, but to learn the coordinations. This cannot come from just one practice; it has to be daily work. At the beginning your focus is on footwork, body shape, and principles. At this time trying to use your mind to lead the energy doesn't work. Beginners should practice to improve strength, balance and coordination. The result will be that gradually you cultivate energy and flow. But at the beginning the mind is very busy with the basics.

**DB** Gradually as the motions become more natural, the thinking process becomes calmer and people have more confidence and can perform the motions without being confused. Is it at this point that we introduce the concept of Yi function and how is this done?

**YJ** We want you to practice imagining you are with an opponent. You need to clearly understand in each movement where is the energy point and what the application of that motion is. At this time your internal and external practice will be combined.

**DB** From the Yang family point of view, what is the right time to begin introducing the application information?

**YJ** The applications could be introduced from the beginning but it really depends on the people in class. From my point of view, beginners seeing the applications can help them to better understand the movements. This can also help with memorization. At this time, they are still busy with the foundation work, but it is useful for them to see it. It's not necessary for them to apply the movements to understand why the motions are done. There's no clear line, it depends on the individual student.

**DB** In the intermediate levels of practice, your grandfather used to tell us to focus the mind principle by principle. One day, practice for loosening the chest, the next practice for loosening the chest, rounding the back, etc. Is this considered part of training the Yi?

**YJ** These things should become like a habit from daily practice. You do them do them without thinking. It becomes a reflex. You know, these levels: beginning, intermediate and refined are not totally separate. At the beginning we can't introduce movements without discussing the principles. The intermediate students must be reminded of these foundations. Refined practice doesn't mean you

forget them. We always need the principles, but the way of thinking is different. From the habits formed by daily practice they are naturally in the body. The learning process must be cumulative in order to improve. Intermediate students have finished learning the movements. The mind is working on how to connect the principles with your physical structure, but we also need to begin to focus on internal energy. For example, in the refinements of dropping the elbows, loosening the shoulders, we can see these adjustments. What about the energy flowing continuously? Upper body and lower body combined together? intent mind rather than force? You need to bring these principles into your practice.

**DB** Is the understanding of energy points in the offensive and defensive techniques a feature of refined/advanced practice?

**YJ** No, this is still intermediate. Actually, from my grandfather's point of view these levels are more physical in nature. The flavor of Yang style is developed and we can see this from outside. The refined level is not the last step in training. From the internal point of view, what is the last step? It is the last principle: body move, mind calm.

**DB** This is the "Seek Quiescence in Motion" principle?

**YJ** Yes, this is how they have translated it.

**DB** How would you translate it, from your understanding?

**YJ** I would say, "body moving, mind staying calm; finding a center, finding a balance internally." Balance does not only mean physical balance; your mind needs to be balanced. That is the center, actually; when your mind is calm. Basically it becomes that you are not thinking, but you are thinking.

**DB** This is one of the most intriguing things about practicing Taijiquan.

**YJ** Yes, which is we think we are not thinking, but we are thinking.

**DB** So we want to train the Yi, but ultimately we want the Yi to be natural and calm?

**YJ** That's right, imagining an opponent should not always be the point, certain times, yes. Other times, not. Your mental practice is always changing with your skill level; it's not always the same. Beginners focus on remembering the motions, intermediates focus on the principles and applications but at the end you don't focus on energy points and attack and defense. Your mind stays calm; not thinking means you are thinking everything. As soon as you have a specific thought, you have lost something.

**DB** Are you saying that at a certain point if you



Spirit

福

just focus on the mental process you lose something?

**YJ** That's right, if you think about here you lose the other side, you are not in the center.

**DB** How do we keep our mind in the center?

**YJ** Don't think, keep your mind calm.

**DB** In meditation and Qigong the mind is also calm, how is Taijiquan different?

**YJ** Because it is a martial art, in Taijiquan the mind needs to be open, aware of 360 degrees externally; what's coming at you.

**DB** How do we balance the need for a calm mind with external awareness?

**YJ** Actually the calm mind will improve your external awareness. Because you are not thinking, your focus improves. By focusing on one point you lose the others. This calm mind does not mean you have no thoughts; you are in a state of constant readiness.

**DB** In understanding how the mind works in Taijiquan, we have many details, principles and applications; by working on these do we gain freedom of mind, a natural spontaneity?

**YJ** That's right, because we repeat these skills constantly in practice. The mind no longer has to process them, the body naturally knows. There is a freedom in not thinking but understanding. That's why we have the saying that when you practice, first you have to relax. When you can relax and practice the postures over and over, you come to understand the energy. When you can understand the energy then you can achieve what we call in Chinese: shen ming; spirit clear. What does this mean? I don't think, but I clearly understand. This is where we find freedom in our motions.



# Tai Chi Chuan Wen Da

## Questions and answers from Master Yang Jun's seminar in Montreal, Sept.2009

### Compiled by Helen Smeja, MD



***It is my understanding that when we do the form, we should aim to have continuity in our movements, but we should also show the intent of the movements. But when I try to express the intent of a movement, I lose some continuity. Can you give us some advice as to how to reconcile these two concepts?***

When you do the form, the energy should be flowing continuously, but with some people we don't see the ending point of a given movement. When we speak about the continuous flow of energy, it is within one movement. It also depends on whether you show a release of energy or not. At the end of a movement, when you finish sending out the energy, you have a kind of stop point. In Chinese we refer to this as "si ting fei ting" - it looks like a stop but it is not a stop. The "stop" or slight pause you make is not by your intention, but it is from your energy being sent out.

In our practice, our movements have yin/yang changes, where part of the time we are storing energy and part of the time we are releasing energy. With some people, it is not clear where the energy storage ends and the energy is sent out. It depends on what you want to show in your form. Some people prefer to do a smoother, dance-like form. Another method is to show more clearly the energy expression. Some people say that explosive energy is


not expressed in Wu or Yang style Taijiquan, but this is not entirely true. The energy is hidden internally, but everything you do, it is the same process as if you were doing it fast. In the form, wherever there is an energy explosion, that is usually where the movement ends. Some movements have two explosion points, such as with Parry, Block and Punch. In this case, you will have two small pauses expressed in the movement. When you don't have any energy release, you should make your flow continuous. When you finish an energy release, you should make a small pause.

***Can you clarify the concept of coordinating internal and external?***

In order to coordinate internal and external, you have to understand the meaning of each movement. If you just wave your hands around, you can't express the engagement of your mind. In order to use your mind, it is important to know the technique as well as the meaning of a movement. If you don't use your mind, your movement will look empty. You want the outside of your movement to look soft but the inside to feel like steel. It can help if you visualize your opponent. You won't







always need to imagine an opponent. Once you pass the level of coordinating mind and body, you won't need to think about an opponent anymore. Then you can work on keeping your mind more centered. It doesn't matter whether or not your practice is for martial arts purposes; the aim is always to keep your mind centered. You don't want your mind too much in any one area. So as you practice your form, the steps are first to think of the principles, then to think of your opponent, then, without thinking, do everything, with your mind calm and centered. It is important for your spirit and your mind to be centered. While not thinking about anything, everything is clear around you.

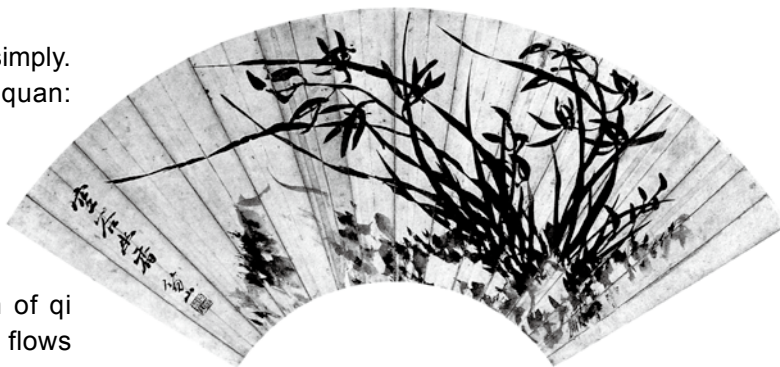
***During our form practice, when the energy flows, does it flow through the meridians? Should we try to imagine the energy flowing through the meridians, or should we just focus on the physical movements?***

This question is not easy to answer simply. There are two ways to practice Taijiquan: One is jing exercise, which is a still exercise. The other is dong exercise, which is a moving exercise, as when we do the forms.

In jing exercise, there is circulation of qi along the meridians, and the energy flows to the “four tips”, expressed in the tongue, the hair, the nails and the teeth. These four tips are the components making up your body, referred to as xue (blood), rou (flesh), jing (tendon), gu (bone). The tongue is a manifestation of the flesh (muscles, etc. When your flesh is really strong, you could push out your teeth with your tongue). The hair is the manifestation of qi and blood (when your qi is sunk, you can feel your hair “stand up”), the nails represent the tendons (when the tendons are strong, when someone grabs you, you can feel the nails going into the bone) and the teeth represent the bones (when your bones are strong, you can bite off the tip of a knife with your teeth). In Chinese medicine, the methods used are observation, smell, questioning of the patient

and examination of the pulse. Through assessment of the pulse, the practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine can “feel the organs” and make a “pulse diagnosis”. For instance, the practitioner can know whether or not you are pregnant. Taijiquan and Traditional Chinese Medicine are connected. They come from the same root, the same philosophy.

From the qi sinking to the dantian, there is storage of qi which then circulates to all the body through the meridians. When the dantian is full, the energy can reach all over the body. In form practice, you don't need to think of qi circulation. During form practice, you need to be aware of the outside, rather than to be focused inward. When you are doing still (jing) exercises, you can concentrate on the inside. Every exercise you do is like one drop of water going for storage in your dantian. (“lian gong” - practice storing energy). When you have a



strong storage of qi, the qi or energy can reach all the “four tips”. You can build strong energy/gong into your body through daily practice. Everybody can build up their storage of qi through daily practice. You don't have to know how to circulate the qi; you don't have to guide the flow of energy. Just as when you pour water into a glass and keep pouring it, it will eventually overflow, so by storing your qi in your dantian, it will gradually expand and flow out to where it is needed. When you practice your form, you should be more focused on the yin/yang changes. By focusing on the up/down, open/close, your practice will feel like an ocean wave. Then your qi will flow with the external practice.



# Character Analysis for 意 Yi

By *Andy Lee*  
Center Director  
East Brunswick, NJ

Analysis of 意 Yi—13 strokes					
Character		Spelling	Hanzi Rebus		Genealogy
Simplified	Traditional	Pinyin	Radical	Phonetic	Etymology
意	意	Yì	心	立	音 yin sound from the heart 心 xin
			Xin -heart	Lì-stand	Thought

用意不用力—yong yi bu yong li --the intention doesn't make an effort.

Use mind not force: the Tai Chi Chuan classics say. "All of this means use Yi (mind/ heart/ intention) and not Li (force, tight clumsy muscle)." While practicing tai chi the whole body should be relaxed/released. Don't have a tight clumsy muscle in the body, blood vessels, bones, ligaments, and

tendons to tie/tighten up the body. If the body is not tense then it can be agile and able to change. It will be able to turn freely and easily. The body has meridians (jing guo) like the earth has streams and rivers. If the river is not dammed, the water can flow. (Think of the Qi as having properties like water.) If the meridian is not closed, the Qi goes through. If the whole body has hard force and it

fills up the meridians, the Qi and blood are obstructed and the turning is not smooth and agile. Grandmaster B. P. Chan would say: just pull one hair on the body and the whole body is affected/effected/off-balance. One hair affects the whole body. If you use Yi, not Li, then the Yi goes to a place you pick and the Qi follows your Yi. The Qi and the blood circulate together. Where the Qi goes, the blood follows.

**Sound from the heart implies meaning, idea, intention, thought or thoughts:**

"What about Yi? Yi is the heart (mind) and heart is Yi. In definition, there is a slight difference between heart and Yi. The heart is the chief and the Yi, the assistant. When the heart moves (intentions), the Yi starts to work. The Yi leads and the Qi follows. Therefore, the heart, Yi and Qi are all interconnected. If the heart is troubled then the Yi is diffused. If the Yi is diffused, the Qi floats. On the other hand, when Qi sinks, the Yi will be concentrated. When the Yi is concentrated, the heart is stable. Therefore the three are melded together and cannot be separated from each other. The Qi moves and can motivate the blood and the spirit.



*Andy Lee*  
Center Director



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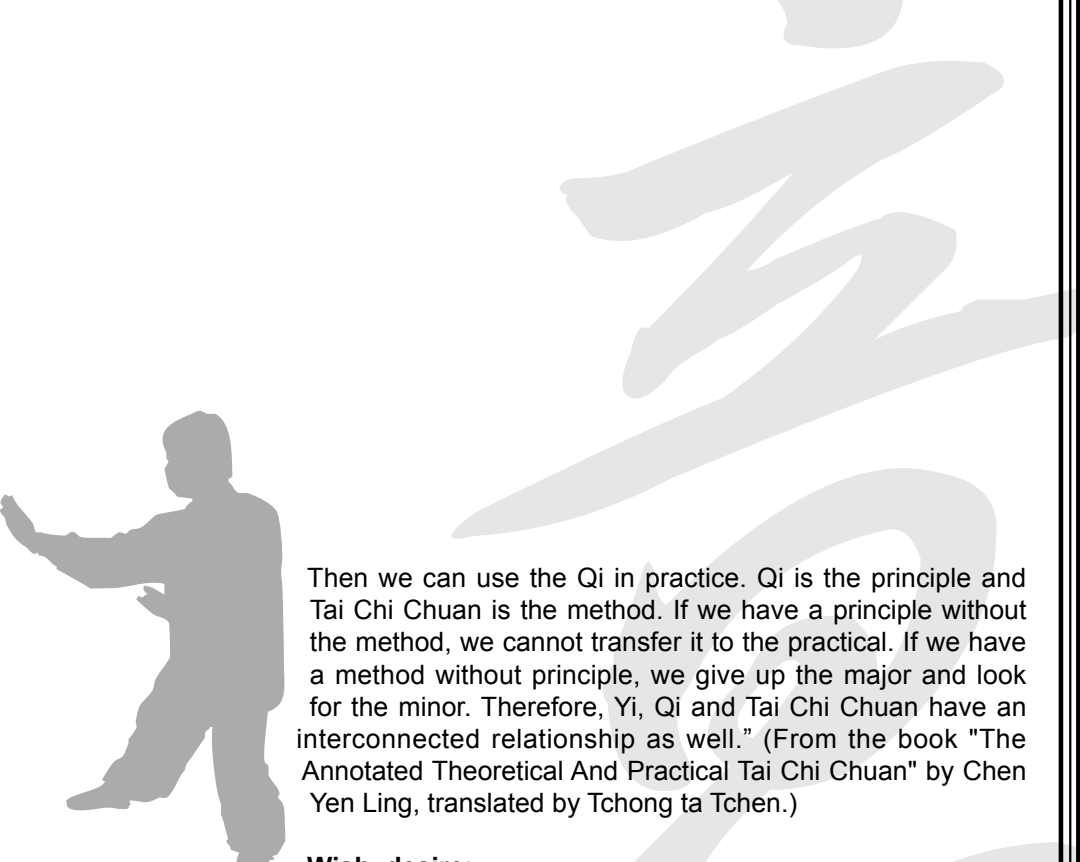
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Then we can use the Qi in practice. Qi is the principle and Tai Chi Chuan is the method. If we have a principle without the method, we cannot transfer it to the practical. If we have a method without principle, we give up the major and look for the minor. Therefore, Yi, Qi and Tai Chi Chuan have an interconnected relationship as well." (From the book "The Annotated Theoretical And Practical Tai Chi Chuan" by Chen Yen Ling, translated by Tchung ta Tchen.)

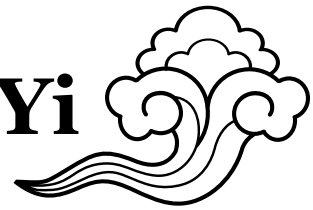
#### Wish, desire:

Concentration/focus and regulating Energy flow by means of the mind. The mind leads the movements of the body and supplies guidance for the inner energy flow. Feel this and lead the inner energy to specific areas of the body, integrating it with the physical movements. Use the mind to achieve balance, transferring the energy from areas where there is too much or too little. Normally keep the mind focused on the lower abdomen (Dantian-丹田) to prevent the scattering of thoughts as well as the inner energy.

***"Both the movements and the energy accumulation are exercises guided by the mind. The Yang style calls for the integration of internal and external. The internal means the integration of the "mind," "will" and "energy." The reason for the difference between Taijiquan and other physical exercises is that it can effectively improve the function of human awareness and better improve the coordination between the mind and form in human life." —Zhang Luping***



# Commentary on Yi



By **Roberta Lazzeri**

Center Director  
Firenze, Italia



Generally speaking, I am not interested in the western viewpoint on an eastern theory: if it works, it's all right, it's true. I don't like to try to validate it because it would work for us too. I'm interested in the opposite process instead: how we, with our cultural background, understand and then apply these theories. Because we are teaching a Chinese discipline, we need to try to understand it deep inside, without taking short cuts.

In the West we have been speaking of mind and body as two separate entities for ages. Especially in Italy for a long time there was the so-called "the two cultures division": mind/spirit activities, aesthetics and logic, the classical studies were considered as elevated activities, and economy and ethics as practical activities. Everything about physical interaction vs. pure mental speculation has been decreased to "vile Mechanics". If even mathematics and physics were considered activities belonging to

the world of practices, and so at a lower level, try to imagine how physical activity would be considered in this model!

Even nowadays in the West there is a persistence to see the mind as something aseptic, removed from the body, seated in the head and the body is seen as simple executor, vile flesh.

Of course mind and body are two words, but not two separate things, yet they are two aspects of our human being. A body without a mind is a corpse, a mind without a body has never been seen. The thought, the intention as commonly meant, are seen as a direct expression of the pure mind. In fact it is often said, especially to women: "Don't think with your heart!". Here is the problem! You can see at once a difference between western and eastern culture, 意 yì mind/intention in the eastern world is directly related to the heart, as one can see even in the Chinese character itself. Therefore when we use the word mind/intention we must make an effort to understand what meaning we assign to it; make it clear what we are talking about, in order to avoid any eventual cultural misunderstanding.

Let us analyze now the Chinese character 意 yì

意 yì meaning; idea

From 音 (yīn) 'sound' and 心 (xīn) 'heart'.

"The 音 sound in the 心 heart" – Karlgren(1)

音 yīn n. sound

The bottom 日 (yuē) is 口 (kǒu) 'mouth' with a horizontal line in it, representing the tongue, or sound coming out. The top may have depicted a flute; now it looks like 立 (lì 'stand'). The tops of 音 yīn 'sound' and 言 yán 'words' were originally identical. 音 yīn and 言 yán may be cognate.

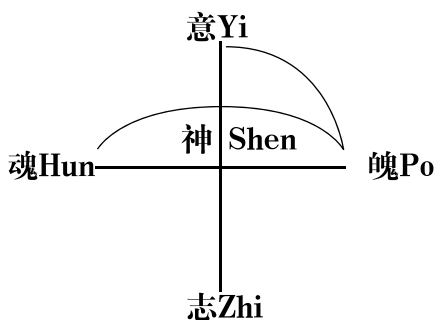
心 xīn n. heart

Picture of a heart. As a component, also written 忄, usually suggesting meanings involving



emotions.

Let's see now how 意yì is the expression of our whole being, totally connected and mutually related to the spirit of the various internal organs as understood by Chinese medicine. I really like this explanation because it develops the idea of a mind that is being formed in real time, and how all the organs are the seat of some mental function, and how the awareness, 意yì, is formed after the birth, and how all these elements are intimately connected.



神 (shén) spirit/soul of the heart organ is formed in the conception, has the idea.

魂 (hún) spirit/soul of the liver organ, has the fantasy, structures the ideas, has the preview.

魄 (pò) spirit/soul of the lung organ, has the historical memory, the instincts, the reflexes.

魂 (hún) and 魄 (pò) are formed between conception and birth.

意 (yì) spirit/soul of the spleen organ organizes, forms the conceived idea. 志 (zhì) spirit/soul of the kidney organ has the will, the action, translates the conceived idea into action.

意 (yì) and 志 (zhì) are formed in the first years of one's life.

十 (shí) is the Chinese character that means 10, indicating change, transformation.

神shén has the idea, 魄pò instincts and 魂hún fantasy. These are are balanced but don't produce anything, so they are represented on a horizontal axis: stasis, balance; therefore 魄pò energizes the transition to the vertical axis, creation, order, so that 意yì, the conceived idea can arise.

意yì therefore, is a conceived idea, not the first thought coming to my mind: it has spent a lot of time forming and it takes a lot of time to maintain and develop it.

Now that we are close to understanding what we mean by 意 yì, we can analyze the second part of the Yang Chengfu principle 用意不用

力 (yòng yì bú yòng lì) "Use Intent Rather than Force". Here we should clarify the meaning of 力 lì In order to avoid various misunderstandings that lead to "dull" performances of the form.

We start from the character again:

劲(勁) [jìn] strength, energy, spirit. But we had better use the traditional character jin, since it is more visually comprehensible in order to see its constituent components From jīng phonetic and 力 (lì) 'strength'

I will also split up 𠂔 into its components, not only considering it as phonetic, but directly responsible of the meaning of 劲 jin .

Above: 𠂔 [chuān] river; variant of 川 chuān, Below: 一 a stroke that may represent the earth surface, stream under the earth surface, below 工 [gōng] work; productive labor

"Picture of a carpenter's square" – Karlgren.(1)

Therefore one should not use the brute strength 力, but of course the internal strength 劲 jin = 力 lì + 𠂔 jīng, acquired with work that is constant and continuous like the flow of a river underground, therefore not a native strength, but one that has been acquired with a long conscious work and commitment.

As one may see as well from the ideogram, in order to have 劲 jin I should have 力 lì, what else can I work with? I really like the similarity that Master Yang Zhenduo makes between 力 lì and 劲 jin like iron and steel: I should refine a great deal iron if I want to have quality steel.

The western and eastern cultures and languages are very different, therefore pinpointing in our practice what 意yì and 劲 jin are and how they work is very important in order to bring life to the performance of the form.

Sources:

1) Bernhard Karlgren (15 October 1889, Jönköping - 20 October 1978) was a Swedish sinologist, philologist, and the founder of Swedish sinology as a scholarly discipline. His full name was Klas Bernhard Johannes Karlgren, and he adopted the Chinese name "Gao Ben Han" simplified Chinese: 高本汉; traditional Chinese: 高本 ; pinyin: Gāo Běnhàn). ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernhard\\_Karlgren](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernhard_Karlgren))

2) "Wenlin® Software for Learning Chinese"



# Me, My Mind and I

By Franco Giordana

Milano, Italia



意境

Perhaps writing about this subject may be considered not proper for someone who believed, for the most part of his life, that “me” and “my mind” were exactly the same thing. Only at the respectable age of 64, after a few experiences of meditation and the beginning of the study of taijiquan I became aware with astonishment that my mind was only a part of myself, perhaps not even the most important, in spite of the persistent tendency of the mind to assume a dominant role. This kind of revelation has deeply changed my life and the practice of taijiquan was a fundamental factor in this course, moving my attention first to the sensations sent by my body and then more and more to the connections between my frame of mind and my performance while practicing the form. Perhaps I am not

skilled enough to talk about the importance of mindfulness in the practice of taijiquan, I can in any case say something about my experience of the role that taijiquan has on my mind.

Beginning the study of the form, the difficulties related to the task of remembering and executing unusual sequences of movements with exotic names were a challenge greeted with excitement by my mind, satisfied by having at hand new toys to dismantle, due to be thrown away and forgotten in a corner once their mechanics had been understood. During the first and second sections there were new techniques of increasing difficulty that had to be mastered: repulse the monkey, diagonal flight, the feared kicks; everything was a new challenge both for my

body, confronted with increasing demands, and for my mind, required to remember newer and subtler details. The third section came to me as a surprise, where, after the first new techniques, not even particularly difficult from an athletic point of view, one finds long repetitions of previously learned movements, culminating with the long sequence containing the white snake spitting his tongue, almost exactly the same sequence already learned in the second section, with only the almost negligible difference of the last gesture of unfolding of the fist.

At this point the mind begins to be bored, so it turns to its favorite activity: trying to foresee the future or complaining about the past, focusing on how it could have been better if things had



happened differently from how they effectively had, leaving the body to go on with the automatic routine. And the snake's tongue is kept inexorably in his mouth, with the fist kept clenched as it already was previously twice in the second section, or one remains frozen in a single whip posture without knowing anymore what is coming next. So one starts to understand what it means to match inner and outer and to reckon that the third section has been organized precisely in this way in order to make us realize that it is impossible to practice the form in a correct way if our intention is not continuously oriented to what we are doing. Every time we go astray or take the wrong direction at one of the many crossroads present in the third part, we must acknowledge that yet again our mind has stolen us from ourselves, brooding over whatever is no the present moment, increasing tension and stress. Every time we become aware of a diversion from the correct sequence of the form, we are brought back to the here-and-now and the mind loses a

bit of its power, letting us gain serenity and wellness.

Slowly, practicing again and again, I became aware of how much our mind can interfere with the form if we are not constantly concentrated on what we are doing in every single instant. For example, I became conscious of the fact that every time the form was getting near the kicks I started worrying, fearing that, as it frequently happened, I would lose my balance. Worrying did not improve at all my balance in kicking, but, as a reward, it did worsen the performance of the preceding techniques. From the moment I became aware of this, I tried to concentrate on every single action without thinking about what was coming next and as a result the kicks ceased to be a source of fear and my balance began to gradually improve.

As I went on with my daily practice of taijiquan, I realized that the tendency of the mind to always run forward showed up at every single step. If my attention is put mostly on the fact that I am "going forward" (or backwards,)

my intention goes to the leg which is moving, forgetting the rooting of the standing leg, giving rise to a tendency to "fall" on the stepping foot, a way not apt at all for a walk on thin ice, as it should be following the teachings of the Masters. It was as if my moving leg became "heavier", pulling me towards where I was going. Since I moved my attention to rooting my base, being aware that in that very moment the most important thing is to have a stable support for my whole body; my center of gravity has gone lower, improving my stability, while the advancing leg has become lighter and easier to move nimbly and softly.

It may look a small thing, but being forced every day to recognize how little control we usually have on our mind is a great help in resizing it's role and an important step in the direction of a healthier and easier life. And the daily effort to focus on the present moment seems to gain, with passing time, some success: now it seldom happens to me that the white snake doesn't spit out his tongue!



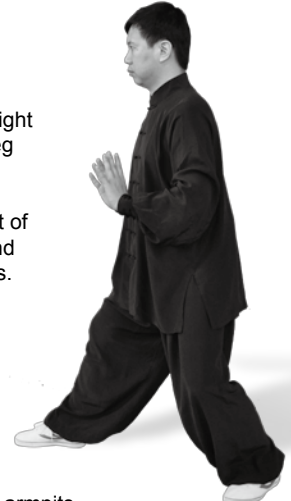
# Practice Pages



Turn your body square while separating arms.



Bring your arms in while shifting weight back.



Shift your weight to the back leg (about 70%), bring your hands in front of your chest and sit your palms. Keep your body square, and don't lean back. Continue sinking your chest and opening your armpits

Your head should turn with your body, eyes looking forward.



You arms follow the turning of the waist, making a large circle.



Shift your weight back, your arms continuously circling until you reach the left corner (about 45°).



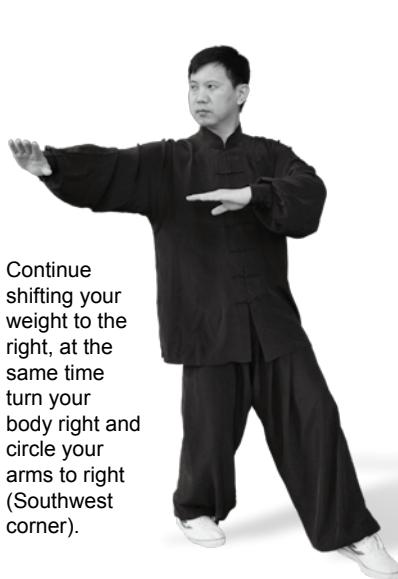
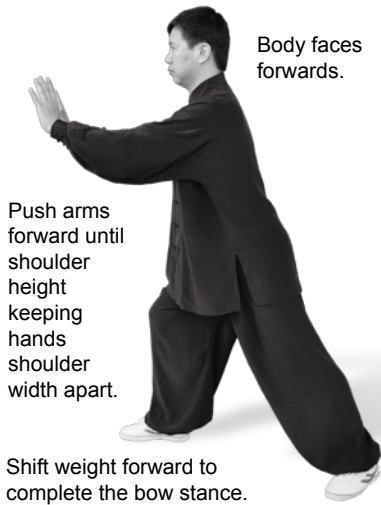
Keep your body straight and do not lean back.

Your right toe turns in 135° while following the turning of your waist.

As you shift your weight to the right, pivot on the ball of the left foot until it feels comfortable.



# 太极拳



Pick up your left foot, step out straight. At the same time the left arm stands up.



## Single Whip



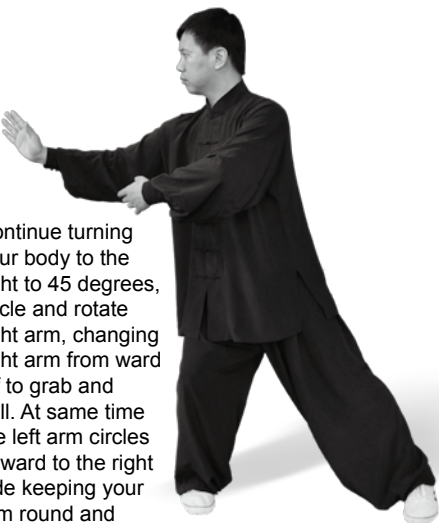
Sit your left palm, look forward past the tiger's mouth.



Moving forward, the left arm strikes out. Make sure your torso is vertical and your chest is rounded. Your torso should be facing between south and southeast.

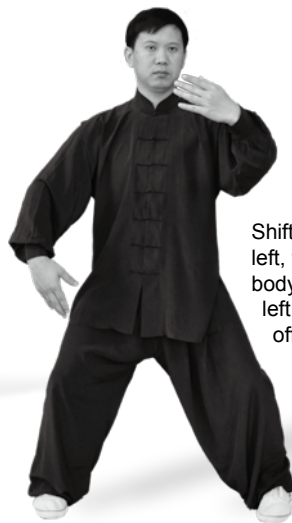


Shift weight to the right, rotating your body to the right. Left arm follows waist turning. Left arm makes a curve in front of your body. Sit left palm with the intent to grab and pull. Using the waist, turn your left leg in so the toes point straight forward.



Continue turning your body to the right to 45 degrees, circle and rotate right arm, changing right arm from ward off to grab and pull. At same time the left arm circles upward to the right side keeping your arm round and armpit open.

At the same time, left leg steps out sideways with left toes pointing forward.



Shift weight to the left, turning your body to the left, left arm warding off upwards.

Right arm circles downward and rotates, changing from pull to ward off with the left palm facing inward.



Arms follow the body turning left (to 45°); circle left arm downward and right arm upward.

Right leg steps in with toes pointing forward. The distance between both legs is shoulder width.

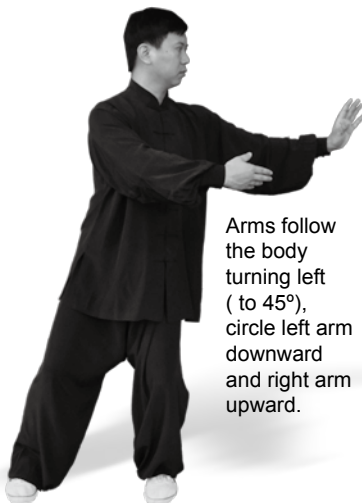
# 太极拳

## Cloud Hands (1)

Right arm makes a curve to form ward-off.

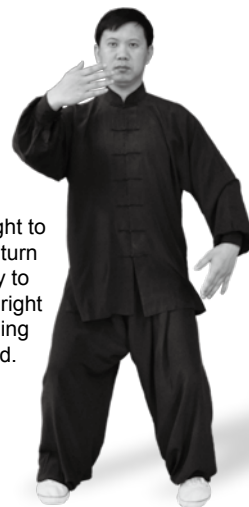


Shift weight to the left and turn body to the left. At same time, left hand grabs and pulls to the left side. Right arm circles down, gradually open right hand with palm facing inward.



Arms follow the body turning left ( to 45°), circle left arm downward and right arm upward.

Right leg steps in with toes pointing forward. The distance between both legs is shoulder width.

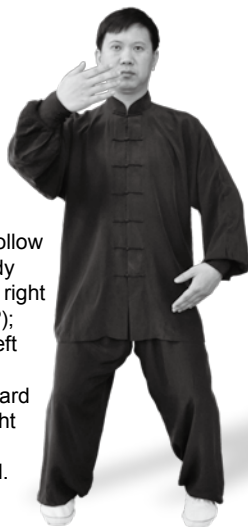


Shift weight to the right; turn your body to the right, right arm warding off upward.

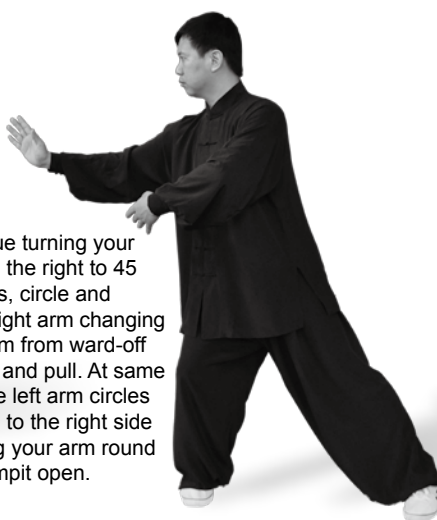
Left arm circles downward and rotates changing from pull to ward-off with left palm facing inward.

## Cloud Hands (2)

Arms follow the body turning right ( to 45°); circle left arm downward and right arm upward.



Left arm circles downward and rotates changing from pull to ward-off with left palm facing inward.



Continue turning your body to the right to 45 degrees, circle and rotate right arm changing right arm from ward-off to grab and pull. At same time the left arm circles upward to the right side keeping your arm round and armpit open.

At the same time, left leg steps out sideways with left toes pointing forward.

Right arm circles downward and rotates changing from pull to ward off with the right palm facing inward.

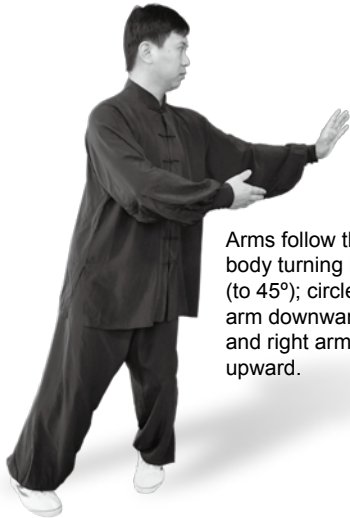


Shift weight to the left; turn your body to the left, left arm warding-off upwards.





### Cloud Hands (3)



Arms follow the body turning left (to 45°); circle left arm downward and right arm upward.

Right leg steps in, turn in right toes 45 degrees. Keep the distance between both feet about shoulder-width apart.



Shift weight to the right, left arm warding off downward. At same time the right arm circles upward, keep your left arm rounded, and armpit open.



While shifting weight to the right leg your right arm circles upward and rotates as it extends to the right corner. Right hand makes hook. Continue to circle left arm upward.



Shift your weight to the right, rotate left arm, open right palm and begin to bend right arm in.



Continuing to shift your weight to right, rotate left arm, palm facing up and bend your right arm close to your body.

Front view.



Bring your left foot to center and touch with ball of your foot. At the same time turn the body square, pulling your left arm in to the side of your ribs and striking out with the right palm.

Front view.

# 太极拳

## Single Whip



Look forward following the left arm direction.

Pick up your left foot, step out straight. At the same time the left arm stands up.



Sit your left palm, look forward past the tiger's mouth.

Shift your weight forward and turn your body slightly to the left. At the same time rotate and circle your left arm straight ahead.



Moving forward the left arm strikes out. Make sure your torso is vertical and your chest is rounded. Your torso should be facing between S. and SE

## High Pat Horse with Palm Thrust

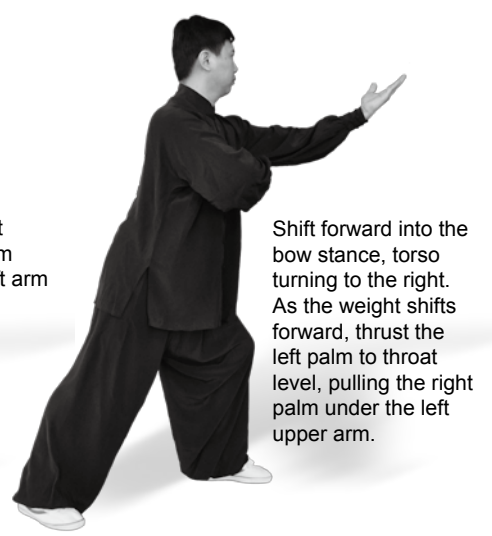


Pick up your left leg and step out into the bow stance.

Front view.



Shift your weight forward, right arm pulling in and left arm thrusting out.

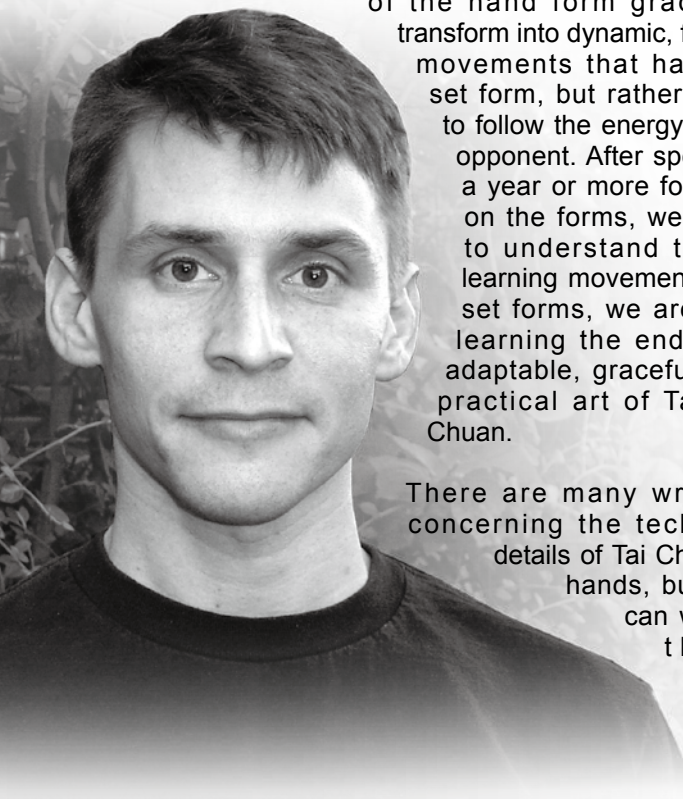


Shift forward into the bow stance, torso turning to the right. As the weight shifts forward, thrust the left palm to throat level, pulling the right palm under the left upper arm.



# Principles in Practice: Using Empty and Full To Progress In Push Hands

By Edward Moore



In Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan, push hands is the way in which we begin to understand how to meet and respond to an opponent while using the energies that we learn in the hand form practice. Push hands not only makes use of the excellent, methodical foundation that we acquire in the hand form, it also teaches us a lot about the hand form practice by giving us the experience of using the Tai Chi energies in a real way, while responding to the energy of a partner. In the hand form training, we are learning movements and principles, we are cultivating our energy and focusing on our own self. In push hands, however, we begin focusing instead on our partner, so that we can use the Tai Chi methods to follow and neutralize their movements. The set postures of the hand form gradually transform into dynamic, flowing movements that have no set form, but rather strive to follow the energy of the opponent. After spending a year or more focusing on the forms, we begin to understand that in learning movements and set forms, we are truly learning the endlessly adaptable, graceful, and practical art of Tai Chi Chuan.

There are many writings concerning the technical details of Tai Chi push hands, but how can we put these to use in a way

that helps us progress in Tai Chi Chuan? In my experience practicing and teaching push hands, I have found that certain key elements are often left out. It is easy to be distracted by complex concepts and movements, while forgetting the basic and enduring truths that make up the foundation of the art. The concept of empty and full, or yin and yang, can seem so simple at first and often we are tempted to believe that we know these concepts thoroughly. In *The Ten Essentials of Tai Chi Chuan*, by Yang Chengfu, the fourth principle is "Separate empty and full". When practicing the hand form, we begin to recognize how to separate empty and full by shifting the body weight from one leg to the other while making transitions, but that is only the beginning. The concept of empty and full is present everywhere in the art of Tai Chi Chuan, and is necessary for understanding the practice of push hands. As Yang Chengfu said, "Tai Chi Chuan everywhere tries to be perfectly round and to separate the yin and yang, the substantial and insubstantial; therefore the name Tai Chi is used for this martial art."<sup>(1)</sup>

How can we make the most of our practice? Each time that we meet with our partners to practice, we have the opportunity to learn and develop our skills and understanding through our training. One of the first things to consider is that push hands is not a martial art or a form of self-defense. Push hands has been carefully designed over the years by the esteemed masters of the art in order to help us move from the hand form practice through the various push hands exercises and eventually to free sparring. To think of push hands as only a martial art can really hurt one's progress, because the the practitioner's intention focuses on winning rather than learning, and often the ego is easily bruised. It is crucial to be flexible and yielding in push hands, but as soon as we start thinking of it as a fight we will start resisting and then



depart from the principles. If both partners are focused towards learning and progressing through the art, rather than struggling with each other, they will naturally help each other gradually understand the deeper aspects of Tai Chi Chuan. And both will benefit from this beautiful tradition.

In push hands, the study of the concept of empty and full can be very helpful for better understanding and improving your practice. The essential way that we use empty and full to control the opponent's energy can be seen from the first exercise that we do, the single hand horizontal circle. This is the act of sticking and yielding that becomes the foundation for so many of the applications that we do later. Master Yang was instructed by his grandfather to practice 500 of these circles a day as a requirement for his training, and I think that it is easy to understand why. When I first learned this movement, I was eager to move on to more complex things, but over time, as I learned more and more applications, I gradually started to see the genius in this simple circling form, and how it can help us to continually improve our practice. move down, starting a new paragraph have two clear energies in play: ward-off, and push. The person that is in the ward-off position has to stick their arm to the palm of the person pushing, but without using force, and without resisting. To do this, we need the flexible, expansive nature of ward-off energy. While in the ward-off role, we can't initiate the movement by trying to pull our opponents hand, we have to listen and be responsive in order to use yielding to change the partner's energy. Because we have only one point of contact (the wrist and the hand) we can concentrate on the interplay between push and ward-off. The ward-off listens to the push and the push listens to the ward-off. We have a focused, sensitive and informed movement that can very closely follow the principles of Tai Chi Chuan. Each time we meet for push hands practice, it is a good idea to start with the single arm horizontal and gradually make the circle more and more round and smooth. Get used to the feeling of never making a move unless you are responding in some way to your partner's energy. The person who is pushing is looking for something full in their partners body to push against, and the person who is yielding is continually yielding the push in, and changing the fullness to emptiness by neutralizing. This is what Master Yang refers to as "correct changing". This kind of changing is essential for performing applications correctly. When one can feel the smooth and effortless interplay of push and ward-off being exchanged continually without force or separation, the

essence of empty and full in push hands is easy to recognize. Once you have this feeling, gradually progress through the complex circles and then the applications. It is interesting to see how long you can hang on to it before resistance or separation starts to happen.

How does the single hand circling apply to applications? If the opponent is using roll back, for instance, to lift your elbow, there are a few things that you have to do to change the energy correctly. First, you have to follow their movement, you have to yield and continue in the direction that they want to go for a little while. Naturally, we also have to listen to the opponent's energy through our arm, and try not to either run away from them (separate) or go against them (resist). After you yield to the roll back energy and follow their movement, you can gradually make the arm more empty by circling and relaxing the shoulder. Eventually, it is possible to circle the arm from up to down and the roll back energy has been completely resolved without resistance.

The key to using Tai Chi principles in push hands is to first listen to the opponent's energy and yield to it. What does it mean to yield? Yielding is letting the opponent use their energy against you, while you remain flexible. As you yield and listen, you gradually affect their movement in a very subtle way so that the energy is gradually diverted and used against them. In order to do that, we have to be able to stick, follow, neutralize and redirect, all things that we learn and focus on in the single hand horizontal movement. Each time that we make contact with our partner we have to be aware of empty and full; we must listen and understand who is pushing and who is yielding. We exchange who is initiating the movement and who is following in order to change the energy and seamlessly respond with new energies. In this way, two push hands players resemble the Tai Chi symbol of Yin and Yang, continuously turning and responding in a perfect, balanced interchange of energy. When both partners are listening and responding in every movement and application just as if they were carefully doing the horizontal circle, empty and full, listening and following, yielding and neutralizing will always be present, and resistance and struggling can gradually diminish.

Reference:

1 Chen, Wei-Ming. Tai Chi Ch'uan Ta Wen. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1985. Pg.61.



**Buffalo, NY USA**

Sept 10-12, 2010 Hand Form  
 Contact: Robert A. Gott  
 3701 McKinley Pkwy Suite 832  
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 Ph: (716) 822-0222  
 Email: [Robert A. Gott](mailto:Robert.A.Gott@yangfamilytaichi.com)

**O'Fallon, IL USA**

Sept 24-26, 2010 Hand Form  
 Contact: LeRoy Alsup  
 812 Whitehorse Ln,  
 O'Fallon IL, 62269  
 Phone: 618 719-9638  
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**Rome, Italy**

Oct 8-10, 2010 Instructor training  
 Contact: Claudio Mingarini  
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 Cell: 39-347-3635333  
 Email: [Claudio Mingarini](mailto:Claudio.Mingarini@yangfamilytaichi.com)  
<http://www.taichiyangfamily.it>

**Sao Paulo, Brazil**

Oct 28, 2010 Saber Form  
 Oct 29- Nov 1, 2010 Hand Form  
 Nov 2-3, 2010 Instructor training  
 Contact: Angela Soci  
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 and +55 11 4704.6578  
 Email: [Angela Soci](mailto:Angela.Soci@yangfamilytaichi.com)  
<http://www.sbtcc.org.br>

**East Brunswick, NJ USA**

Feb 19-20, 2011 Hand Form  
 Feb 20, 2011 Push Hands  
 (afternoon 2 hours)  
 Contact: Andy Lee  
 P.O. Box 232  
 East Brunswick, NJ 08816  
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 Fax: (732) 238-7322  
 Email: [Andy Lee](mailto:Andy.Lee@yangfamilytaichi.com)  
<http://www.taichiusa.com>

**Paris, France**

April 15-18, 2011 Hand Form  
 April 19, 2011 Push Hands  
 April 20-21, 2011 Sword Form  
 Contact: Duc Nguyen Minh  
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 Mobile: +33-(0)6 07 26 72 96  
 Fax: +33-1-60 12 24 19  
 Email: [Duc Nguyen](mailto:Duc.Nguyen@yangfamilytaichi.com)  
<http://www.clubchevry2.com>

**Berlin, Germany**

April 26-29  
 9am-noon 103 Hand Form  
 2:30pm-4:30pm review Class  
 5:30pm-7:30pm Push Hands  
 Contact: Johannes Mergner  
 Kaiser-Friedrich-Str. 89  
 10585 Berlin  
 Ph: +49-30-34787871  
 Fax: +49-30-36407017  
 Email: [johannes@yangfamilytaichi.com](mailto:johannes@yangfamilytaichi.com)  
<http://www.yangstil-taiji.de>

**Milan, Italy**

May 12 - 15, 2011 Hand Form  
 May 16, 2011 Sabre Form  
 May 17, 2011 Tui Shou  
 Contact: Giuseppe Turturo  
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**Budapest, Hungary**

May 20-23, 2010 Hand Form  
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<http://www.taiji.hu>

**BULGARIA**

June 17, 18, 19 - Hand Form - Plovdiv  
 June 20 - Saber form - Stara Zagora  
 June 21 - Push Hands - Stara Zagora  
 Contact:  
 Stanislav Bagalev  
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**Cluj-Napoca, ROMANIA**

June 26-24, 2011 Hand Form  
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 Phone: +40729059990  
 Email : [mingdao.cluj@gmail.com](mailto:mingdao.cluj@gmail.com)  
<http://www.mingdao.ro>

**Louisville, KY USA**

July 14-16, 2011 Hand Form  
 July 17 push Hands  
 Contact: Carl D. Meeks  
 William W. Wojasinski  
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 Louisville, KY 40232  
 Ph: (502) 693-7724  
 or (859) 312-2456  
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