

**Why Should Meditation Practitioners Learn about Chinese Qigong?**

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## PART ONE: ENCOURAGEMENT

We spiritual seekers have heard stories about monks with supernatural abilities, shamans who could heal, witches who could cast magic spells, and saints who could perform miracles. Is this the stuff of fairy tales, or is there truth that underlies the lore? Digging deeper, the spiritual seeker discovers that “magic” is very real: physicists are telling us that the material world is not so solid after all; healers like Dr. Paul Cho and the late Anthony DeMello have made a science out of petitionary prayer; spiritual leaders like Deepak Chopra, Wayne Dyer, and Rhonda Byrne teach about a universe that tends to meet our expectations. It seems that many brilliant minds accept the idea of cultivating spiritual power. How is it done?

Meditation. Living energy surrounds us, and we breathe it into our bodies. Regardless of whether the practitioner is a Daoist sage, Buddhist priest, Christian healer, Native American medicine woman, or a Pagan mystic performing a ritual of magic, the principles remain the same. *If the student learns how to store and circulate natural life energy inside the body*, he or she begins to learn the secrets of cultivating spiritual power. Among the various spiritual traditions, techniques vary, but they all involve the practice of meditation. It is crucial that spiritual seekers choose a meditation discipline to pursue. This paper is intended to provide meditation practitioners with encouragement, guidance, and good study habits for learning the Daoist science of Qigong as it is taught through the publications of Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming.

### *Chinese Qigong for Cultivating Spiritual Power*

In Daoist Qigong, which is the basis for the methods of classical Chinese medicine that have so impressed the western world in recent decades, the exercises and meditation methods are divided into four categories: Martial Arts, Medical, Scholar, and Religious Qigong.<sup>1</sup> This purposeful organization is the first clue telling us that, among the world's many spiritual disciplines, the Daoist tradition offers especially clear, comprehensive, and sophisticated instructions for modern students to follow. Daoist spiritual cultivation is made particularly useful by the teachers who have carefully preserved and translated the teachings from one generation to the next. We are fortunate to have access to Daoist meditation techniques as they are explained by Dr. Yang and other modern scientists who have reconciled the ancient teachings with modern scientific understanding.

What about the students who have doubts about Qigong and believe that ancient practices cannot still be of practical use in modern times? Even technology from ten years ago is becoming obsolete, so how can ancient teachings still be useful? Sure, some people claim to have experienced euphoria and strange phenomena during meditation, but everyone knows that our minds can play tricks on us, so why should we believe those who claim to have experienced verifications of their practice? Why should we believe that it is possible to store energy, to increase longevity, or to experience an

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Yang's *The Root of Chinese Qigong*, p. 63.

“enlightenment” that solves the mystery of life? In order to encourage doubtful student, one only needs to point out the fact that *energy follows the attention*.

Reflecting on this principle, it is easy to understand the immense value of practicing to lead the Qi with the attention during meditation.

### *Energy Follows Attention*

After reading about the principles of Chinese medicine, one understands that Qi can be increased or decreased in the body. Qi can be drawn into the body through food and air, or it can be emitted/consumed through various activities. Qi goes where it is needed, depending on our attention. This is why, for example, the legs are so much thicker than the arms on humans: Energy builds up the mass of legs as it constantly passes through them to be emitted from the “bubbling well” cavity on each foot as we walk around in the world.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, tingling can be felt in either hand when one “attaches”<sup>3</sup> the attention to either palm. Energy follows the attention.

Anyone who studies Chinese medicine and still feels doubtful about the nature of Qi should refer to Dr. Robert Becker’s book *The Body Electric*.<sup>4</sup> When people start to think of Qi as electricity, they have no trouble believing in it, because everyone knows that the body uses electricity. People know that the

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Yang explains this principle in the video entitled “Qigong Meditation: Small Circulation.” It gave me a great insight about the Yogic practice of standing on one’s head: if the weight of the body being supported by the feet causes energy to constantly be emitted through the “bubbling well” on each foot, then it stands to reason that we can develop a bubbling well at Bai Hui (GV #1) by doing headstand meditation!

<sup>3</sup> At a winter seminar in 2008, Dr. Yang asked us, “Can you attach your attention to an object?”

<sup>4</sup> Recommended by Dr. Yang in many of his publications.

nervous system consists of pathways for electrical impulses. Furthermore, everyone knows that we send impulses from the brain – like the impulse to wiggle a finger – by *thinking*, and that we send impulses from the skin to the brain by *feeling*. When one considers the facts that all bodily movement originates with thinking and that action is made possible through the use of bioelectricity, it is no longer difficult to believe in the principle that energy follows the attention. Energy follows thoughts. Thoughts manifest physically in the physical world.

What are the implications of this important truth? Energy goes where the attention goes, and with this insight comes a great realization, realization of the reason why meditation is the key to cultivating spiritual power: Meditation is the only activity that keeps the attention *inside* the body. In the moment a person wakes up in the morning and opens the eyes, energy begins leaking away. All day long, the attention is on various things outside the body, but seldom one's attention inside the body. Energy is given out all day long through the five gates, the pores, and the eyes, and at the end of the day the person has become fatigued, so the attention naturally turns within for sleep.<sup>5</sup> Meditation can be thought of here as any activity during which energy is drawn into the body instead of leaking away: Fixing the attention on one of the Dan Tians (“elixir fields,” where the longevity elixir is grown), following the breathing, and even receiving a

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. Yang points out that in sleep is similar to embryonic breathing in the sense that both activities emphasize the inhalation – because they involve storing up the Qi.

massage can all be meditations, because they involve keeping the attention inside the body for a period of time – something people rarely think to do. Why do people usually pay attention to things outside the body? It is because they do not know that *energy follows the attention*. Understanding this simple principle, the practitioner becomes very confident in Qigong for bringing about an extraordinary result.

#### *Potential for Extraordinary Results from Qigong*

Meditation practitioners, Taoist meditation is worth the time it takes to attain proficiency in its practice. It is a spiritual science that takes the mystery out of pursuing the benefits of meditation. The mysticism often associated with meditation can lead practitioners to become complacent in their practice as they hope for some sudden, spontaneous, miraculous experience of “enlightenment.” Especially after reading texts about Zen Buddhism that emphasize the importance of meditating without trying to achieve anything,<sup>6</sup> with no purpose other than to keep the proper zazen posture – meditation practitioners faithfully remain passive in their practice. Likewise, people who use prayer as their form of meditation can fall into the trap of passivity by waiting for God to provide salvation – approaching salvation as something that happens *to* the practitioner, when they should be approaching it as something to be achieved *by* the practitioner.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Shunryu Suzuki’s *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* or the translations of Taisen Deshimaru’s teachings in *Questions to a Zen Master*.

This passivity is not necessarily the best way. A passive approach is taught in many schools of Buddhism,<sup>7</sup> and a comparatively proactive approach taken by Daoism.<sup>8</sup> Daoist exercises are closely associated with Chinese medicine's meridian system, so it is no surprise that a more methodical, scientific approach has been taken by the Daoists. Daoism enhances practice by applying the principles of Chinese medicine to enlightenment meditation and taking a systematic approach. However, an important truth is hidden in the teaching about passivity in meditation; meditation can be disturbed by the notion of trying to achieve a result. Even though Daoist meditation is more proactive than Buddhist meditation, Dr. Yang warns us not try to force the practice of Qigong into a rigid schedule. He writes, "If you force it, it will not happen naturally."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, in Daoist Qigong it is understood that the mind must not be fixed on a notion of enlightenment while in meditation, but it is also understood that certain tasks must be completed by the practitioner. The practitioner does not have to simply sit in meditation and wait for enlightenment to happen by itself. One who studies the energy pathways, which have been mapped out by acupuncturists and sages, will begin to see meditation in a whole new way.

Extraordinary results can be achieved by practitioners who begin to think of meditation in terms of the meridian system. For example, meditation

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See Dr. Yang's DVD entitled "Understanding Qigong: Embryonic Breathing," 2007.

<sup>9</sup> *Root of Chinese Qigong*, p. 202.

practitioners all know that they must silence the mind and be free of emotional disturbance in order to experience deep meditation, but they may not know *why* it is necessary to silence the mind. They may have never even wondered about it.

Observing or stopping thought is only the first step toward achieving the benefits of meditation. Anyone who learns about acupuncture, for example, knows that the needles are used to affect the electrical energy of the body; it is not difficult to understand, then, that Qigong practitioners can maintain their health by using their meditative intention (Yi, “wisdom mind”) in the way that the physician uses needles. Maintaining health is a matter of balancing internal energy, and that, in general, is not so hard to understand. What meditation practitioners do not always realize, though, is that the profound experience called “enlightenment” is also a matter of balancing and manipulating internal energy.

According to Chinese medicine, the various emotions all come from different internal organs, so emotional disturbances come from imbalanced energy flow to the internal organs. This is a big hint about the fact that meditation practice involves the electrical energy of the body; most meditation practitioners calm the mind without even thinking about how they are affecting the electricity of the body. It is no wonder that extraordinary results can be achieved by practitioners who begin to get a clear understanding of the nature of Qi.

### *Qi and Enlightenment*

How is Qi involved with enlightenment? Bioelectricity is involved with all illnesses, emotions, thoughts, ambitions, and desires during life, so people who want to know what “enlightenment” is should theorize that it probably has something to do with bioelectricity. The sudden experience of subjective transformation that has been called “enlightenment” is a change that can be achieved through the use of Qi after the body has been conditioned to store a high electrical charge. The meridian system and energy centers are important for enlightenment in the same way that they are important for health and longevity. As we shift into a higher gear of practice, like the spiritually ambitious Daoists of times past, let’s see if we can make a drastic change in the way we relate to reality.

### **PART TWO: LEARNING FROM DR. YANG**

Daoist meditation takes us deeper than meditation practices that do not explain bioelectricity or the meridian system. Practitioners of meditation will find great encouragement in the aforementioned principle, *energy follows the attention*, so it will be described again here for emphasis:

*Meditation practice seems mystical at first, until Dr. Yang reminds us that the electricity follows the attention (Qi follows yi). The body runs on electricity like any other battery, and we all know that the electrical activity of the central and peripheral nervous systems is directed by the brain – so it is easy to understand how Qigong practitioners can use meditation to make specific, physiological changes.*

Whatever your reason for practicing meditation, Daoist methods provide the systematic approach that must be used if we are to achieve our goals.

Dr. Yang has published many books and DVDs, but new students should start by learning fundamental principles, such as the “Five Regulatings.”<sup>10</sup> In the next part of this paper, I will describe the “five regulatings” according to my own understanding of Dr. Yang’s explanations, so that when you study chapters eight through thirteen of that book the concepts will already be familiar to you. If you are already a meditation practitioner, you will find that your skill and experience will be very useful to you as you enter the practice of Chinese Qigong.

The information contained within Dr. Yang’s books is so profuse and profound that it can be difficult for readers to put it all together in their minds. In order to make a meaningful contribution to the study of this subject that has already been so thoroughly expounded by Dr. Yang, my best option is to write about what he has already written. I hope this section will prepare new students for making the most of Dr. Yang’s explanations of the “Five Regulatings”:

1. Regulate the body by passing through three stages of relaxation, starting with *mental* relaxation.
2. Regulate the breath by using eight key words and six stages.
3. Regulate the emotional mind in three stages.
4. Regulate the Qi (energy) by keeping an abundant supply in the lower abdomen.
5. Regulate the Spirit.

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<sup>10</sup> The Five Regulatings are explained in the book *The Root of Chinese Qigong: Secrets of Health, Longevity, and Enlightenment*. There is actually a sixth “regulating”, too, and it is regulation of the essence. This involves the internal and external kidneys. On pages 161-169 of Dr. Yang’s *Root of Chinese Qigong*, he discusses stretching and twisting to massage the kidneys, practicing moderation in sexual activity, and dietary concerns for regulating the essence.

### *Regulating the Body*

The first challenge in Qigong practice is to regulate the body, and this requires the ability to relax deeply. Dr. Yang explains that what most people think of as “relaxation” is actually relaxation’s most superficial level. Assuming a posture that is balanced and consciously relaxing, you have reached only the first stage of relaxation. Deeper relaxation is possible, and it is deep relaxation that enables Qi channels to stay open.

Relaxing the mind must come first, in order to regulate the body. This makes sense, because letting go of tension in the body requires concentration, and in order to concentrate the practitioner must be able to focus the mind. What does it mean for the mind to be “relaxed”? If the mind is not relaxed, it must be being disturbed by persistent thoughts, discomfort, or some other vexation. Even before the body is relaxed, it is possible to relax and focus the mind. That seems to be why relaxing the mind is the first step to regulating the body. Ancient Daoist masters saw the body as a microcosm of the universe. The body can be considered an expression of the consciousness of the person. Modern spiritual teachers claim that we are “it.” Jesus taught that the Kingdom of heaven is within you, the Buddha taught that we all have Buddha-nature, and, accordingly, James Broughton writes:

*This is It  
And I am It  
And you are It  
And so is That  
And he is It  
And she is It  
And it is It  
And that is That.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Broughton, James in *Zen To Go*. John Winokur, ed. Penguin: New York, 1990.

How can we relax so deeply that we will intuit our true nature (i.e. “We are It”)?

Dr. Yang’s explanation of the three levels of relaxation<sup>12</sup> makes students realize that *in order to release tension we must energize the area we are trying to relax.*

Abundant energy is conducive to deep relaxation, but people with deficient energy cannot relax.

Everyone thinks of relaxation is a process of stopping something – stop holding tension! However, the body and its organs hold tension automatically as a way of conserving energy. Therefore, we must send energy to the places we wish to relax. For example, when someone squeezes your shoulders to help you relax, they are adding energy to that area. Likewise, when a good leader has a great amount of energy to contribute to the group’s process, all group members feel more relaxed. Now that I understand this principle, I pierce my muscles and internal organs with energy in order to relax them during meditation. Perhaps one day I will be able to relax even into my bone marrow.

### *Regulating the Breath*

Beginners should memorize the eight key words for regulating the breath.<sup>13</sup> Many people think of reading as a leisure activity, so they tend not to work hard and memorize lists when necessary. With these eight key words, it is impossible to apply them unless one takes the time to commit them to memory.

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<sup>12</sup> See Dr. Yang’s *Root of Chinese Qigong*, p. 108-114.

<sup>13</sup> *Root of Chinese Qigong*, p. 143.

I remember them on my fingers. Looking at my index finger, I think of how people sometimes raise the index finger to the lips to tell people to be “calm and silent,” and this helps me to remember that the first key word for regulating the breathing means “**calm and silent.**” Next, I look at my middle finger, which seems slender because it is taller than my other fingers, and it helps me to remember “**slender.**” After that, I look at my ring finger, which is associated with marriage, and marriage is a “**deep**” relationship. After the ring finger, I look at my little finger, and it is easy to remember “**long**” because it is ironic to remember “long” on the finger that is shortest.

I look at the four fingers of my other hand to *continue* with key words #5 through #8, and it reminds me of “**continuous**” when I look again at the index finger. I move to the middle finger, and, because I have only switched hands the fingers I am looking at seem “**uniform**” with the other hand. I look at my ring finger and little finger, and somehow I am reminded of the words “**soft**” and “**slow,**” but I could not think of any more interesting associations to make for aiding the memory. The point is that this method of remembering items “on our fingers” (i.e. with the help of mental associations made with each finger) is useful for memorizing the lists that need to be learned for the practice of qigong.

### *Regulating the Mind*

The “Stop and Look” method of stopping thought is explained by Dr. Yang as a matter of *watching* for thoughts to arise and *stopping* them. Thoughts that are not stopped will grow, so the practitioner must watch carefully. This brings to mind a section

of Eckhart Tolle’s popular book *The Power of Now*, where he advises meditation practitioners to assume a watchful attitude, as if to ask, “I wonder what my next thought will be,” and this watchful, wondering attitude often pacifies the mind so well that the next thought does not come for a long time. Thus, even the act of watching is enough to calm the mind.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Yang goes on to explain the method of Xi Yuan Zhi (Tie to the Origin and Stop),<sup>15</sup> and this is the kind of meditation technique that uses a focal point. Dr. Yang suggests that both the tip of the nose and the lower Dan Tian are good focal points for the attention. To me, it seems like the Lower Dan Tian is a better focal point to use, because the energy will be stored, but Dr. Yang must have a good reason for giving the tip of the nose as an option. I suspect that the tip of the nose is a good option for beginners because the stimulation at the tip of the nose – cool air on inhalations and warm air on exhalations – helps the beginner to keep the mind “attached” to it.

The method of using a focal point is familiar to many meditation styles, but Dr. Yang’s instructions go further: “Once you have [restrained the monkey mind], you still have to calm it down.” This is called Restrain the Xin and Stop (Zhi Xin Zhi).<sup>16</sup> What a great insight for meditation practitioners! Attaching the mind to a focal point is only the first step; while staying attached to one spot, you must also stop the generation of thoughts. This is restraining the monkey, *and* then trying to get it to calm down – two different things!

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<sup>14</sup> I remember reading somewhere that a meditation teacher compared this watchfulness to a cat watching a mouse hole.

<sup>15</sup> *Root of Chinese Qigong*, p. 153.

<sup>16</sup> *Root of Chinese Qigong*, p. 153.

The third step is called Comprehend the Real and Stop Method (Ti Zhen Zhi).<sup>17</sup> Now that the ape has been not only restrained but also pacified, the student can investigate the origin of thoughts that arise. If thoughts are distractions from what is real, resistance to what is real, then the idea of “freeing the mind” must involve this process of going beyond thought. Thought is superficial, so it must be overcome in order to “comprehend the real.”

The above three steps are explained on pages 153-154 of *The Root of Chinese Qigong*, and they are followed by explanations of several other techniques, but those cannot all be covered here. The scope of this paper focuses on helping meditation practitioners make a strong start as they learn Qigong from Dr. Yang’s publications, and these methods of restraining the mind, pacifying the mind, and observing the source from which thoughts are generated – are included because they are particularly fascinating and helpful.

#### *Regulating the Qi and Shen*

If the practitioner is able to regulate the body, breath, and mind, it becomes possible to regulate the Qi and Shen. These profound subjects are still beyond my understanding, so this section is brief.

Regulating the Qi starts with understanding that the body is a battery composed of billions of batteries (each cell is like a battery, with two polarities and the capacity to store a charge), and that the Lower Dan Tian is the place where the Qi must be gathered. Pure, original Qi (Water Qi) comes from *below* the Lower Dan Tian, and Fire Qi comes from *above* with every breath and

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<sup>17</sup> *Root of Chinese Qigong*, p. 154.

swallow. These are Yin and Yang respectively, and they can come together to create new life.

Regulating the Qi is first a matter of drawing Qi into the Lower Dan Tian from various places: breath, internal and external kidneys, the False Lower Dan Tian at the skin's surface, the large vessels of the legs, and so on. Practitioners must gather enough Qi in the center of the Lower Dan Tian so that they can circulate it in order to widen the Governing and Conception Vessel in small circulation (sometimes called "microcosmic orbit"). When practitioners seek enlightenment, they must gather enough Qi in the Lower Dan Tian to heat up the Huang Ting cavity that is located above it (small tripod and furnace). After this, the practitioner can use this Qi to heat up the Upper Dan Tian for enlightenment (large tripod and furnace).

The above explanations are incomplete, and perhaps not entirely accurate, but they should suffice to fascinate meditation practitioners and compel them to spend time practicing Qigong. Anyone who has ever practiced breathing exercises, self-hypnosis, Yoga, Zazen, or any other kind of meditation is already off to a good start for learning the enlightenment science of Chinese Qigong. If one becomes excited about the possibilities, the great potential that is available when meditation involves *storing up a high electrical charge*, it is important to use good study habits in order to make the most of the teachings.

### *Good Study Habits: Reading Meditation*

What if someone wants to learn Qigong from Dr. Yang's books, but s/he does not have good study habits? Many people do not have good study habits, but that is alright, because in the *Tao Te Ching* it says, "Much knowledge means little wisdom." Nevertheless, if someone wants to gain the benefits of Qigong from the ancient, abstract writings translated by Dr. Yang, it is necessary to use good study habits and ponder all day long. Some people think of reading as a leisure activity, and it may not occur to them that these teachings cannot be transmitted to a casual reader.

When studying the ancient meditation techniques preserved in translations and commentaries by Dr. Yang, meditation is the only appropriate state-of-mind. Some students approach reading as a leisure activity, so they barely scratch the surface of the truth that is available in Dr. Yang's translations of ancient Qigong (Chi Kung) literature. Other students are more scholarly in their approach; through note-taking and reflection, they are able to understand the principles. Even a scholarly analysis is insufficient, though, for getting to know Dr. Yang's Qigong through literature. Those of us who hope to learn and apply the teachings - with deep understanding - must join him in meditation.

How can we *read* in a meditative way? Jon Kabat-Zin explains meditation as a nonjudgmental kind of looking. To do something in a meditative way is to do it without letting judgments arise in the mind. This seems like a good definition of "meditation" for students to consider. Dr. Yang explains methods

of stopping or looking at thought,<sup>18</sup> and to whatever extent the thoughts that arise in the mind can be considered “judgments,” Kabat-Zin’s definition applies. In fact, one could even argue that all the thoughts that arise in the mind have something to do with “judgment.” All meditation involves observing or stopping thought, in the sense that looking deeply at something requires us to silence the internal stream of judgments, that ongoing rant of the mind.

It is difficult to read in a meditative way, though, because a constant stream of thoughts must pass through the mind as one reads. Reading is done with the conscious mind. How can one read Dr. Yang’s Taijiquan and Qigong literature while keeping a meditative mind? I use periods. The little dot at the end of each sentence signifies a pause, the completion of a thought. When reading a novel, it is okay to float past each period in a breezy way as the story unfolds, but when studying complex principles we need to **stop** at each period and let the information from the preceding sentence sink deep into the mind.

I stare at each period until ideas and questions spontaneously arise: *What does Dr. Yang mean by this, and why does he choose to say it here?* I stare at each period until the truth of a principle comes into focus in the mind’s eye. The little dot at the end of each sentence can be like a portal to profound understanding.

By stopping at the end of each sentence and staring at the period, that perfect focal point for meditation, we students can interact with the principles being taught by Dr. Yang. The need for this pause is obvious, but it is often

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<sup>18</sup> *The Root of Chinese Qigong*, p. 153-156.

overlooked. As an example, close consideration can be given to Dr. Yang's commentary on the "Song of Eight Words," an ancient lesson from Taijiquan that can be enlightening to martial artists of every style. Part of the song reads:

"Wardoff, Rollback, Press, and Push are rare in this world. Ten martial artists, ten don't know"<sup>19</sup> For our benefit as students, Dr. Yang explains this part of the

Song by writing:

*Wardoff, Rollback, Press, and Push are the four basic movements of Taijiquan. Few people understand them properly. The movements are done with Qi-supported Jin which allows the power to be either soft or hard.*<sup>20</sup>

Now comes the moment of truth. Some readers will continue reading without pausing for contemplation, and they will miss the opportunity to understand.

Other readers will take this opportunity to *know* what Dr. Yang means by asking themselves: *I know that Qi is bioelectricity, but how does Qi "support" Jin (martial power), and why does Dr. Yang choose the word "support" in order to explain the relationship of Qi to Jin?* We can stare at each period until questions like these arise in our minds. I ask myself, *What is it about these four special movements that makes them ideal for applying Qi-supported Jin?*

Serious martial artists strive to understand. In that passage above, it is also mentioned that, "Few people understand [the movements] properly." How is it that few people understand when the principles have been so thoroughly

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<sup>19</sup> In Dr. Yang's *Tai Chi Secrets of the Ancient Masters: Selected Readings with Commentary*. Boston, YMAA, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

expounded in the writings of the ancient masters? Why do people fail to understand? Surely, it is because they do not practice reading meditation. We can know Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming and the other great masters through literature if we meet them at their profound states of mind.

### **Conclusion**

We can't talk about it. To talk about it is to mess it up; that's what the first verse of the Book says about the Dao. It's true, too, because what's going on here cannot be codified into symbols. Words are just symbols, subject to various interpretations, but the reality to which the *Dao De Jing* alludes is like something subtle that underlies every moment. It is the fundamental formula, the natural way in which things unfold, and when we try to talk about it we cannot do it justice. We cannot talk about it, but we can follow it. We can say "Yes," to it, and we learn from the trial and error of the great Qigong writers, ancient and modern.

Yes, those who seek enlightenment should study the principles that have been uncovered by Daoists - the meridian system that has been mapped out by Chinese medicine, the best ways to reach profound relaxation, the pitfalls to avoid, and so on. Daoism gives us an active approach. Why be passive about something so important? Practitioners may have inadvertently achieved enlightenment without learning Qigong, in the same way that practitioners have inadvertently maintained health through meditation without learning Qigong, but with Qigong we can use a systematic approach. We can use the maps and

path notes that have been left by previous masters as we meditate to “reach the other shore.”

Meditation is such a powerful practice that we can think we are doing it right even before we learn the important principles taught by Dr. Yang. For years, I did not know what I was missing by overlooking Daoist longevity and enlightenment literature. Now that I have started to benefit from these teachings, I am compelled to write this paper for the benefit of practitioners who, like me, practiced for a long time without knowing what they were missing!

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Chinese medicine uses Qigong exercises to maintain health, prevent illness, and extend longevity because it is a powerful tool for maintaining and restoring harmony to the Organ Systems, Essential Substances, and Channels. Qigong is also used for non-medical purposes, such as for fighting and for pursuing enlightenment. Qigong is truly a system for a lifetime. That's why so many people over age sixty in China practice Qigong and Tai Chi. The effects may be powerful, but the routines themselves are usually gentle. Practitioners learn to master the intricate manipulation of Qi—infusing the Eight Extraordinary Channels with Qi, and then guiding the Qi energy through the Channels to the bone marrow to cleanse and energize it.