



Taijiquan Core Principles
(Level Three)

Four Session
Master Class
with Master Sam Masich

Level Three, Session Four Yin-yang, 4 Valves, 5 Bodies, Zhou-Kao

1. Yin-yang cycle of return

Chapter 16 of the *Daodejing* (道德經) speaks of 'return' as the constant. The return from *yang* to *yin* and eventually of *taiji* to *wuji*.

People, creatures, and all else enjoy flourishing, then each returns to its source.

In the end, it is called 'stillness,' or, so-to-speak, 'destined-to-return.'

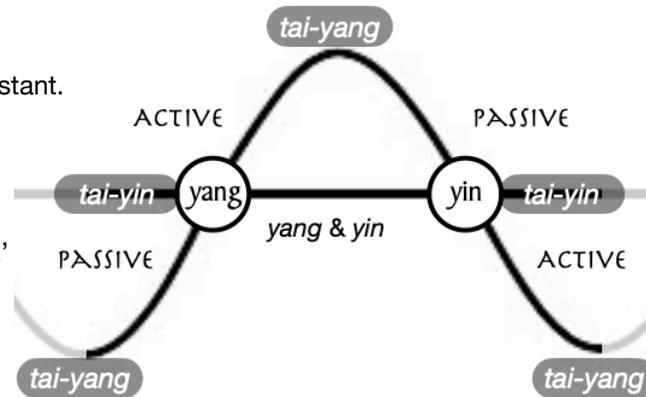
Destined-to-return is called 'the constant,' and knowing the constant is called 'clarity.'

To not know the constant leads to recklessness and is ill-fated.

There are two ways to return to *wuji*. Both have to do with an extreme:

If *tai-yin* loses its relationship with *yang* it returns to *wuji*—through acceptance.

If *tai-yang* loses its relationship with *yin* it returns to *wuji*—through resistance.



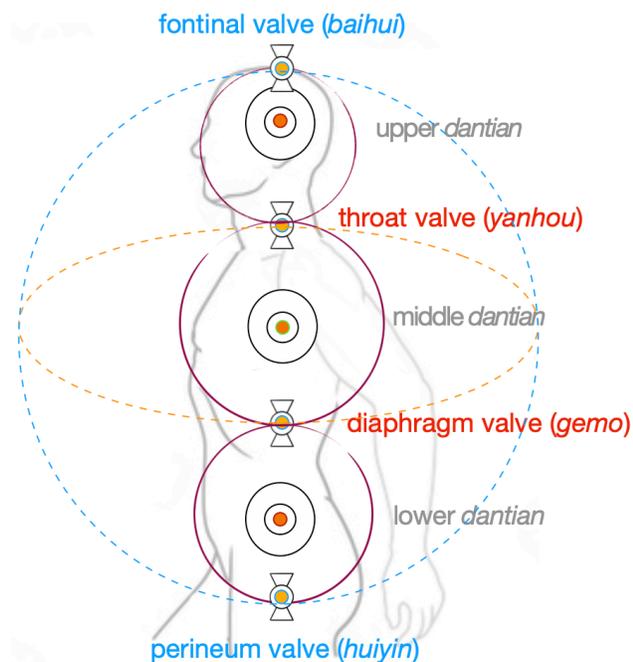
2. Four Valves

Each of the three *dantians* is at the centre of one of the regions or 'bowls' in the head-torso-abdomen complex. At the top and bottom of each bowl is a two-way 'valve' (*men* 門). The valves are either 'passage valves' (which connect one bowl to another bowl) or 'pole' valves which connect the bowl to the world outside.

The valves allow energetic qualities from one region to affect the adjacent region. Valve control of activities such as utterance and breathing can be use in processes of nourishing and regulation.

The three regions are connected internally by two passage valves. The middle and upper bowls are connected with the 'throat valve' (*yanhou* 咽喉). The middle and lower bowls are connected with the 'diaphragm valve' (*gemo* 膈膜).

Further, the upper and lower bowls are connected to 'heaven-above' and 'earth-below' by two 'pole valves'—the familiar *baihui* and *huiyin* centres. In advanced *taijiquan* practices the valves can be used to express the three inner harmony concepts as well as supporting the *taijiquan* thirteen-power theory.



3. Five bodies

In the Thirteen Powers Circulation and Cultivation Explanation (十三勢行功心解) the following advice is given:

Use the 'heart' (*xin* 心) to mobilize 'vital energy' (*qi* 氣).

Task it with sinking calmly.

Only then can it be gathered and penetrate the bone marrow.

Use 'vital energy' to transport the body. Direct it to follow along smoothly.

Only then can it truly accord with the 'heart.'

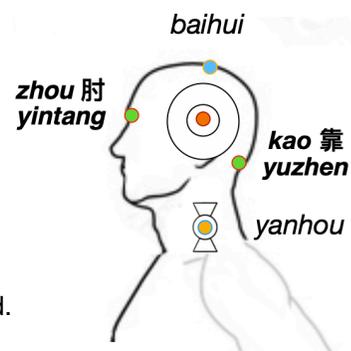
This is a clear and obvious reference to the six-harmonies concept found at the root of the internal martial arts. Terms such as 'heart,' 'qi,' 'bone marrow,' and 'body' may seem to clash as they speak from different places conceptually. It can, therefore, be helpful to clarify various systems or 'bodies' overlaid upon and intermingling with one another. Here, we will take a 'from the ground up' look at the 'bodies' as they move from tangible to less tangible.

- **The solid body:** The 'corporeal' or 'physical' experience of body is especially tangible during environmental interaction and movement.
- **The liquid body:** Blood and bio-fluid in the liquid-plasma state becomes tangible with secretion, discharge, absorption, and containment of fluids from within and without.
- **The energetic body:** Bioelectricity or *qi* (氣) is subtle but its presence becomes tangible with the sensation and mobilization practices of *taijiquan*.
- **The heat body:** Inner sensation such as those known as 'emotion,' 'human warmth,' or 'soul' begin as undefinable 'heat' and become tangible and expressible through human and biological interaction.
- **The imaginative body:** The capacity for consciousness interiority, the 'I,' or self of self as individual becomes tangible through activities thought and narrative making.

4. The 'Centres': Zhou & Kao

The diagonal-advancing energy 'elbow' (*zhou* 肘) is supported by the 'seal hall' (*yintang* 印堂) on the forehead (sometimes called the 'third eye'). The energy 'lean' (*kao* 靠) is stabilized by the 'jade pillow' (*yuzhen* 玉枕) at the occipital ridge, where the neck meets the skull.

Zhou and *kao* are the diagonal members of the 'forward path' which includes: *peng*, *ji*, *zhou*, *kao*. *Yintang* (*zhou*), and *yuzhen* (*kao*) are clustered around the upper *dantian*-to-*baihui* complex. The energetic transitions between 'ward,' 'elbow,' and 'lean' can be very fast, smooth, and powerful when these centres are well understood.



5. Taijiquan: a guide for life

Lines from the Thirteen Powers Song (十三勢歌) bring the promise of the *taijiquan* classics into clear focus:

Asking candidly, why use this theory and practice as a guide? Because 'intention' and 'vital energy' are the true rulers, the bones and muscles are merely the subjects.

Why consider promoting this idea all life-long?

To benefit and prolong one's life and not, with age, let wither the spring.

This song! This song! One hundred and forty characters—every word clear and true with nothing omitted. If one's inquiry does not accord with these requirements—it will be wasted time and effort (*gongfu* 功夫) and one will heave a sigh of regret.

Learning to embody the wisdom of *taijiquan* through practice and study promises wisdom, health, and vitality for one's entire life. Even core-principles at the deeper level is really just another beginning!