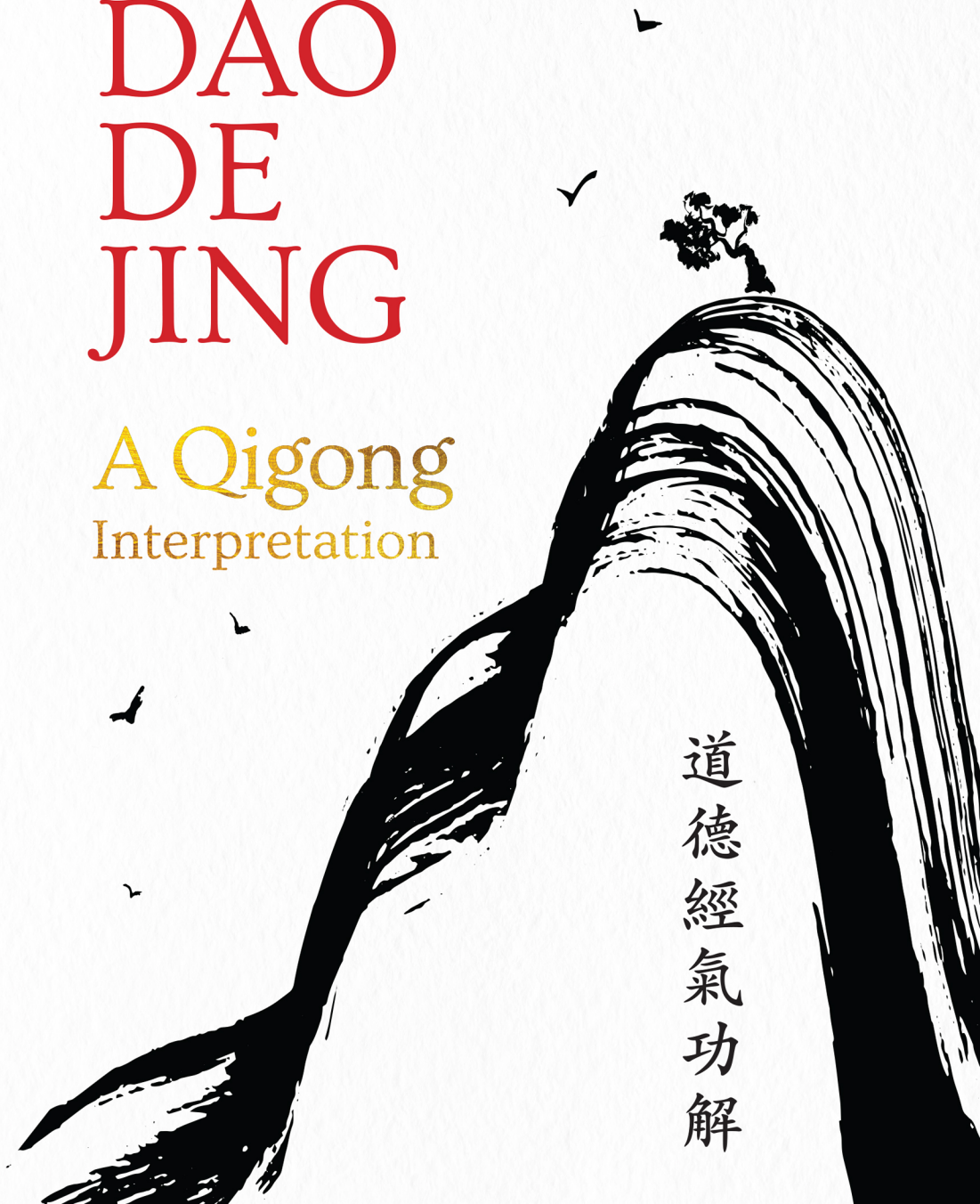


LAO TZU · TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
DR. YANG, JWING-MING

The
DAO
DE
JING

A Qigong
Interpretation

道德經氣功解



This book examines one of the world's most enduring and influential literary works through the timeless art of qigong.

In his words, Lao Tzu (or Laozi), author of the *Dao De Jing*, embodies qigong principles, advocating the cultivation of mind and body. Only when we know qigong can we know Lao Tzu—and only when we know Lao Tzu can we know the *Dao De Jing*.

Lao Tzu's writing has been read, translated, and discussed around the globe. It deals with principles that transcend time and culture. That is why this ancient text has been reimagined countless times in books on business, relationships, and parenting—but never with a focus on the art of qigong. This makes the *Dao De Jing: A Qigong Interpretation* unique and indispensable.

Many chapters in the Dao De Jing purely talk about qigong, especially the practices of regulating the body, breathing, mind, qi, and spirit.

Dr. Yang, a renowned author, scholar, and martial artist, devoted decades to researching and writing this book. He interprets and analyzes the 81 chapters of the *Dao De Jing*. His commentary will bring new insight, inspiration, and depth to your understanding of Lao Tzu's words—and to your qigong practice.

This book includes

- The complete *Dao De Jing* in English and its original Chinese text
- Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming's commentary and analysis of each chapter
- Numerous illustrations and diagrams

The *Dao De Jing: A Qigong Interpretation* is not a book of instruction. It is about the Way—the path before us, in qigong and in life, where what you achieve comes through your own understanding.



Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD, is a world-renowned author, scholar, and teacher. He has been involved in Chinese martial arts since 1961. Dr. Yang's writing and teaching include the subjects of kung fu, tai chi chuan, and meditation, and he is a leading authority on qigong. Dr. Yang is the author of over 35 books and 80 videos.

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Lao Tzu
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It is recommended that before beginning any treatment or exercise program, you
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course of practice.

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Foreword

Thomas G. Gutheil, MD

When the mind is steady, then you can acquire calmness. When you are calm, then you find peace. When you are at peace, then you are able to ponder. When you are able to ponder, then you gain. All objects have their initiation and termination, and all matters have a beginning and expiration. If one knows the beginning and the end, then one is closer to the Dao.

—*Li Ji*

I am deeply honored by the invitation to write this preface to Dr. Yang's meticulously crafted book; yet I am also humbled by the task of trying to introduce a work of such depth and complexity. Some time ago, in the twenty years or so during which I had the exhilarating experience of studying Shaolin Gongfu under his tutelage, I gradually discovered his interests in Eastern scholarship beyond the practical martial arts. One of the fruits of that scholarship is before you now. Be sure, however, that the connections and associations I derive are entirely my own, as are any errors or misunderstandings.

Dr. Yang appropriately begins with, and repeatedly addresses, the obstacles that both Eastern and Western readers encounter in grappling with the concepts in this book. He outlines the various levels of obstacles. First, in attempting to deal with ancient texts there are challenges of meaning, especially given the inherent redundancy of much of the Chinese language, where the same character or word may have different meanings based on context and tone. Second, there is the Chinese cultural worldview, which must affect this discussion. Third is the use of metaphor and analogy—what Western readers perceive as a colorful language not usually used to discuss serious principles, where anatomic/physical and symbolic usages coexist comfortably. For example, water is used as an image of desirable humility: water humbly reaches the lowest level (we say “water seeks its own level”) without complaint. Indeed, this preface is intended as a first step in surmounting

those same obstacles by attempting to place these traditional ideas in a modern context accessible to today's readers.

Finally, there is the use of paradoxes; for example, *wuwei* can be translated as “the doing of not doing.” Somewhat similar to the *koan* in Buddhist thought, the paradox forces the reader's mind into a new channel. In this connection, martial arts students may recall Bruce Lee's description of his art in *Enter the Dragon* as “fighting without fighting.” Paradoxically as well, the purpose of study, concentration, and effort is to achieve “emptiness” that can be filled by new ideas and to recover the innocence of childhood. Elsewhere in this text, reference is made to a “semisleeping” state, itself a parallel to Buddhist themes such as *zazen* meditation.

Understanding the Dao is certainly made challenging in itself, since it is described as without shape and color—indeed, without explicit or concrete description. It thus resembles—in its formlessness and ubiquitous permeation of all things—God, Nature, and even “the Force” used by the Jedi in the Star Wars universe. Lest readers feel this is far-fetched, Dr. Yang observes later in this book: “Dao is always in a state of high alertness so it can sense any disorder in this universe and respond to the changes.” Note how this closely parallels the notion of a “disturbance in the Force.” The “De”—the manifest universe—is described as an expression of the Dao.

One of the ways in which Dr. Yang takes on the challenges noted above is by frequently quoting other authors and scholars as they comment on the same material; this is helpful to the student, since reading any one description of a subject may confuse a reader, but other phrasings, other images, may clarify the point.

Dr. Yang ranges freely among such relatively familiar concepts as *qi*, body meridians, the *Yi Jing*, yin and yang, and the third eye. More expansively, he relates those basics to such widely separated fields as scientific research into the tiny particles composing matter and the theory of the subconscious, most elaborately introduced in Europe by Dr. Sigmund Freud. In fact, Dr. Yang calls on his audience to develop a scientific approach to spirit, and professes no conflict between these two ideas.

One important concept about the Dao, among many, is the generalization from the person's self (a "small universe") and the person's body, to the family, then to the natural world at large and to governments; this potential application is captured by the familiar expression, "the body politic." Running through the discussion is the notion of achieving a calm and peaceful mind by using the "wisdom mind" to govern the "emotional mind"—to achieve, among other goals, a union of body and spirit and a deep connection to the natural world. The wuji state, described as neutral mind without thoughts, echoes modern conceptions of meditation and mindfulness: a personal peace should lead eventually to a society at peace.

How does the health practice called qigong apply to these ideas? In chapter 13, Dr. Yang summarizes with a military metaphor:

Qigong practice can be compared to a battle against sickness and aging. If you compare your body to a battlefield, then your mind is like the general who generates ideas and controls the situation, and your breathing is his strategy. Your qi is like the soldiers who are led to various places on the battlefield. Your essence is like the quality of the soldiers, such as educational background and the skills of combat, etc. Finally, your spirit is the morale of the army.

This paragraph captures and summarizes the unity among the themes described in this book—themes such as the concept of qi, the central importance of breathing and the centrality of notions about spirit.

Because this book is highly detailed, it requires close attention, but the repetitions and clarifications make understanding easier for the serious student. This book joins a series from Dr. Yang, which, in all, make available to the Western reader some of the most important elements of Eastern thought, including lost documents otherwise unavailable.

Dr. Thomas G. Gutheil
Harvard Medical School
January 1, 2017

Foreword

Mr. Charles Green

For a student of life, there is perhaps no single better text—certainly of its length—than the *Dao De Jing*. Its simplicity contrasts simultaneously with its profundity, two sides of an infinitely valuable coin. As with all great works of human civilization, we can return again and again to contemplate it during our lives, gaining new insights into ourselves and the world around us each time. This is because it shares—as best as it can, within the constraints of the construct of human language—universal truths about the nature of existence and our place in it, as seen from an ancient yet ever-fresh perspective.

This new work by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming is a considered and humble—yet at the same time bold—attempt to add yet another layer of profundity to our understanding of Lao Zi’s ancient classic, being a systematic treatment of its relevance for meditation and qigong. For Western minds unaccustomed to traditional Chinese methods of layering multiple meanings in arts and practice, this may appear to be a somewhat radical reinterpretation of the original work. It is more correct, however, to see it as revealing yet another layer of understanding of the root of Daoist practices, which holistically consider a person and their place within the universe, rather than focusing on individual acts in isolation from the greater picture. Indeed, a fundamental point of qigong meditation and practice is to align ourselves better with the natural way or direction (Dao) of the universe, essentially by definition the healthiest path available for both body and mind.

Even a surface treatment of the basic concepts contained in the *Dao De Jing* can bring rewards to a practitioner of life. Above all, the idea that some of the deepest truth and understanding we can obtain is fundamentally experiential in nature, rather than to be found in a fixed set of “facts”—a very modern lesson, as we are forced to revise our understanding of the world periodically with new developments across all of the sciences. The notion of the experiential layer of life as being most profound plays directly into Dr. Yang’s deep investigation of the

original text's relevance for mental, spiritual, and physical health practices, many of which are expressed primarily internally and rely upon our mind's direction. These practices, if followed consistently, could be considered a lifestyle; however, they go beyond that and also encompass one's basic orientation toward the universe, as part of the more mundane actions of daily life. Again, this parallels modern concepts of the central importance of our personal attitude toward life and how the *quality* of our thinking can have a profound impact on everything from our physical health to the success we are likely to have in life.

I am honored to be able to write these words, not as a master of Daoist philosophy and history, but from the perspective of a perpetual student who seeks to make what progress he can at life's arts. Reading, contemplating, and practicing (however imperfectly) Dr. Yang's other works on taijiquan and qigong theory and practice have led to significant positive changes in my own life over the past twelve years. This includes being able to rely on qigong practice instead of prescription medication to successfully control hypertension, a condition that surfaced at a relatively young age for me after the experience of serving my country in a time of war. Perhaps even more important, however, has been the integration of multilayered practices that encourage—in reality, require—one to adopt a centered, calm contemplation of events in the perpetual present, which is the only time that we can truly experience between the past and future. It is in such contemplation of events that we are able to discern the Dao and move more easily with its current, rather than attempting to paddle upstream. In that spirit, I look forward to further contemplation of this new work, as a treasure that can be inexhaustibly mined over a lifetime.

Charles Green
January 31, 2017

Foreword

Dr. Robert J. Woodbine

I first met Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming sixteen years ago in New York City when he taught a qigong workshop at the Open Center. I had recently returned to New York after devoting the previous eight years in Portland, Oregon, to earning my doctorate in naturopathic medicine and masters in Chinese medicine and acupuncture. Having studied and practiced qigong with a variety of qigong and taiji teachers since 1985, it was propitious that Dr. Yang was teaching in New York and I was able to attend his workshop since he was headquartered in Massachusetts at the time.

I found him to be quite knowledgeable, competent, straightforward, and, most importantly, genuinely humble. I chose to study with him and made the biannual treks to Massachusetts to attend his weekend workshops from 2001 through 2007. I would bring along the students I taught so they could experience the wealth of knowledge Dr. Yang offered. In that brief period of time, I observed another admirable character trait—his ardent commitment to truth and clarity.

As an example, when I first learned the taijiquan long form sequence from Dr. Yang and his senior students, the single whip pattern was executed a particular way. Over the years, this was modified and refined, not whimsically, but rather because of Dr. Yang's ceaseless devotion to pondering the deeper meaning of form and application. To him, taijiquan is a living art with an inherent responsibility between teacher and student to adhere to its principles as a living foundation from which to understand and create credible refinements. His commitment to the truth and his ability to change speaks highly of his personal integrity and moral character.

In the world of martial arts and healing, Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming is highly respected and regarded. His body of work is voluminous. He is a prolific writer, publisher, and producer of books and DVDs regarding the theories and practical applications of Shaolin, White Crane, taijiquan, and qigong. With over fifty-five years of experience in his field,

Dr. Yang has numerous Yang Martial Arts Association (YMAA) schools in various countries throughout the world. His most recent achievement is the creation of the YMAA Retreat Center in the mountains of Northern California to preserve and disseminate the traditional training methods of Chinese martial arts and culture.

Throughout the history of mankind and in every culture, there have been those rare individuals who are compelled to be of service to the rest of us. They have no choice in the matter, as this is an internal calling they are driven to fulfill. As a trained physicist, Dr. Yang's keen intellect and heightened curiosity have driven him to translate the Chinese qigong and taijiquan classics, not for his personal gain, but to share these insights with the world to uplift humanity. This unique interpretation of the classic *Dao De Jing* through the lens of qigong is Dr. Yang's offering to mankind.

Man's inhumanity to man throughout recorded history is nothing new, unfortunately. However, what seems unique to me about our modern culture is the accelerated and pervasive pace at which we seem to be disconnected not just from nature, but from one another. I believe the pendulum has swung quite far in the direction of materialism and consumerism to the extent that there is a profound hollowing out of the spirit. This empty space cannot be fulfilled with what we can acquire or consume.

Dr. Yang's qigong interpretation of the *Dao De Jing* is an answer to contemplate, digest, and then execute. Its power is in the repeated simplicity of Lao Zi's words throughout the eighty-one chapters of the *Dao De Jing*. Its gift is in the clear method (embryonic breathing) that Dr. Yang shares with the reader. He provides a key with which to unlock the pantry to nourish that hollow space and learn to once again commune with nature and each other truthfully and honestly.

For me, qigong training is an invaluable means by which to consciously cultivate one's body, mind, and spirit while promoting self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Far too often, it was my clinical experience with patients that the root of their chronic ailments rested in unresolved emotional tensions and an inculcated adherence to dependency models with healthcare providers. The notion that much of the

healing they sought was within and not external to themselves was often foreign but empowering.

The uniqueness and value of Dr. Yang's interpretation of the *Dao De Jing* is that it provides a formulary through which one can be in the world but not of it. Through embryonic breathing meditation, one can gradually quiet the conscious mind and its imbalanced focus on the material world. His thesis that, through embryonic breathing meditation, one can gradually cultivate the awakening of the subconscious mind and its association with the Source of all that exists, is reasonable. What remains for you to consider is doing the practice. As an African proverb states, "First you pray to God, but then you move your feet."

Dr. Robert J. Woodbine
Miranda, California
January 20, 2017

Preface

I have worked on an interpretation of the *Dao De Jing* from a qigong point of view for the last twenty years, and it has been a challenge. I encountered many difficulties and obstacles, and I think it would be helpful to your understanding if you were aware of these issues.

1. **I am afraid my understanding of qigong is still too shallow to be qualified to interpret the Dao De Jing.**

I have studied and practiced qigong for more than fifty-four years (since I was sixteen) as of this writing. Despite my years of training and research, I believe my understanding of qigong is still shallow. Nonetheless I think it is important to begin a discussion of the *Dao De Jing* using the qigong theories I feel are the basis of this treatise.

2. **The Dao De Jing was written two thousand five hundred years ago.** Ancient writing is very different from today's writing. In order to interpret this ancient classic, one must know ancient Chinese literature at a profound level. It takes time and energy, study and research in order to begin to understand the meaning of every word.

3. **It is difficult to translate this ancient Chinese language into English without losing some of the meaning.** There are many Chinese words that are difficult to translate into English. The Chinese cultural background is so different from the Western, and the feeling developed from these different backgrounds generates different modes of language and meaning. This difference makes it a challenge to find a correct and exact equivalent English word that adequately conveys the original feeling of the word being translated.

4. **Often, the exact same Chinese character will have several different meanings.** Quite often, a Chinese word has different meanings, depending on where you place

it, how you pronounce it, and how you use it. Whoever interprets the word must consider which meaning to choose based on the context.

5. **Many spiritual qigong terms are hard to translate.** It is often difficult to find the English equivalent for many qigong terms. This is especially true for the *Dao De Jing* since most of it was written from a spiritual viewpoint, often centered on feeling, that is still beyond our current western scientific point of view and understanding. The human science we have developed is still in its infancy, especially in the spiritual sciences. Thus, we cannot yet use our limited science to verify or interpret the existence or phenomena of the spiritual world.
6. **Lack of the same feeling as Lao Zi.** To interpret the *Dao De Jing* accurately, I need to have the same feeling as Lao Zi, the root of his spirit, and this is nearly impossible. I spent countless hours reading, pondering, and meditating, reaching into his feeling to perceive his original meaning and yet I am still concerned about my interpretation. Although many past scholars have interpreted the *Dao De Jing*, most were not qigong practitioners and, unfortunately, they interpreted the *Dao De Jing* from a scholarly point of view. Naturally, though these ancient interpretations have provided us some level of understanding, it is not deep and clear enough, and is missing a qigong perspective. I have found only one book, *Dao De Jing and Qigong*, that tried to interpret the *Dao De Jing* from a qigong point of view.¹ Unfortunately, this book only interprets some chapters that are obviously related to qigong practice.

There is a story about Confucius learning zither from Shi, Xiang-Zi (師襄子)²: Shi, Xiang-Zi taught Confucius to play a piece of music on the zither. After learning the piece of music for a period of time, Shi, Xiang-Zi said to Confucius: “You have now learned this piece of music; today you are ready to advance to another piece of music.” Confucius replied: “But I have not yet mastered the skills of this music.”

After a period of time, Shi, Xiang-Zi said: “Now, you have mastered the skills of this music; you may advance to another.” Confucius replied: “But I have not grasped the feeling of the music yet.” Again, after a period of time, Confucius was able to play the music with deep feeling. Shi, Xiang-Zi again said: “Now, you are able play the music with feeling; you may advance to another.” However, Confucius said: “But, I still don’t know the composer’s feeling yet.” Confucius continued his practice and put his feeling into the composer’s feeling. After a period of time, with profound thought, Confucius experienced an epiphany, as if he stood on the high ground and gazed far ahead, and said: “Now, I know who the composer of this music is. This person has dark skin and a tall body, with a wide-open heart and farsighted vision that is able to spread everywhere. If this was not composed by King Wen (文王), who else was able to do so?” Shi, Xiang-Zi left his seat, stood up, saluted Confucius, and said: “The gentleman you are talking about is a sage. This music was passed from him to us, called ‘King Wen’s Practice.’”

This story illustrates my point. In order to have a perfectly accurate interpretation of the *Dao De Jing*, one needs to have the same feeling and spiritual cultivation as Lao Zi. Naturally, this is improbable. In this book, I have tried my best to interpret it through my understanding and feeling. Please keep your mind open and question everything I have said.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming
YMAA CA Retreat Center
May 1st, 2016

1. 《道德經與氣功》，丁辛百、潘明環編著。安徽科學技術出版社，1996。Ding Xin Bai and Pan Minghuan, *Dao De Jing and Qigong* (Fengyang, China: Anhui Science and Technology Press, 1996).
2. 孔子學琴於師襄子，襄子曰：“吾雖以擊磬為官，然能於琴。今子於琴已習，可以益矣。”孔子曰：“丘未得其數也。”有間，曰：“已習其數，可以益矣。”孔子曰：“丘未得其志也。”有間，曰：“已習其志，可以益矣。”孔子曰：“丘未得其為人也。”有間，孔子有所謬然思焉，有所闡然高望而遠眺。曰：“丘迨得其為人矣。近黜而黑，頽然長，曠如望羊，奄有四方，非文王其孰能為此？”師襄子避席葉拱而對曰：“君子，聖人也，其傳曰《文王操》。”（《孔子家語·辨樂解第三十五》）

Introduction/Foundation

The *Dao De Jing* (《道德經》) was written from Lao Zi's (老子) personal understanding of the Dao (道) and the De (德). For this reason, it is important to understand the influences that shaped his point of view. In order to know Lao Zi's motivation in writing the *Dao De Jing*, you need to put yourself in his place during China's long warring period (Chun Qiu Zhan Guo, 春秋戰國) (770–221 BCE). Many kingdoms with various rulers with corrupt officers had occupied all of China. This caused people immeasurable suffering and pain; society was in chaos.

Think about his situation. Since Lao Zi was not a ruler at that time, how was he able to share his opinions or experience with rulers about how to rule a country? Was most of his writing from his imagination or based only on his personal understanding? How was he able to acquire those concepts or knowledge for his writing?

Many chapters in the *Dao De Jing* are purely about qigong, especially the practices of regulating the body (tiao shen, 調身), regulating the breathing (tiao xi, 調息), regulating the mind (tiao xin, 調心), regulating the qi (tiao qi, 調氣), and regulating the spirit (tiao shen, 調神). Therefore, in order to understand these chapters, you should have the foundation of a basic understanding of qigong.

I have summarized those basic concepts in this introduction section. This introduction/foundation will be divided into four parts: “Preliminaries,” “Foundations—Basic Understanding,” “About the *Dao De Jing*,” and “*Dao De Jing* and Humanity's Future.” I believe these concepts will help you understand my point of view in interpreting the *Dao De Jing* from a qigong perspective.

Preliminaries

1. Lao Zi was born Chinese and grew up with a Chinese cultural influence. No human artifact can be understood

apart from its cultural background. Therefore, in order to interpret and understand the *Dao De Jing* clearly, you must also have a clear idea of Chinese culture. Without a solid understanding of Chinese concepts, one's understanding of the *Dao De Jing* will be shallow and vague. Naturally, if one uses a non-Chinese cultural background to interpret the *Dao De Jing*, the accuracy of the interpretation will be questionable.

2. When the *Dao De Jing* was written by Lao Zi about two thousand five hundred years ago (476–221 BCE), *The Book of Changes* (《Yi Jing, 易經》) had already existed for at least seven hundred years. *The Book of Changes* has been considered the preeminent document of all ancient Chinese classics (Qun Jing Zhi Shou, 群經之首) (The Leader of All Classics) in Chinese history and since then has influenced Chinese culture heavily. Naturally, Lao Zi's mind was also influenced by this classic. Therefore, it is important to understand the basic concepts from *The Book of Changes* of how the yin and yang spaces (yin jian/yang jian, 陰間/陽間) are coexisting and related to each other. Without knowing these basic concepts, you will have difficulty in understanding some of the chapters.
3. Lao Zi was not a politician. He was appointed to the office of shi (zhou chao shou zang shi, 周朝守藏史) (historian) at the royal court of the Zhou dynasty (c. 1046–256 BCE). The shi were scholars specializing in matters such as astrology and divination and also were in charge of sacred books. It is likely Lao Zi had no experience in governing or ruling a country. Therefore, all his writings about the way of governing the countries for those rulers or monarchs were based on his personal understanding through his inner cultivation.
4. From the *Dao De Jing*, it is obvious Lao Zi was a qigong practitioner, a sage, a philosopher, and a teacher who comprehended life and achieved a profound level of

spiritual cultivation. The *Dao De Jing* was written based on Lao Zi's personal understanding about the Dao and the De through his personal qigong practice, especially spiritual cultivation. Since the Dao of managing the body is similar to the Dao of managing a country, Lao Zi was able to incorporate his understanding into his writing that offered moral guidance to historical Chinese rulers. This is because once you have comprehended and mastered the principles and natural rules of the Dao, you will be able to apply them to other fields without too much difficulty. Confucius also said: "My Dao, use the one to thread through (i.e., comprehend) others."¹ This can be seen clearly in chapter 54 of *Dao De Jing*. In this chapter, Lao Zi applied the same Dao for self-cultivation, family, village, nation, and the world. It is recognized that although the theory and the rules of the Dao are simple, they are very difficult to understand and follow.

5. In qigong history, many new qigong theories and practices were developed after Lao Zi. In my twenty years of analyzing and studying the *Dao De Jing* I feel there is no doubt that some of these new developments were derived or influenced from the *Dao De Jing*. For example, there were not many documents on embryonic breathing qigong practice before Lao Zi. Of the more than 150 documents about embryonic breathing meditation written after Lao Zi wrote the *Dao De Jing*, most of the discussions in these documents follow the same theory and practice of the *Dao De Jing*.
6. The Great Nature has simple rules, and from these rules, myriad objects are born, raised, nourished, and then perish. If we follow the rules, we will be able to cultivate our lives within the rules and maintain our health and extend our lives. From following the Dao and the De, we are able to comprehend the meaning of life.

7. Before reading the *Dao De Jing*, first recognize that scholar Dao (Dao xue, 道學) is not religious Dao (Dao jiao, 道教). Scholar Dao is the study of the Dao's philosophy from the *Dao De Jing* written by Lao Zi. Later, during Eastern Han Dynasty (Dong Han, 東漢) (25–220 CE), Zhang, Dao-Ling (張道陵) combined the Daoist and Buddhist philosophies together and created a religious Dao. Therefore, when we study Daoism, we should distinguish the differences between scholar Daoism and religious Daoism.

Foundations—Basic Understanding

1. There is no correct way or perfect set of words to translate the Dao into any language. Even in Chinese society, the Dao remains a mystery and cannot be defined. The Dao is the way of Nature. All we know is that the Dao created all objects in this Nature. Although we don't know the Dao, and cannot see, hear, or touch it, all of us can feel it and know it exists. It may be equivalent to the ideas of God defined by the Western world. When the Dao is manifested, it is the world we see and is called the De. Thus, the De is the manifestation of the Dao.
2. *The Book of Changes* (*Yi Jing*, 《易經》) describes this Great Nature as having two polarities that balance each other. Though there are two polarities, these two are two faces of the same thing. These two polarities are two spaces or dimensions, called yin space (yin jian, 陰間) and yang space (yang jian, 陽間). Yin space is the spiritual space while yang space is the material space. Yin space is the Dao (道) while the yang space, the manifestation of the Dao, is the De (德). These two cannot be separated and coexist simultaneously. They mutually communicate, correspond, and influence each

other. Therefore, there are two spaces, but in function, they are one. The spiritual energy of the yin space can be considered the mother (female) of myriad objects in the yang space. Since humans, as well as all other entities, are formed and generated from these two spaces, a human being includes both a spiritual and material life. Since we don't actually know what the Dao (i.e., Natural Spirit) is, we also don't know what the human spirit is.

3. The Chinese have always considered the Great Nature to be the “grand universe” or “grand nature” (da tian di, 大天地). In this grand universe, all lives are considered as cells of this universe and are all recycling. Since we, humans, are formed and produced in this Grand Universe, we will naturally copy the same energy pattern or structure. The human body is considered as a small universe or small nature (xiao tian di, 小天地). The head is the heaven (tian ling gai, 天靈蓋) and the perineum is the sea bottom (hai di, 海底). All the cells in our bodies are recycling. In the grand universe, the Dao or the natural spirit is the master. In the small universe, the human spirit (related to our minds) is the master of life. This human spirit is considered as the Dao while the physical manifestation or actions are the De. The Chinese word for morality is “Dao-De” (道德) reflecting that in Chinese culture morality is considered to be related to thinking and behavior.
4. There are two kinds of mind in the human body. The emotional mind is called xin (心) (heart). It is also called heart since it is believed that the heart is related to our emotions. The other is called yi (意) (wisdom mind) and is rational, logical, calm, and wise. In Chinese society, it is said that xin is like a monkey and the yi is like a horse (xin yuan yi ma, 心猿意馬). This is because the emotional mind is just like a monkey: not powerful, but annoying and disturbing. The wisdom mind, by

contrast, is like a horse: powerful, calm, steady, and controllable. Thus, in qigong cultivation, a practitioner will learn how to use the wisdom mind to govern the emotional mind.

5. There are, again, two other different categories of the mind, the conscious mind (yi shi, 意識) and the subconscious mind (qian yi shi, 潛意識). The conscious mind is generated from brain cells located at the cerebrum while the subconscious mind is generated from the limbic system at the center of the head. The conscious mind thinks and has memory while the subconscious does not think but has memory. The conscious mind is related to the type of thoughts and behavior humans typically exhibit after they're born and socialized: emotional, playing tricks, and not truthful. The subconscious mind is related to the natural instinct that we are born with and is more truthful. We live in a duplicitous society, and we all lie and have a mask on our face. From a Chinese qigong understanding, it is believed that the spirit resides at the limbic system and connects to our subconscious mind. The limbic system is called the "spirit dwelling" (shen shi, 神室) or Mud Pill Palace (Ni Wan Gong, 泥丸宮) in Chinese qigong society. It is believed that, in order to reconnect with the natural spirit, we must downplay our conscious mind to allow the subconscious mind to wake up and grow. In order to reconnect to the natural spirit, we must reopen our third eye. The third eye is called "heaven eye" (tian yan/tian mu, 天眼/天目), and through it we are able to connect with Nature (figure I-1).
6. Western science explains there are two polarities in the human body. Each single cell has two polarities and a human's growth is completed through cell division (mitosis) from a single cell. Scientists have also confirmed that we have two brains, one in the head and

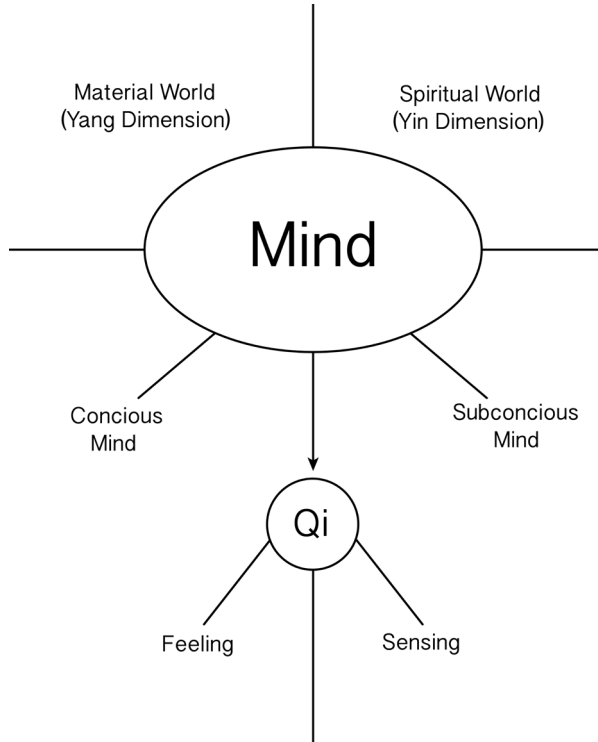


Figure I-1. Yin/Yang Worlds and Mind

the other in the guts. The top brain housed in the skull thinks and has memory, and the lower brain has memory but does not think. These two brains are connected through the spinal cord. Highly conductive tissues construct the spinal cord, and there is no signal delay between the two brains. Therefore, while there are two brains physically, actually, they are only one in function since they synchronize with each other simultaneously (figure I-2). In Chinese qigong, the upper brain is considered as the upper dan tian (shang dan tian, 上丹田) (upper elixir field) while the lower brain located at the center of gravity is considered as the real lower dan tian (zhen xia dan tian, 真下丹田) (real lower elixir field). Elixir means the qi that is able to extend life. These two

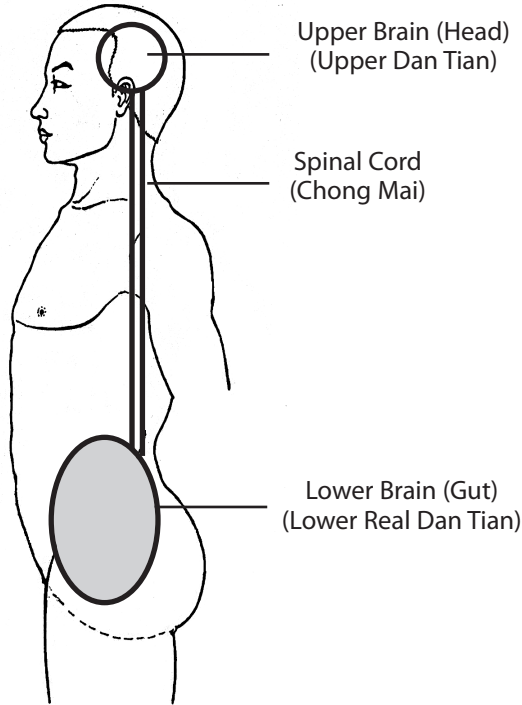


Figure I-2. Two Polarities (Brains) of a Human Body

places are considered as fields since they are able to store and produce qi. The spinal cord is called “thrusting vessel” (chong mai, 衝脈) in Chinese medicine since the qi can thrust through without delay.

7. To begin to understand qigong, you must first know about the human body’s qi network. According to Chinese medicine, the body has twelve primary qi channels (i.e. meridians) (shi er jing, 十二經), countless secondary qi channels (luo, 絡), eight vessels (ba mai, 八脈), and one real dan tian (zhen dan tian, 真丹田). The twelve primary channels are likened to twelve main rivers that circulate the qi to the entire body while those secondary channels are considered as streams that branch out from the rivers so the qi can be distributed everywhere in the body. The eight vessels are the qi

reservoirs (qi ba, 氣壩) like lakes, swamps, or dams that accumulate the qi and regulate the qi's quantity in the rivers. The real dan tian is where the battery of the qi is. It produces and stores the qi to abundant levels. The real dan tian is situated at the center of gravity (guts) and is called "qi residence" (qi she, 氣舍). If you are interested in knowing more about the twelve channels and their functions, you should refer to Chinese medical books. Due to limited space here, we will not discuss this further.

8. Another important part of the qi network is the eight vessels. They include four pairs of yin-yang corresponding vessels. That means there are four yin vessels and four yang vessels. The conception vessel (yin vessel) (ren mai, 任脈) runs from the mouth area down the front side of the torso to the perineum where it connects to the governing vessel (yang vessel) (du mai, 督脈). The governing vessel runs upward from the perineum along the center of the back, passing the crown and finally connects with the conception vessel at the mouth area (figures I-3 to I-8). The conception vessel is responsible for the qi's status of the six yin primary channels while the governing vessel governs the qi's condition of the six yang primary channels. There is one vessel that connects the upper brain or upper dan tian to the lower brain or real dan tian. This vessel is the thrusting vessel (chong mai, 衝脈) (spinal cord). This vessel is the most yin among the eight vessels. This vessel corresponds with the most yang vessel among the eight, the girdle vessel (dai mai, 帶脈). Each of the above four vessels exists singularly. There are two pairs of vessels that run through each of the legs, yin heel (yin qiao mai, 陰蹻脈) and yin linking (yin wei mai, 陰維脈) vessels and yang heel (yang qiao mai, 陽蹻脈) and yang linking (yang wei mai, 陽維脈) vessels.

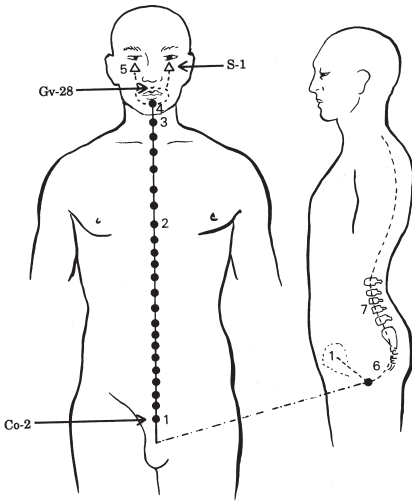


Figure I-3. The Conception Vessel (Ren Mai)

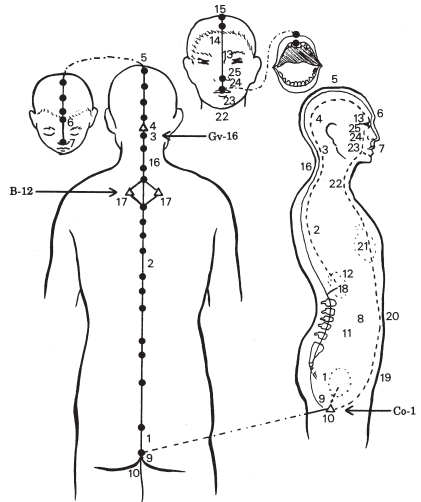


Figure I-4. The Governing Vessel (Du Mai)

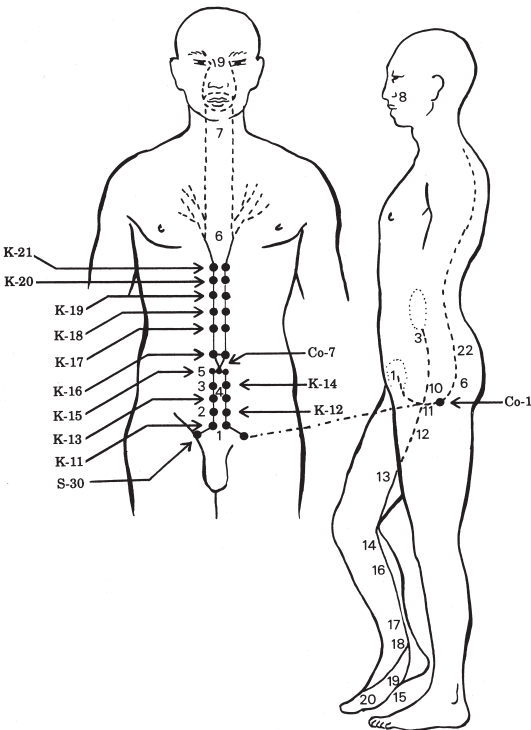


Figure I-5. The Thrusting Vessel (Chong Mai)

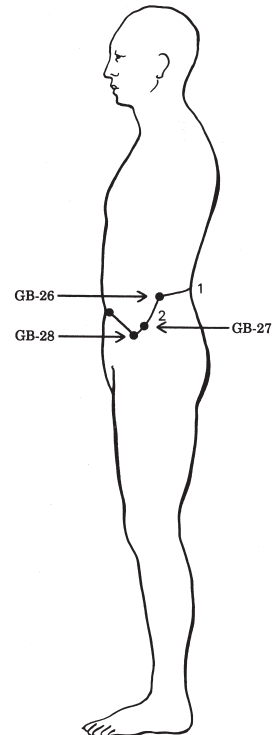


Figure I-6. The Girdle Vessel (Dai Mai)

Dao Jing (Dao Classic)—Chapters 1 to 37

Note:

The first subtitles of most of the chapters were given by a Tiantai Mountain (天台山) Daoist hermit, He Shang Gong (河上公). Little is known about his personal background such as his place of origin and exactly when he was born. However, his interpretation of the *Dao De Jing*, known as “He Shang Gong’s Chapters of Lao Zi (老子) (*Dao De Jing*)” (《老子河上公章句》) written during the Western Han Dynasty (西漢) (228 BCE–8 CE), has significantly influenced Chinese scholars’ studies about the *Dao De Jing*. The second set of subtitles for all of the chapters were given by the author of this book, Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming (楊俊敏) based on his understanding from a qigong point of view.

CHAPTER I

Comprehending the Embodiment
of the Dao—The Entrance of Dao

第一章

體道—道門

「道」可道，非常『道』；

名可名，非常『名』。

『無』，名天地之始；

『有』，名萬物之母。

故

常『無』，欲以觀其妙；

常『有』，欲以觀其徼。

此兩者，

同出而異名，同謂之玄。

玄之又玄，眾妙之門。

The Dao that can be described is not the eternal Dao.
The Name that can be named is not the eternal name.
Nothingness can be named as the initiator of heaven and earth
(i.e., Nature);
having can be named as the mother of myriad objects.
Therefore,
Always (maintain) nothingness, wish to observe its marvelousness.
Always (maintain) having, wish to observe its returning (i.e., recycling).
These two,
are commenced from the same origin but named differently, both
are marvelous and profound.
Profundity within profundities, it is the gate of all marvelousness
(i.e., variations).

General Interpretation

This first chapter is the root or foundation of the entire *Dao De Jing*. It is from this root that all the discussions in the following chapters are derived. Therefore, it is the most important chapter if one wants to accurately extract and apply concepts from this book. Fan, Ying-Yuan (范應元) said: “(This chapter) is the door of entering the ‘Dao’ and the foundation of establishing ‘De’ (i.e., Dao’s manifestation). It is the total conclusion of this classic (i.e., Dao De Jing).”¹

Dao (道) is the way of nature that cannot be described or interpreted by words. The work *Guan Zi* (《管子·內業》) says: “What is the Dao? The mouth cannot describe it, the eyes cannot see it, and the ears cannot listen to it.”² The Daoist book, *Can Tong Qi* (《參同契》) says: “The Great Dao does not have sound and is without odor and has no color and no emptiness. (Then), what can we say about it? It is because there is yin and yang hidden within this no sound and no odor. And there is a creation and derivations contained in this no color and no emptiness.”³

From these two sayings, we can see the Dao itself does not have any colors, physical forms, sounds, odors, or anything humans can describe. Though it cannot be sensed or seen, it is there and existing. Its power is great and it gives birth to all lives and objects.

The Daoist script, *Qing Jing Jing* (《清靜經》) say: “The Great Dao does not have shape (i.e., is not visible), but it gives birth to heaven and earth (i.e., the universe). The Great Dao does not have compassion, but it moves the sun and moon. The Great Dao has no name, but it grows and nourishes myriad objects. I don’t know what its name is, but if forced to name it, call it ‘Dao.’”⁴ Fan, Ying-Yuan (范應元) concluded: “The long-lasting and natural Dao exists, but without shape; though shapeless, there is an essence (i.e., content). It is so big that there is no external boundary; thus, there is nothing not included within. It is so tiny without an internal boundary; thus, there is no tiny place that cannot be entered. Therefore, there is nowhere it cannot permeate (i.e., reach).”⁵

This means the Dao is everywhere and there is no boundary, no limitation of time or space. It is something that, though it reaches everywhere, cannot be described. The reason for this is simply because the

Dao is so profound and marvelous that it cannot be described by the limited human knowledge and concepts we have discovered or defined. If we use this limited knowledge to explain the Dao, the Dao will have been distorted and will not be the original natural Dao anymore. For example, the Dao is truthful and does not lie. However, we all lie and play tricks on each other. Consequently, we all have a mask on our faces. The Dao does not have emotions, colors, good or bad, glory, dignity, honor, pride, or any other desires created by humans. We humans are truly in a deep bondage to the matrix of all of these human emotions. Therefore, if we use our emotional and untruthful mind to judge the truth of the Great Nature, then the interpretation of the Dao will not be truthful.

The Great Nature does not have a name or give a name to anything. Therefore, all of the myriad objects do not have names. It was we humans who gave names. Once these names are given and defined, the natural truth is again distorted and becomes misleading. Therefore, once we have given the names to those objects or feelings around us, we have created a matrix (masked society) that is not the natural Dao but a human Dao. That means, again, we have defined Nature or the Dao through our limited mind.

Relatively speaking, nothingness can be considered as yin (陰) that initiates the millions of things (having). Having is the manifestation of nothingness (yin) and is considered as yang (陽). Nothingness is called the wuji state (無極) (no extremity, no polarities). From this wuji state, through taiji (太極) or Dao (道), the “having” is initiated. “Nothingness” and “having” are two aspects of the same “Dao”; even though there are two, actually, it is one; though it is one, actually, there are two. From “having,” yin and yang’s two poles (or polarities) are derived. From this, you can see that yin and yang’s two poles are “the having” of the myriad objects, which is relative to nothingness (figure 1-1). From these two poles, the millions of objects can be derived.

Wang, An-Shi (王安石) said: “The origin of the Dao is from ‘nothingness.’ Therefore, when (one) always keeps ‘nothingness,’ the marvelousness (of the Dao) can be observed. The application of the Dao belongs to ‘having.’ Thus, when (one) always has ‘having,’ the natural recycling can be seen (i.e., comprehended).”⁶ Gui, Jing-Yu (龜井昱) also

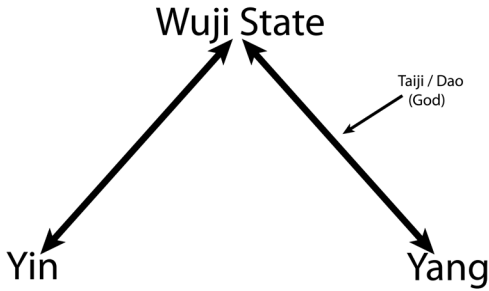


Figure 1-1. Yin and Yang Derived from Wuji (Nothingness)

said: “To always keep ‘nothingness’ is to observe (the Dao’s) marvelousness in initiating objects. To always keep ‘having’ is to observe the object’s returning at the end.”⁷ Finally, Teng, Yun-Shan (滕雲山) said: “Always ‘nothingness’ means the Dao itself. It is marvelous to initiate ‘having’ from ‘noth-

ingness.’ Always ‘having,’ the movements (i.e., actions) are generated from calmness. What is ‘jiao’ (徼)? It means the ending of objects, from ‘having’ returning to ‘nothingness.’”⁸ “Jiao” (徼) means the border or the ultimate end.

Qigong Interpretation:

In qigong practice, through a few thousand years of pondering and practice, the Chinese people have been trying to understand the grand universe (da tian di, 大天地), the small universe (xiao tian di, 小天地), and their mutual relationship. From this understanding, they hope to live long and to comprehend the meaning of life. Since *The Book of Changes* (*Yi Jing*, 《易經》), the Chinese have believed there are two dimensions coexisting in this universe. These two dimensions are called “yin space” (yin jian, 陰間) and “yang space” (yang jian, 陽間). Yin jian is the spiritual world that cannot be seen while yang jian is the material world we live in. When we are alive, our physical body is in the material world with a spirit living within. However, after we die, the physical body reenters the recycling process while the spirit will be reincarnated.

Traditionally, the Chinese considered the Great Nature to be the grand universe (great heaven and earth; da tian di, 大天地) while a human body is a small universe (small heaven and earth; xiao tian di, 小天地). Since humans are formed in the Great Nature, we copy the same energy pattern and have the same energy similarities. Therefore, a human being incorporates both a physical and a spiritual body.

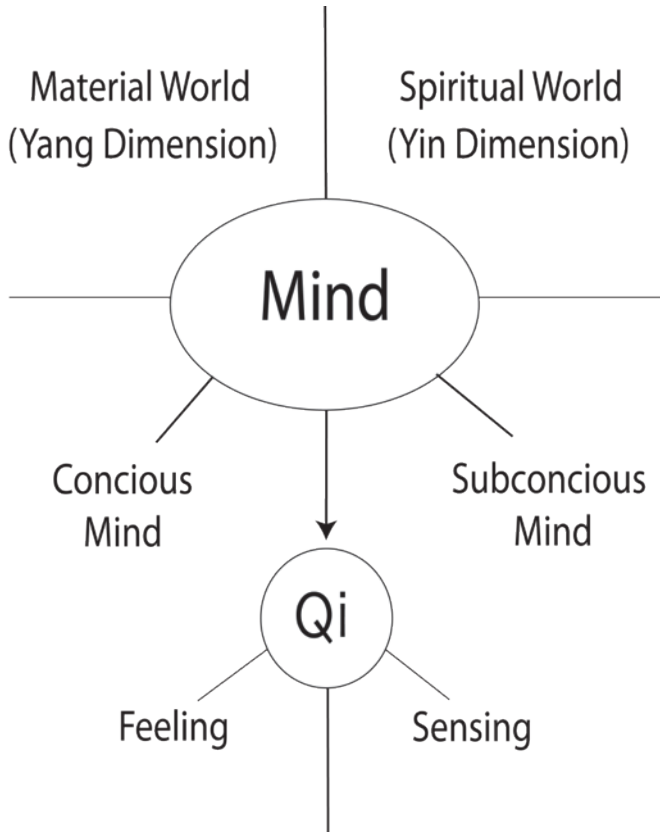


Figure 1-2. Yin/Yang Worlds and Mind

Naturally, the physical body is considered as yang while the spiritual body is considered as yin. Between this yin and yang is the mind. Mind is not the spirit but connects to both the spirit and the physical body (figure 1-2).

Throughout Chinese history the Dao has been called different names depending on the school or society. For example, it is called “taiji” (太極) (grand ultimate) in Confucian scholar society, “Dao” (道) or “tai chu” (太初) (grand initiation) by Daoist society, and “tai xu” (太虛) (great emptiness) by Chinese medical society. In the Daoist book, *Yun Ji Qi Jian* (《云笈七鑿·元氣論》), it is said:

“extremely profound and deep, it is tai yi (太易); when the original qi is not yet formed, it is then called tai chu (太初);

*when original Qi just begins to initiate, it is called tai shi (太始); when the shape of qi has begun to formalize, it is called tai su (太素); when the shape of qi has been formed into material, it is called taiji (太極)."*⁹

In Chinese society, it is believed that this universe began with some unexplainable and incomprehensible deep and profound force. This force is called "tai yi" (太易) and means "extreme change." Then energy (original qi) was produced, but not formed into shape. This second stage is called "tai chu" (太初) and means "great initiation." After this, the original qi began to be formed and is called "tai shi" (太始), which means "grand commencement." Then, the original qi began to formalize into shape and is called "tai su" (太素), which means "great simplicity." Once the original qi began to formalize into material; it is called "taiji" (太極) which means "great or grand ultimate." Therefore, taiji is the force that formalizes material from the wuji state.

Cheng, Yi and Cheng, Hao (程颐/程颢) said: "What is taiji? It means the 'Dao.'"¹⁰ Then, what is taiji? In order to understand qigong, you must first comprehend the definition of taiji or Dao. Taiji is usually translated as "grand ultimate." However, its meaning is still vague. Let us take a look at a classic written by Wang, Zong-Yue (王宗岳). In it he says: "What is taiji? From it, wuji is born. It is a pivotal function of movement and stillness. It is the mother of yin and yang. When it moves, it divides. At rest it reunites."¹¹ From this, we can see that taiji is a natural force or Dao that activates movement (actions or variations of nature) and also causes the cessation of the movement. When this happens, wuji (nothingness) can manifest into yin and yang, two poles. Once you are in the yin or yang state, you can resume the wuji state from either. From the influence of taiji, this yin and yang can be further divided into more yin and yang, and so on. Consequently, millions of objects are derived (figure 1-3).

Thus, myriad objects can usually be classified as yin or yang. Yin and yang are relative and not absolute. How you define yin and yang depends on your point of view and where you stand as the reference position. For example, female is yin while male is yang and the moon is yin while the sun is yang. The seed is yin and the plant, the manifes-

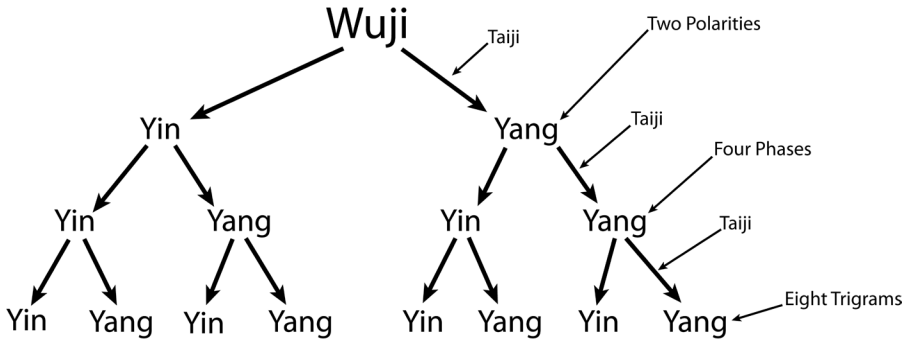


Figure 1-3. The Continuous Derivations of Yin and Yang

tation of the seed, is yang. Sadness is yin while happiness is yang. Naturally, this can change, depending on your reference point.

We can thus see that “nothingness” is the beginning of myriad objects’ derivations and “having” (existence) is the manifestation of nothingness. Taiji is the cause of this manifestation, and therefore taiji is the mother of myriad things. When the mind (Dao, 道) is manifested, it is having (De, 德). Having is the manifestation of nothingness (mind). However, this having will eventually return to emptiness, which implies the recycling of manifestations (the material world or actions). Then, what is taiji? It is the Dao of Nature.

From a qigong point of view, when you are in an extremely calm state both physically and mentally, you have returned your being to the wuji state and you do not have any initiation of thought. However, once you have initiated a thought (taiji), movements are also initiated and yin and yang actions are created. When the concept of Dao is applied to a human being, it actually refers to the thought or the mind. It is from this mind that the creation of the human universe or matrix occurs.

Mind or thinking is insubstantial and empty in the material world. However, this mind or thought can be so powerful that it creates things from nothingness. This mind can travel anywhere in the universe without restriction of time or space. Once you can keep this mind open and free, you are able to create myriad things without restrictions. If your mind is restricted in the human matrix, dogmas, or tradition, then your spirit will be in bondage and cannot be developed.

In the grand universe, the taiji or Dao is the natural spirit (God to the Western world) of this universe. However, in a person's small universe, the human spirit is the taiji or the Dao. As is commonly known, we human beings have two coexisting minds—the conscious mind and the subconscious mind. The conscious mind is connected with the matrix we have created in the past and the subconscious mind is more truthful and still connected with our spirit. Our conscious mind has, unfortunately, dominated the body for a long time, and the subconscious mind has been ignored. Consequently, our spirits have been overshadowed and placed behind the human matrix.

However, from a qigong perspective, when you quiet your conscious mind, your subconscious mind will be strengthened. Consequently, the spirit residing at the center of the brain (limbic system) will be awakened and your intuition will be accurate and strong. That is the practice of embryonic breathing.

In embryonic breathing meditation practice, you first bring your mind to the wuji state. When you are in the wuji state, your mind is neutral and without thought. In this state, you will be able to observe and judge things with a neutral mind. From this neutral state, your mind will be clear and able to initiate an idea for further action. Therefore, before making a decision, you should first calm your mind and bring it to the neutral state.

Conclusion

One of the main purposes of practicing qigong is to comprehend the Dao (mind and spirit) in a human body and its relationship with the natural Dao. Daoists are called “xun Dao zhe” (尋道者) which means “Dao searchers.” Through qigong practice, they are able to gain health, longevity, and further understand the meaning of life.

The final goal of qigong practice is to reunite your spirit with the natural spirit. This is called “the unification of heaven and human” (tian ren he yi, 天人合一). In order to reach this state, you must first reopen your third eye. The third eye is called “heaven eye” (tian yan, 天眼 or tian mu, 天目) in Chinese qigong society. The crucial key to

open the third eye is practicing embryonic breathing meditation in which you must first set your spirit free from the human matrix. That means you have to be truthful. Daoists called themselves “zhen ren” (真人), which means “truthful person.” This is because in order to find the truth of the Dao, a Daoist must first be truthful. Only then, will he be able to jump out of the human matrix to experience his true nature. Only when you are truthful will your subconscious mind (the seed of spirit) be awakened. When your subconscious mind is awakened, your spirit will be free and grow.

The mind is the most important and crucial key to qigong practice. This is because this mind (related to spirit) acts just like a god of a human universe.

For any practitioner who wishes to learn qigong at a profound level, he must first understand the meaning and concepts of Dao, taiji, wuji, and yin-yang. The entire qigong theory and practice are built on these basic concepts. Without this foundation, your qigong understanding and practice will be shallow.

Finally, let's summarize the key points of this chapter:

1. This chapter is a summary of the whole book.
2. Recognize and comprehend the root of the Dao—mind and spirit.
3. Recognize the power of the Dao and its possible manifestation (De, 德) and function.
4. Find the correct way of searching the Dao without bias (the neutral mind).
5. Quiet your conscious mind so the subconscious mind can be awakened.
6. When you are in a subconscious state (a semisleeping state), you will be able to reconnect with nature and see the variations (the changes of objects and thoughts) of the universe clearly.

1. 范應元云：“乃入道之門，立德之基，實一經之總也。”

2. 《管子·內業》：“道也者，口之所不能言也，目之所不能視也，耳之所不能聽也。”

3. 《參同契》：“大道無聲無臭，非色非空，有何可言？然無聲無臭中而藏陰陽，非色空裡而含造化。”

4. 《清靜經》曰：“大道無形，生育天地；大道無情，運行日月；大道無名，長養萬物；吾不知其名，強名曰道。”

5. 范應元云：“夫常久自然之道，有而無形，無而有精。其大無外，故大無不包；其小無內，故細無不入，無不通也。”
6. 王安石曰：“道之本出于無，故常無，所以自觀其妙；道之用常歸于有，故常有，得以觀其微。”
7. 龜井昱曰：“常無者，觀之欲以得其始物之妙也。常有者，觀之欲以得其終物之微也。”
8. 滕雲山曰：“常無，指道體而言。妙，從無生有。常有，靜極生動。微者，成物之終，從有還無。”
9. 《云笈七鑿·元氣論》：“窈窈冥冥，是為太易；元氣未形，漸謂太初；元氣始萌，次謂太始；形氣始端，又謂太素；形氣有質，復謂太極。”
10. 程頤/程顥說：“何謂太極？道也。”
11. 王宗岳云：“太極者，無極而生，動靜之機，陰陽之母也。動之則分，靜之則合。”

About the Author

Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD (楊俊敏博士)

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming was born on August 11, 1946, in Xinzhu Xian (新竹縣), Taiwan (台灣), Republic of China (中華民國). He started his wushu (武術) (gongfu or kung fu, 功夫) training at the age of fifteen under Shaolin White Crane (Shaolin Bai He, 少林白鶴) Master Cheng, Gin-Gsao (曾金灶). Master Cheng originally learned taizuquan (太祖拳) from his grandfather when he was a child. When Master Cheng was fifteen years old, he started learning White Crane from Master Jin, Shao-Feng (金紹峰) and followed him for twenty-three years until Master Jin's death.



In thirteen years of study (1961–1974) under Master Cheng, Dr. Yang became an expert in the White Crane style of Chinese martial arts, which includes both the use of bare hands and various weapons, such as saber, staff, spear, trident, two short rods, and many others. With the same master he also studied White Crane qigong (氣功), qin na or chin na (擒拿), tui na (推拿), and dian xue massage (點穴按摩) and herbal treatment.

At sixteen, Dr. Yang began the study of Yang-style taijiquan (楊氏太極拳) under Master Kao Tao (高濤). He later continued his study of taijiquan under Master Li, Mao-Ching (李茂清). Master Li learned his taijiquan from the well-known Master Han, Ching-Tang (韓慶堂). From this further practice, Dr. Yang was able to master the taiji bare-hand sequence, pushing hands, the two-man fighting sequence, taiji sword, taiji saber, and taiji qigong.

When Dr. Yang was eighteen years old, he entered Tamkang College (淡江學院) in Taipei Xian to study physics. In college, he began the study of traditional Shaolin Long Fist (Changquan or Chang Chuan, 少林長拳) with Master Li, Mao-Ching at the Tamkang College Guoshu Club (淡江國術社), 1964–1968, and eventually became an assistant instructor under Master Li. In 1971, he completed his MS degree in

physics at the National Taiwan University (台灣大學) and then served in the Chinese Air Force from 1971 to 1972. In the service, Dr. Yang taught physics at the Junior Academy of the Chinese Air Force (空軍幼校) while also teaching wushu. After being honorably discharged in 1972, he returned to Tamkang College to teach physics and resumed study under Master Li, Mao-Ching. From Master Li, Dr. Yang learned Northern Style Wushu, which includes both bare hand and kicking techniques, and numerous weapons.

In 1974, Dr. Yang came to the United States to study mechanical engineering at Purdue University. At the request of a few students, Dr. Yang began to teach gongfu, which resulted in the establishment of the Purdue University Chinese Kung Fu Research Club in the spring of 1975. While at Purdue, Dr. Yang also taught college-credit courses in taijiquan. In May of 1978, he was awarded a PhD in mechanical engineering by Purdue.

In 1980, Dr. Yang moved to Houston to work for Texas Instruments. While in Houston, he founded Yang's Shaolin Kung Fu Academy, which was eventually taken over by his disciple, Mr. Jeffery Bolt, after Dr. Yang moved to Boston in 1982. Dr. Yang founded Yang's Martial Arts Academy in Boston on October 1, 1982.

In January of 1984, he gave up his engineering career to devote more time to research, writing, and teaching. In March of 1986, he purchased property in the Jamaica Plain area of Boston to be used as the headquarters of the new organization, Yang's Martial Arts Association (YMAA). The organization expanded to become a division of Yang's Oriental Arts Association, Inc. (YOAA).

In 2008, Dr. Yang began the nonprofit YMAA California Retreat Center. This training facility in rural California is where selected students enroll in a five-year residency to learn Chinese martial arts.

Dr. Yang has been involved in traditional Chinese wushu since 1961, studying Shaolin White Crane (Bai He), Shaolin Long Fist (Changquan), and taijiquan under several different masters. He has taught for more than forty-six years: seven years in Taiwan, five years at Purdue University, two years in Houston, twenty-six years in Boston, and more than eight years at the YMAA California Retreat Center. He has taught seminars all around the world, sharing his knowledge of

Chinese martial arts and qigong in Argentina, Austria, Barbados, Botswana, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, England, Egypt, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Iceland, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland, and Venezuela.

Since 1986, YMAA has become an international organization, which currently includes more than fifty schools located in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, and the United States.

Many of Dr. Yang's books and videos have been translated into many languages, including French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Russian, German, and Hungarian.

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