



Taijiquan Core Principles
(Level Three)

Four Session
Master Class
with Master Sam Masich

Level Three, Session Three Perceptual Movement, Observation & Intuition, Cai & Lie

Taijiquan Core Principles are descriptions of the essential criteria for *taijiquan* practice based on natural laws governing human structure, movement, and function. They are trainable concepts meant to be integrated into any and all *taijiquan* solo and partner practices. Taijiquan Core-principles—Level Three concepts use classical *taijiquan* literature, internal energetic points and functions, and the deep theoretical structures of *taijiquan* to approach the significance and meaning of the basic principles that guide our study and practice. They are directly related to the ideas and practices found in Taijiquan Core-principles—Levels One and Two.

1. Mobilization and Perceptual Movement

In chapters two and three of the ‘Yang-family Forty Chapters’ (楊家四十篇章) a path is laid out whereby the progressive development of ‘perceptual movement’ (*zhijue yundong* 知覺運動) toward ‘comprehending energy’ (*dong jin* 懂勁) and, eventually, ‘clarity in consciousness’ (*shen ming* 神明) can be achieved. An important comparison is made between, on one hand ‘mobilization’ and ‘sensation,’ and on the other ‘movement’ and ‘awareness.’

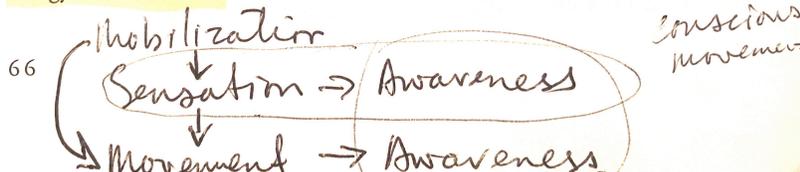
While ‘movement/awareness is naturally easy to grasp, ‘mobilization/sensation’ requires study and can be accomplished by mastery of ‘perceptual movement.’ The Forty-Chapters scheme for achieving clarity in consciousness—also known as ‘spiritual illumination’—derives from the Taijiquan Treatise (*Taijiquan Lun* 太極拳論) which opens with the ‘*Taiji*—born of *wuji*—is the mother of *yin* and *yang*’ concept.

Gradually, as one’s touch matures, ‘comprehending energy’ (*dong jin* 懂勁) is awakened.

As a result of ‘comprehending energy’ one progresses toward ‘spiritual illumination.’

Once again, the idea of subtle stirring is put forth in support of the goal of self-cultivation through martial arts. Distinguishing mobilization from movement and sensation from awareness is key to developing perceptual movement. It is further argued that if one can correctly develop this (perceptual movement) in themselves they can naturally know it in others—this is the basis of the ‘comprehending energy’ that leads to both clarity in consciousness and martial-arts mastery.

Movement and awareness are easy, but mobilization and sensation are difficult. By first seeking to develop conscious movement in yourself and realizing it in your own body, you will naturally be able to know it in others. If you seek it first in others, it is likely that you will miss it in yourself. It is essential that you understand this principle, and the ability to interpret energy follows from this.



From my dog-eared copy of Douglas Wile’s towering 1996 work:

‘Lost T’ai-chi classics from the late Ch’ing dynasty’

This is a must-read for all serious *taijiquan* players and provides some of the best background information on the art.

Note: I translate some terms differently than Professor Wile.



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2. Observation and Intuition. Channels

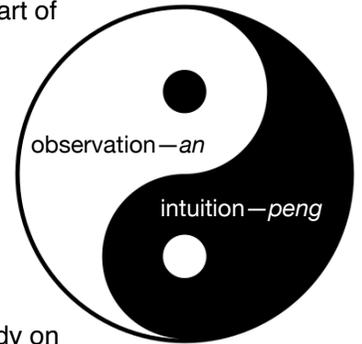
Information in the form of ‘percepts’ and ‘concepts’ can either be received by way of perceptual organs or through the emergent processes of thought. As percepts and concepts arrive (or arise) they can be attended-to in two general ways—they can be observed and analyzed or they can be sensed and intuited.

The importance of mobilization and sensing is seen in solo and partner perceptual-movement practices such as *taijiquan* forms (*taolu*) and sensing and pushing hands (*jueshou/tuishou*). In the context of such practices one can develop both observation and intuition faculties and integrate these integrative modes.

Forms of education that focus on the observational, analytical, and rational faculties (part of what the past masters called ‘our natural powers of discrimination’) are capable of leading humans to great heights of understanding but can also foster an over-reliance on the observation half of the equation resulting in negligence of the intuitive side. Perceptual movement, from this perspective, can potentially remedy unbalanced forms of education and experience.

In Chinese medicine there are ‘eight extraordinary channel’ (*qijing bamai* 奇經八脈) that support the other main channel systems. Two of these, the ‘conception channel’ (*renmai* 任脈) and the ‘governing channel’ (*dumai* 督脈) encircle the upper body on its vertical axis. The *renmai* runs down the front midline of the head, trunk, and abdomen from *baihui* to *huiyin* while the *dumai* runs up the back midline from *huiyin* to *baihui*.

For *taijiquan* players the conception and governing channels may be understood in terms of observation and intuition and also as *an* and *peng*.



3. The ‘Centres’: *Cai* & *Lie*

The diagonal energy ‘pluck’ (*cai* 採) is supported by the ‘gate of life’ (*mingmen* 命門) point along the back governing channel while ‘split’ (*lie* 捌) is stabilized by the ‘sea of *qi*’ (*qihai* 氣海) point on the front. The *mingmen* and *qihai* are anchored to the lower *dantian*-to-*huiyin* complex and, for *taijiquan* players, form part of the ‘backward path’ that begins with *an*.

Centres that lay upon the conception and governing vessels cluster around a *dantian*. For example in the last class we observed the relationship between the *taijiquan* energies *ji* and *lü* and the points *jianggong* and *shuangguan* which are located on either side of the middle *dantian*.

