

How to concentrate the mind during practice?

We should focus on practicing, put everything aside, and “replace all thoughts with only one thought”. Over time, we can naturally concentrate

our thoughts. Many methods can help us calm down and eliminate the distracting thoughts. Common methods include counting breath, contemplation, concentrated meditation, reasoning, understanding the mind, expiration and inspiration, imagination, Daoyin and post standing (zhan zhuang)

Why do many people think that material and science are more and more advanced, while human innate functions are more and more degraded?

This is because the development of material and science is closely related

to the use of human acquired functions, and human innate functions are set aside,

thus leading to degradation of human innate functions. Science, technology and

civilization are mainly adopted to explore the laws of all things in the universe. Even

if the research object is the spiritual field, the researcher can only study the part

related to material through his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind, and with the

help of instruments. In traditional terms, this part is named “shi shen (shi-acquired

spirit)”. Qigong exercise is to know ourselves and recognize the nature of life. And

this nature is beyond material, beyond time and space, and even beyond spirit.

After we enter the state of meditation when practice qigong, we must set aside the use of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind, that is, set aside the acquired use and enter the congenital state, constantly sublimate and deepen until we know the nature of life. In traditional terms, it is to explore the "yuan shen (yuan-primordial spirit)". From the perspective of methodology, adopting the ideas and methods of studying the acquired material world to study human innate nature is a "contradiction". At least at this stage, the research directions and means of the two are opposite. If we want the innate functions not to degenerate, we should often use them, which means setting the acquired functions aside. Since the innate and acquired functions cannot work at the same time, we have to make a choice. Therefore, some people hold that material and science are more and more advanced, while human innate functions are more and more degraded.

We may be able to solve this problem in the future. Then we can give play to both human innate and acquired functions, and thus they can jointly promote the exploration of material and spiritual fields.

Why do we encounter terrible scenes sometimes when we enter the state of meditation? What should we do?

We do not have to be nervous and escape when we encounter terrible scenes in meditation. We can get rid of them by imagining beautiful scenery or noble holy images. At the beginning, we may be unable to imagine such images or the images are not clear. With the deepening of practice and the improvement of cultivation, these images will become clearer and easier to observe. We will also have a strong sense of qi to help us overcome the terrible scenes. We need to know that the terrible scenes in meditation come from our own mind and slowly emerge in the shallow layer of thought. The fear and stress hidden in our mind are not perceived in daily life, but they are very easy to emerge when we are under a deeply quiet state. The fundamental way to eradicate the terrible scenes is to find out the hidden fear and stress in our daily life and get rid of them. Then the brightness of our mind will naturally appear, and the fear in meditation will completely disappear. If we often encounter terrible scenes in the qigong state, we should remember this proverb: "Terrible scenes come from our own mind where we can eliminate them."

We often hear that practicing qigong can lead to “zou huo ru mo (uncontrollable internal fire and being possessed)”. What are the specific manifestations of this situation? Does the qigong deviation of beginners fall under “zou huo (uncontrollable internal fire)” or “ru mo (being possessed)”? What are the differences between them? How can we stay away from this situation and how to deal with it?

“Uncontrollable internal fire and being possessed” mainly refer to mental disturbances and abnormal psychological reactions resulted from qigong practice. Actually, “uncontrollable internal fire” and “being possessed” are two different situations. Generally speaking, beginners will not experience the situations since they can only occur in the advanced stage. In the traditional terms of qigong Neidan school, “uncontrollable internal fire” means that when the inner alchemy is about to be finished, the zhen-genuine qi suddenly scatters and the pathogenic qi gets grand and uncontrollable. Then the practitioner’s mind gradually loses control. The fire becomes more and more intense, burning the internal alchemy. Consequently, all the previous efforts are in vain. “Being possessed” is more severe. It means that terrible scenes present in the qigong state, and the practitioner loses his mind in the abnormal state and becomes insane. Beginners will not experience the situations of “uncontrollable internal fire and being possessed”. Even if they feel uncomfortable

when or after
practicing qigong, it is mostly the physiological reaction towards qi
adjustment in the body.

If we enter the advanced stage of cultivating internal alchemy and go
into
the dangerous situations, we must immediately tell the teacher and let
the teacher
help us get rid of them.

What is wu huo (strong fire)? What is wen huo (mild fire)? Some
people think that using too much strong fire will exhaust the yuan
primordial qi of the body. Is it true? Why cannot we see these two
terms
in Buddhism?
The term “qigong” was put forward in the 1950s. It collects all the
methods about self-cultivation and dual cultivation of both inherent
nature and
life endowment in various schools in ancient China, including Daoyin,
Tuna,
qi refining, meditation and inward contemplation. In the late 1980s,
qigong
gradually went abroad and influenced the people in that era, becoming
a symbol of that era. Since the contents of qigong are complicated, it is
difficult to give a
standardized and accurate definition to “qigong”. Traditionally, the
cultivation

of qigong involves both Taoist and Buddhist contents, as well as the cultivation methods in the schools of Martial Arts and Doctor. In ancient China, these different schools had their own cultivation systems and purposes that were not necessarily compatible with each other. Although after the Ming (1368—1644) and Qing (1636—1912) Dynasties, the culture of traditional Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism got more integrated, there were still great differences in their academic systems, cultivation methods and terminologies.

Strong fire and mild fire are cultivation terms for Daoist Neidan school. The Neidan school, originated from the Waidan school, borrows many cultivation terms of Waidan sect. For example, martial fire and civil fire originally refer to the degree of fire in the process of refining pills. In the cultivation system of Daoist Neidan school, they are related to the breath and mind in practicing qigong. Mild fire refers to gentle persistent breathing while strong fire refers to fortified intention and breathing. During the cultivation of internal alchemy, the breath and mind often change with the cultivation state. We should use them flexibly under the guidance of the teacher. Many tips cannot be known by beginners in advance, otherwise it may hinder the deepening of their current practice. In addition, when refining external pills, alchemists should not blindly burn tripod stove with “strong fire”, otherwise it will be counterproductive. The same is true for practicing qigong.

As for why Buddhists do not use strong fire and mild fire, it is easy to understand after we know the evolution history of the two terms. Unlike Taoists, Buddhists neither pursue immortality nor take pills. They have their own cultivation methods and terminologies.

What age is the most suitable for practicing qigong? Is the practice time directly proportional to the practice level? The process of practicing qigong is to go deep into the nature of life, and there is no age limit for practicing qigong. However, people of different ages have their own physiological features in qigong practice. Adolescents have more vigorous energy, less innate function degradation, and are more likely to enter the qigong state, but they are easy to be confused by all kinds of phantoms. Middle aged people have the best energy and mental conditions, but they are busy with life and career and have no time to practice. Although the elderly people have enough time, urgent health needs and rich life experience, and are not

easily
confused by illusions, their essence, qi and spirit have declined greatly.

Therefore, from the perspective of health and health preservation needs,
the elderly and sub-healthy people are most likely to accept qigong.
From the
perspective of life energy, the earlier we start practicing qigong, the
easier it is to
go deep into life.

The practice level is not absolutely proportional to the practice time
but
to the quality of qigong state. If we practice for a long time, but cannot
enter the “qigong state”, it is not the real qigong and can only be
regarded as the
preparation of qigong.

How to measure the level of qigong cultivation?

After learning and practicing qigong, our understanding towards qigong will experience a gradually deepening process. This process is reflected in the beginner's level of understanding and cultivation, which is traditionally called "theory practice" and "dao practice". Low level means that the beginner's understanding towards qigong is mainly focused on the body and form. They are not clear how to go on practicing qigong in the future and need the guidance of teachers. Their dao practice mainly concentrates on the level of "body" and "qi". To sum up in one sentence is that their cultivation mainly focuses on "existence"

High level means that our understanding towards qigong begins to break away from the physical constraints, gradually enters the mental level, and the dao practice gradually concentrates on the "spirit". To sum up in one sentence is that the cultivation gradually focuses on "nonexistence".

Those with a high level of qigong generally have great "morality" at the same time. If a person with low "morality" claims that he has achieved a high level of "Dao", he must be deceiving himself and others. Since immoral people cannot enter the advanced state of mind and nature, they cannot enter the advanced state of qigong definitely.

Are the legends true that Bodhidharma (the founder of Chinese Zen) “crossed the river by a reed” and Zhang Sanfeng (a famous Taoist in ancient China) lived from the Song Dynasty (960—1279) to the Ming Dynasty (1368—1644)?

These historical legends and stories have nothing to do with real qigong practice. The nature of qigong is to cultivate the “inherent nature” and practice the “life endowment”. The exercise of “mind” and “body” requires a lot of efforts, and the focus lies in our own “nature of mind”.

Legends are only legends after all. Qigong cultivation is a practical process that needs to be explored and tested step by step with body and mind.

Do sensitive people really exist in our daily life? How to explain their sensitivity?
People with particularly sensitive conditions of qi-channels and meridians do exist in our daily life. They, with these physiological features, are more sensitive, or are particularly sensitive to certain aspects of information, such as qi movements, meridians and intuition. It is easier for them to experience the feeling of “obtaining qi” when they practice qigong, and thus they are admired by some insensitive practitioners. However, from the perspective of qigong, these innate conditions are not the key to learn qigong well. Sensitive people also have their own troubles. They are often inexplicably disturbed by the surrounding environment and the energy of qi field, but they can do nothing

The difference in the sensitivity of qi-channels is a natural physiological phenomenon and the innate endowment, as everyone's language talent and IQ are different. We live in a relative world where only difference is always absolute. However, this difference is not the decisive factor for learning qigong well, just as language talent is not the fundamental reason for learning a foreign language well. In essence, qigong is a method of physical and mental cultivation to constantly understand and surpass ourselves. The place where it needs us to make great efforts is our own mind, and the feeling towards "qi" is a useful by product of this process. Even if the objective condition of qi-channels is not sensitive, as long as we can recognize the nature of qigong and make great efforts on our mind, we will gradually break through the limitations of qi-channels, improve in the three dimensions of essence, qi and spirit, and become more and more sensitive.

The gradual maturity of mental cultivation is also reflected in the ability to handle all kinds of disturbance caused by the improvement of sensitivity, especially the interferences of negative emotion, negative energy and negative qi field. Qigong keeps our mind alert and not confused, and also keeps our nature tranquil and brilliant. Therefore, we can not only maintain a high degree of sensitivity in our mind, but also gradually produce the wisdom to control the sensitivity.

When we see or approach someone with low back pain, we also feel low back pain (we do not know he is suffering from low back pain in advance). Is it also a kind of “qi” communication? With the deepening of qigong exercise, we will become more and more sensitive in both body and mind, and be able to perceive the subtle changes of various qi movements and qi fields. This ability is an innate ability of life, and everyone is endowed with it. Perhaps some people are inherently sensitive and can show this ability without exercise, while others need repeated training to gradually restore this ability. When we see or approach someone with low back pain, we also experience inexplicable low back pain. After we stay away from or forget this person, our low back pain disappears inexplicably. This is because our sensory system captures some signal or energy field, such as the strong message of low back pain. If the sensory system cannot capture this signal, it does not mean that the message does not exist or that the message has no impact on you, but that you do not perceive it. In fact, there are many and extensive information, magnetic fields and energy fields in our daily life. For example, various electromagnetic fields, Wi-Fi signal fields and biological magnetic fields exist around us all the time, but they are not directly captured by our sensory system. We can find them only with the help of instruments or equipment. So does the qi field of disease.

We gradually restore some of the original abilities endowed by life through qigong exercise, and we can sense, identify, adopt or block the obtained information. Our body and mind gradually enter a “qi” level, opening a new dimension to our cognition.

How do ordinary people feel the existence of “qi”? How to experience “qi” in our daily life? “Qi” is a unique concept in traditional Chinese culture, and its application is extremely extensive. Macroscopically, all the celestial bodies in the sky and the infinite universe including the sun, moon and stars are the presentation of “qi”. From the intermediate perspective, form, spirit, things, feelings and all the lives are lives of “qi”. Microscopically, cells, viruses, genes and even dust are the interpretation of “qi”. The world of qi and the existence of qi are almost everywhere.

From the perspective of qigong practice, “qi” is the bridge between “form” and “spirit”. Form (essence), qi and spirit are the manifestations of life. “Essence” is the manifestation in the body, “spirit” is the manifestation in emotion, thought and spiritual field. As an intermediary, “qi” is between essence and spirit, with the feature of half essence and half spirit. Compared with the “form” and “spirit”, “qi” is invisible but perceptible. With the deepening of practice, we can understand the feature of qi. Essence, qi and spirit are a “unity” that is the natural manifestation of life in different dimensions. In other words, they can neither be completely separated nor fully integrated, and they are in such a state of “unity”.

Understanding the true state of essence, qi and spirit, we can change the cognitive habits of “form” and carefully observe, feel, experience and even adopt “qi” or “spirit”. Actually, the abilities to perceive and adopt “qi” or “spirit” are endowed by life when we were born. They are hidden in our body and mind, but we completely ignore their existence. Over time, we have completely forgotten that we are born with the ability to perceive “qi”, and have to restore our memory via qigong, meditation, yoga and other methods.

If ordinary people learn to change their perspectives, they will be able to observe the existence of “qi” and experience the world of “qi” in their daily life. Qi is everywhere—in all kinds of art, emotions, life experiences, self-cultivation or gentlemanly conduct. “Qi” itself is not mysterious. The reason why people feel it mysterious is that we never look at it from the perspective of “qi”. All the focus of our observation is on form and quality, and our cognitive ability is also bound by form and quality

Whether such feelings as soreness, numbness, heaviness and pain we experience in qigong practice are “qi” itself or not? Such feelings as soreness, numbness, heaviness and pain we experience in qigong practice are not “qi” itself. Qi will dredge naturally when its circulation is blocked, giving rise to such feelings. The ancients called the following eight feelings—restlessness, itching, buoyancy, heaviness, coldness, heat, roughness, and smoothness—in the process of practicing qigong as “eight physical sensations”, which was used to summarize all kinds of feelings during practice. The significance and value of these feelings are almost the same, indicating that “qi” is dredging the shallow channels and meridians. Actually, the presence of “eight physical sensations” during practice suggests that some qi-channels or meridians within the body are obstructed. If the qi-channels and meridians are unobstructed, we will not experience the eight physical sensations

during the
circulation of “qi”.

In addition, the eight physical sensations that constantly appear during practice indicate that one’s cultivation of qigong is still in the primary stage, and the meridians-channels and qi-channels dredged by “qi” are relatively superficial because human physical sensations are difficult to reach the deep channels. When qi is really connected to the deep channels, our subjective perceptions are completely different from the “eight physical sensations”.

Can we feel the “qi” in others?
We can really feel the changes of “qi” in the surrounding environment and others. This perception ability is innate, or a potential ability. Many people with quiet nature often show this ability naturally. After training, people with sensitive to qi-channels can accurately recognize “qi”. Ordinary people also can feel a particularly good or poor qi field. The difference between these three

kinds of
people only lies in the degree of sensitivity. In fact, the so-called
supernatural
abilities of humans can be found everywhere in wild animals, for
example,
snakes, rats and birds that flee a few days before an earthquake, and
migratory
birds that migrate with the help of terrestrial magnetic field.
Therefore, the
question is not whether we can feel the “qi” in others but how we can
achieve it
and use this ability.

There is a law about the sensitivity of human abilities or potential. The
more ability is used, the more sensitive it becomes. The less ability is
used, the
more it fades. Through specific exercises, we will gradually activate the
original
sensitivity of the body, and then constantly polish, familiarize and use
the
sensitivity to understand the differences and features of various qi
movements
and qi fields until we can control them and exert some influence on
them.
Actually, “qi” is a very common physical feeling, and “qigong” is also a
very
common recovery exercise.

How does qigong treat diseases?

There are two forms for qigong to treat diseases. One is that the patient treats himself through practicing qigong, and the other is that the doctor treats the patient through qigong. The first is the mainstream and the root to eliminate diseases. The second is auxiliary and provides a convenient way to treat diseases. Both of them focus on dispelling pathogenic factors, strengthening healthy qi and regulating qi fields. The overall process of qigong treatment is about the struggle and transformation between healthy qi field and pathogenic qi field, which is always accompanied by waning and waxing of the two qi fields. Specifically, the first treatment form is to regulate the body and spirit, cultivate and supplement the healthy qi through self-exercise, and gradually achieve the purpose of supporting the healthy qi, dispelling the pathogenic factors and eliminating the disease field. Although the effect cannot appear swiftly, it can fundamentally change the power balance between healthy qi and pathogenic factors, and it is much easier to remove the root of the disease. The second treatment form refers to that the qigong doctor adjusts the patient's pathological qi field through qigong. The doctor's qigong field and the patient's pathogenic qi field gradually change the balance, and then the doctor's qigong field dominates the process. Thus, the healthy qi remains inside and pathogenic factors cannot invade the body. At this time, the qigong field of the doctor must be stronger than the pathogenic qi field of the patient to ensure the curative effect.

However, the second form completely depends on the qigong level of the qigong doctor, which does not give play to the patient's subjective initiative, and is difficult to touch the patient's mind and the root cause of the disease. Moreover, the high-level qigong doctors can only be found by accident, and not through seeking in our daily life so that this therapy can only be an auxiliary treatment

When qigong is practiced properly or treats diseases effectively, does it affect the mood firstly or the body? This question is very interesting and representative, and reflects that many qigong fans still stick to the original thinking mode. First of all, life is a trinity of form, qi and spirit. In other words, the manifestations of life are multidimensional. In modern terms, it means that the material body, qi field life and nihilistic spirit exist at the same time. The three not only have their own

systems but also interact with each other. Among them, it is easy to understand the dimension of material body, and we can see it intuitively. The material body is deeply studied by modern medicine, and is considered to be the most scientific level of life. Although the material body is extremely important, it is not the whole of life, because life is not just a material machine. Just as the study of physics stepped from Newtonian mechanics to quantum mechanics, with the deepening of research on tangible materials, medical science is opening a new dimension of life. Qi field life, or “qi”, is the understanding and summary towards another dimension of life in ancient Chinese culture. “Qi” is an existence between material and spirit. It is a form of life that interacts with “form” and “spirit”.

As for this question, actually, it affects qi firstly when qigong is practiced properly. Since “qi” is between body and spirit, the adjustment of “qi” will indirectly promote the recovery of tangible body and intangible spirit. Qigong exercise is a process of “unity of three regulations”. Body regulation, breath regulation and mind regulation occur at the same time. The effect of qigong on regulating the mind will be directly reflected in the improvement of mood, and then further reflected in the changes of “qi” and “spirit”.

Is qigong also a type of cultivation?

The name of qigong was first put forward by Mr. Liu Guizhen (1902—1983)

in the 1950s and was widely accepted and used by the public at that time.

Before that, the connotations of “qigong” were scattered in traditional Chinese

culture, including bu qi (emission of qi), lian qi (qi refining), xing ming (inherent

nature and life endowment), dao yin (guiding & stretching), zhan zhuang (post

standing), tu na (inhalation and exhalation), nei guan (internal contemplation),

nei dan (internal alchemy), jin dan (gold alchemy), chan ding (Concentrated

Meditation) and ru ding (Entering Meditation). Since the mainstreams of

traditional Chinese culture are Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, many

contents of them are taken in by qigong. This inevitably leads to the diversity of

the qigong connotation and gives birth to the “qigong” today. Qigong includes

fitness, health preservation, Taoist alchemy, and even deception and religious

heresy. Therefore, when we practice qigong, we should take the essence and

remove the dross.

In terms of the historical inheritance, composition and main academic ideas of modern “qigong”, qigong does demonstrate the cultural inheritance of health preservation and cultivation, and contains very important cultural value and practical significance. Therefore, we can say that qigong is a culture of cultivation.

There are reinforcing method and reducing method in qigong practice. How to judge which is suitable for us? Different designs of qigong do have different considerations. Some methods are designed simply to relieve some symptoms suffered by qigong practitioners, some are to improve the comprehensive quality of the body, and some directly points to the “mind”. There are reinforcing method and reducing method in qigong practice. In addition, there are differences between reinforcing method and reducing method when different techniques are adopted in the

same qigong method, for example, six healing sounds and relaxation training. Therefore, it is difficult for beginners to distinguish the subtle differences between them so that judging which one is suitable for themselves often needs the guidance of people with experience or qigong teachers

Some cultivation methods cover different dimensions and stages of essence, qi and spirit. Generally speaking, this kind of traditional cultivation methods has been tested by countless predecessors. They are much safer and more effective, and worth recommending to qigong beginners.

Do we need to abstain from eating meat and restrain our desires after practicing qigong? Qigong is a physical and mental exercise that integrates body regulation, breath regulation and mind regulation. Generally speaking, qigong mostly starts from Daoyin to regulate the body, gradually integrates breath regulation and heart regulation, and finally reaches the “qigong state” with “unity of three regulations”. Some qigong methods try to enter the “qigong state” directly from breath regulation or mind regulation. The quality and effect of practice are directly related to the length and depth of physical and mental immersion in “qigong state”. The longer and deeper the time is, the more significant

the effect
of practice will be. The practice without entering the “qigong state”
can only be
regarded as the preparatory stage of qigong.

Thus, we find that practicing qigong is not directly related to abstain
from
eating meat or restrain our desires. The key of qigong exercise lies in
whether
we can enter the qigong state. However, if the behaviors and habits in
our daily
life hinder us from entering the qigong state, we do need to adjust or
correct
them. Strong desires and unhealthy living habits will seriously impair
our mind
and nature, which is not conducive to qigong practice. Therefore,
many methods
have been handed down since ancient times to assist in the qigong
practice, such
as controlling desires. These methods, which help us calm the mind
and enter the
qigong state when we practice qigong, are naturally affirmed and even
constantly
emphasized in our daily life.

To sum up, practicing qigong is closely related to mind and qigong
state,
but has nothing to do with abstaining from eating meat and restraining
our
desires. If these things, however, are helpful in practicing qigong,
definitely we
should do it

How to distinguish between real qigong and deception?

For beginners, it is really difficult to distinguish between real qigong and deception. Real qigong lies not in its appearance, but in its connotation.

Qigong is a kind of technical method in traditional Chinese culture to guide people to know themselves, body and mind. Although there are many

traditional qigong schools and different cultivation methods, they are all

related to “dao”. Real qigong is to enhance our wisdom and strengthen our lives. Through the exercise and cultivation of essence, qi and spirit, qigong allows us to understand the nature of ourselves, put down all mental

attachments, and make the life energy operate more naturally and smoothly.

Therefore, qigong is a technique adopted by ancient Chinese to know themselves, exercise their body and mind and stimulate their wisdom.

It is by

no means a tool to fool and cheat others.

To distinguish between real qigong and deception, the first thing is to identify who is introducing qigong with what purposes. Swindlers always go

after their own interests, such as money, reputation and social status.

Deception

cannot improve our wisdom but can only make us lose ourselves, while real

qigong makes us more intelligent. Teachers of real qigong never want to get any

benefits from us, but want us to know ourselves and recover the nature of life

through qigong exercise.

Therefore, if we do not have the ability to identify real qigong and deception, we can first identify the motivation. After all, there is always a huge difference between true and false.

When it comes to qigong, the craze for qigong in the 1980s comes into our mind. How should we think of this craze? There were two crazes for qigong in the 20th century, one in the 1950s and the other in the 1980s. The craze in the 1980s was resulted from the social background at that time. After the Cultural Revolution (1966 — 1976), people began to experience ideological emancipation, and all their suppressed thoughts and demands appeared overwhelmingly. Objectively speaking, the craze at that time was far beyond the scope of physical and mental exercise but more like a sociological and anthropological phenomenon.

Through the mysterious medium of “qigong”, people from all walks of life expressed their suppressed demands, such as to pursue physical health, to alleviate mental depression, to release the demand for religion, to go after fame and wealth, etc. The craze in the 1980s should be viewed in the specific background of that era, and thus it cannot be simply classified as the “craze for qigong”. Real qigong has only been pursued by minority group since ancient times.

Why do some cultivation sects advocate san mai qi lun (three channels and seven connections) and some advocate the two meridians of Ren and Du? Is it caused by the differences of cultivation methods in different sects or the differences of qigong practitioners? Traditional qigong schools do advocate different meridian systems, such as the three channels and seven connections in the esoteric sect, the twenty-four great meridians in Taoism, and the twelve regular meridians and eight extraordinary meridians in traditional Chinese medicine. Safely speaking, these different meridian systems in different schools serve their respective purposes and systems. The system of twelve regular meridians and eight extraordinary meridians is a meridian system summarized for human physiological functions. It mainly serves medical treatment in clinical settings, concerning the transformation of qi movements between physiology and pathology. The three channels and seven connections as well as the twenty-four great meridians are important parts of the cultivation system of the esoteric sect and Taoism, and they also serve their respective cultivation purposes.

If we do not practice qigong in the specific cultivation system of Buddhism and Taoism, we will not encounter the problems of qi-channels in the qigong state. Actually, this is the very problem of “state” in Taiji study—

All problems are problems only in specific states, and they are not problems without the corresponding states. Just like native English speakers, they do not need to learn Chinese or other languages unless they have special needs, which will not affect the communication between them. The differences of qi-channel theory between different cultivation systems also conform to the same truth.

Therefore, we should pay special attention to the differences of state in qigong learning, otherwise it is easy to confuse different fields or completely irrelevant things, which will cause trouble for ourselves.

Is qigong a kind of qigong function that imitates the laws of nature, then abstracts them into symbols and concepts, and further realizes the concepts? Is this the mechanism of qigong?

Qigong is a general term involving all the physical and mental practice techniques. Through these techniques, Chinese people in ancient times knew themselves and the nature of life, and gradually achieved the “unity of all things” and “unity of heaven and man”. Qigong has strong operability and it is summarized step by step from practice. Since the practice process is always accompanied by the continuous change of qi movements and the continuous questioning towards ourselves, towards our cognition and life, qigong helps us improve our health and wisdom in all the three dimensions of body, qi and spirit. We can go a long way from shallow to deep, from outside to inside, from body to mind.

The advanced state of qigong is not only completely different from the state of daily life, but also seems to be the same as the state of daily life. Of course, this is a common feeling of ancient practitioners. Predecessors have constantly summarized and refined from their practices, and gradually formed a relatively clear and systematic regular cognition, which is called “dao”. Many phenomena and laws we see in the state of qigong are often different from the experience in daily life. It is difficult to express them clearly in the terms we used in daily life. Therefore, abstract, philosophical and even symbolic expressions have been invented and more and more used in order to clarify the internal change process of body and mind

Body, qi and spirit are the three dimensions of life to express itself. As long as we can enter these dimensions and stay steadily in them, the corresponding features and laws will appear naturally. This is the inherent ability of life, and also the inherent potential of each individual. Qigong is the practice experience systematically summarized by predecessors. It will help later generations get out of self-solidification and self-closure to show their colorful lives.

Do we need to use our mental focus when practicing qigong?
How to use our mental focus?
We must encounter the problem of how to treat the mental focus when practicing qigong, which is also an important difference between Chinese qigong and other physical exercises. It is a common state that ordinary people have a lot of distracting thoughts in their mind. This is almost completely beyond the control of our subjective wills. Whether we need to think or not, thoughts will emerge involuntarily. Sometimes we are bothered by the messy thoughts and we even have to suppress them with another thought. Although thoughts may consume a lot of energy, few people can control their thoughts freely without

training

We need to enter a quiet state both physically and mentally when practicing qigong, which can reduce the unnecessary consumption of internal energy. Besides, qigong exercise needs to gather energy, and the body and mind need to accumulate energy to seek a breakthrough to a higher state. Therefore, we do not advocate the deliberate use of mental focus when practicing qigong, but hope to naturally expel those distracting thoughts

Some commonly used tips can help us reduce the distracting thoughts and improve the quality of practice, such as replacing ten thousand thoughts with one thought, and focusing on breathing. If we want to get rid of distracting thoughts fundamentally, we must understand the operation mechanism behind them. The ancients called this process “knowing the mind”. Only when we understand our own mind can we really stop the distracting thoughts.

What are the functions of mental focus in qigong exercise? Mental focus falls under the category of “regulating the mind” in the three regulations of qigong, and the purpose of “regulating the mind” is to restore

the purity and sensitivity of the mind and connect the “mind” directly with the “nature” behind it. Originally, this connection is a natural thing, because it is the natural state for life to demonstrate the ability of perception. Unconsciously, the “mind” lost itself and completely forgot this connection. Our “mind” is used to indulging in all kinds of things and being surrounded by all kinds of thoughts and desires so that we lost the capability to distinguish what is “mind” and what is “thought”. Regulating the mind is to recognize the true nature of “mind” and restore its original function. Then we know the general direction of “regulating the mind” in qigong exercise. As one of the products of the operation of “mind”, mental focus should be controlled by the “mind”, and the uncontrolled mind is a state of out of control. The nature of entering the qigong state is to treat the uncontrolled state of “mind” and restore the sensitivity and autonomy of “mind”. Therefore, fundamentally speaking, we cannot deliberately use thoughts when we enter the qigong state. We hope to restore the natural original state of “mind” and “nature”. What should we do if our “mind” cannot calm down during practice? Some methods, including contemplation, counting the breath and holding a thought, will help us. The adoption of these methods also involves thoughts. Mental focus can really play a role only after the “mind” calms down autonomously. They are always subordinate to the “mind”, and are the manifestation of the flexible use of the “mind”.

The relationship between “thoughts” and “mind” is like this proverb:
“If
your thoughts are controlled by your mind, you are a sage. If your
mind is
controlled by your thoughts, you are a mortal.”

Do we need to follow a master when practicing qigong?
Generally speaking, we need someone to guide us at the beginning.
The
person who can guide us to find the secret of cultivation and gradually
embark
on the right path of cultivation is our teacher. This teacher can be a
person with
practice experience, and can also be the experience left by
predecessors, such
as qigong classics and mnemonic formula of cultivation methods. As
long as
they can help us understand the nature of qigong and help us embark
on the path
of cultivation, they are our teachers. However, life is a very mysterious
natural
phenomenon in reality.

Each individual is the unique existence, and the problems encountered by each person during practice are different. Failure to solve these individualized problems will impair the practice. In this regard, the words and books left by our predecessors are difficult to solve all our problems. Therefore, we need a person as the teacher to guide us in time at the beginning of practicing qigong.

“Following a master to learn qigong” does not set great store by the specific forms, but by the sincere “teaching” and “learning” between teachers and apprentices.

Of course, nothing is absolute. Some people broke all the obstacles and achieved a lot through self-study. However, this is conditional. First of all, he must be talented and determined to be an outstanding qigong practitioner. His qi channels must be unobstructed. Then he has the opportunity to access the secrets for cultivation and follows the secrets. It is easy to gain small achievements in qigong cultivation but very difficult to obtain remarkable achievements. It is related to the virtue and wisdom of the practitioner, and requires his knowledge and action to go hand in hand. Therefore, in order to avoid blind practice and detours for beginners, it is better to practice by following a master.

How to deal with the uneasy feelings of beginners in the qigong state?

After entering the state of meditation, our body and mind will gradually go into a special environment. We feel as if everything around us begins to become empty and ethereal, including ourselves. This is the qigong state. Feelings and perceptions in the qigong state are different from those in daily life. When beginners first enter the qigong state, they are inevitably nervous and confused because they do not know how to deal with it. In fact, this is very common, and just as the Chinese saying goes, “things seldom seen are strange”. We should treat everything in the qigong state with an ordinary mind and inaction. After leaving the state, we should often reflect on our feelings under the qigong state, ask ourselves “why do we have these feelings”, and understand “who I am” and “what the mind is”.

If we are not able to find the answers to these questions by ourselves, we should communicate with our classmates and teachers, repeatedly consult the classics, enlighten our wisdom and get rid of our subconscious mental attachments. This process of self-reflection and enlightenment is very important. It is not only conducive to stimulate the hidden wisdom, but also a method to open the meridians and mind. Everyone has three levels: body, qi and spirit. The three levels have their own channels and orifices that need to be dredged and penetrated repeatedly. Reflection and enlightenment are the key to continuously dredge and penetrate the channels and orifices between qi and mind. Deeply understanding the nature of life, we find that qigong leads us deep into the internal world, our mind gets more and more quiet, and our qigong cultivation is also improved

We may feel “qi” running within our body when we have practiced static qigong for a long time. How to deal with this situation? It is a normal condition that we may feel “qi” running within our body when we have practiced static qigong for a long time. Generally speaking, the feelings of restlessness, itching, buoyancy, heaviness, coldness, heat, roughness, and smoothness are the manifestations that qi movements gradually begin to dredge the orifices and channels after practice. We just need to stay calm with inaction and do not pay too much attention to the feelings of “qi”. If sometimes we feel that “qi” in our body is running around, and even induce some old or potential diseases, it is just the phenomenon of “fan bing (turning the hidden disease out)” in qigong exercise.

Fan bing” means that during the circulation, qi movements “turn over” some latent or chronic diseases for treatment, which is a phenomenon of qigong treatment. After the root of the disease is removed by qi, the discomfort disappears, and the underlying disease or old disease is also cured. Therefore, we do not need to be too nervous when the phenomenon of “fan bing” occurs, and what should we do is to continue practicing

If we feel uncomfortable physically and mentally because of wrong practice methods, we need to ask our teacher for advice. Each cultivation method of qigong is different in design. The key points of each cultivation method need the corresponding teacher to give detailed instructions

Does “sinking the breath to Dan Tian (elixir field)” mean centering the mind in Dan Tian or driving qi in the upper and middle jiao to Dan Tian through centering the mind? Or something else? The general public regard the lower abdomen below the navel as Dan Tian. During deep breathing, due to the decrease of diaphragm and the increase of internal pressure in the lower abdomen, the abdomen naturally protrudes outward, just like the inhaled air sinks to the lower abdomen, resulting in the term of “sinking the breath to Dan Tian”. Whether in abdominal breathing or reverse abdominal breathing, we will have the feeling of “sinking the breath to Dan Tian”, which is very common in martial arts, post standing, hard qigong,

singing and playing musical instruments. This term in qigong exercise, however, is different.

First of all, the term “Dan Tian” is from the Taoist school Dandingmen for internal alchemy. They burnt the amalgam of lead in an air-tight tripod stove to make elixirs. Qi produced during this process circulated within the tripod stove, and then condensed into “Dan (elixir)”. The place where this wandering “elixir” stopped and landed was called “Dan Tian”. Later, the disciples in Dandingmen metonymized the term Dan Tian into the cultivation of internal alchemical process, and called the place where the wandering inner elixir landed as “Dan Tian”. For example, if it falls on the lower abdomen, the lower abdomen is Dan Tian; If it falls in the palm, the palm is Dan Tian. Therefore, in the cultivation system of Taoist Dandingmen, the lower abdomen under the navel is not always called Dan Tian

Secondly, “sinking the breath to Dan Tian” does not mean to drive internal qi to gather in the lower abdomen through centering the mind. Directing the qi movements arbitrarily and leading qi through thoughts are not the right way to practice qi, and are very easy to cause all kinds of qi problems such as “qi disorder” and “qi penetrating”. “Sinking the breath to Dan Tian” refers to a naturally internal feeling generated in the process of correct breathing operation.

Finally, “sinking the breath to Dan Tian” does not mean “centering the mind in Dan Tian”. It is just an imagination that qi movements will converge at the lower abdomen Dan Tian by centering the mind in the lower abdomen. This method is easy to cause qi to move with the thoughts and remove to the body surface. Both qi practice and qigong cultivation are natural processes. We cannot practice arbitrarily.

How to grasp the relationship between “you wei (action)” and “wu wei (inaction)” in qigong practice? They correspond to each other. On the whole, with the deepening of qigong practice, the practice will transfer from “you wei (action)” to “wu wei (inaction)”. At the beginning of qigong practice, each of us must be in the state of “action”, because both mind practice and move imitation need “action”. On the contrary, in the process of practice, our body and mind are in the state of “inaction” compared with the state of daily life, or gradually enter the state of “inaction” from “action”.

Both static and dynamic qigong are such processes. Qigong leads our body and mind to inaction and nature. Further exploring, we will find an interesting phenomenon: “inaction” cannot be achieved by relying on “action” but can only be achieved naturally and spontaneously. Therefore, “inaction” emphasized in qigong is still “action”, or a relative “inaction”. “Action” has always been the preparation and prelude to “inaction”.

Even so, it is still very important to relax our body and mind and adjust our breathing in practice, because these “action” will make us close to the state of “inaction” and help us experience “inaction” and nature of life.

What is the relationship between body and mind when we reach the state of qigong? If it is the “unity of body and mind”, what are the specific manifestations of this “unity”?
First of all, qigong state is a broad concept. There are high, low, deep and shallow differences every time we enter the qigong state. The differences are always absolute while the consistency is relative. The state of qigong, especially the advanced state, is different because of the changes of subjective and objective conditions. That we feel almost the same things in the state of qigong every time we enter it is a manifestation of stable qigong practice. Secondly, even if we can reach a certain state of qigong steadily, this state will gradually be used to by us and become a new physical and mental bondage.

From a certain point of view, our study of qigong is a process to constantly break our physical and mental constraints and understand our lives. Definitely, the new constraints formed in qigong state also need to be broken constantly. With the deepening of qigong state, we constantly sublimate the "known" and enter the deeper "unknown". Moreover, the relationship between our body and mind gets more and more harmonious and unified. At the beginning, the unity of body and mind seems to be a strongly subjective feeling. Body and mind, as two aspects of the unity, will influence and restrict each other. That external physical changes can cause internal psychological fluctuations is easy to understand, while that mental state directly affects the physical health is difficult to be perceived. The exercise of the "unity of body and mind" can improve this sensitivity. The "mind" can act directly on the "body", just as the "body" can act directly on the "mind". It is in this particular state that the dominant relationship between the "body" and "mind" has reversed from the "body" to the "mind". Finally, the "unity" inspires us to understand our lives and ourselves again, and provides us with a new perspective and a new way to intervene in health from the perspective of "mind" and "qi

Starting from the integration of body and mind, qigong will lead us to continue to explore the mysteries of life. New feelings of the “unity” will continue to emerge, and the scope of integration will get larger, leading to “unity of knowledge and practice”, “unity of spirit and qi” and “unity of heaven and man”. With this sense of unity, our previous feelings of division, loneliness, conflicts and contradictions will disappear. Therefore, our lives will become more and more meaningful and it seems that we are immersed in endless blessing.

What is the relationship between qigong and Taoist Dandao?
“Qigong” is a modern term concerning traditional physical and mental cultivation technology and theory. Although the connotations and denotations of traditional cultivation are extremely extensive and cannot be simply summarized by the two Chinese characters “qi” and “gong”, “qigong” became popular across the country in the 1950s because of the book Practice of Qigong Therapy compiled by Mr. Liu Guizhen (1902 — 1983). For the first time, “qigong” was truly endowed with the lofty status of representing all the cultivation methods in ancient China, and was widely accepted by the public across the world in the 1980s. Strictly speaking, neither “qi” nor “gong” can represent the

whole content of physical and mental cultivation in ancient China. In our traditional culture, the connotations of all the cultivation methods were generally summarized as “xing ming (inherent nature and life endowment)”, and Taoist Dandao is also contained in this term.

Taoist Dandao, especially the Neidan school, is indeed a very important sect in the cultivation system of ancient China. Since the theories and methods of Dandao were different from other schools and Dandao was widely known because of its fame, after the Ming (1368—1644) and Qing (1636—1912) Dynasties, it was a must to mention the Neidan school when people talked about cultivation. The theories and methods of Neidan school have also been taken into modern qigong and become an important part of modern qigong. Modern “qigong” also contains various cultivation methods of other ancient schools, as well as many contemporary innovative theories and techniques.

Can we learn and practice the qigong described in ancient qigong literature by ourselves?

Ancient qigong literature is vast. There are a large number of documents

on qigong cultivation in Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and other schools of

thought, such as Dao Zang (Daoist Canon) and Fo Zang (Buddhist Canon), and

one cannot finish reading throughout his life. However, there are both insightful

contents and fallacies in these ancient books. Many ancient celebrities wrote a

large number of words in this regard because they were interested in cultivation

or just arty-crafty. They neither practiced qigong by following a master nor

tested their writings personally, only writing by their will and passing it on to

the latter generations. This kind of literature is beautiful in terms of writing, but

is not helpful to practice. If you are a qigong expert, you will not be deceived

by these beautiful words and the reputation of these books, or you are easy to

be misled by them. Therefore, if you want to learn by yourself, you should have

the wisdom to identify, or someone with practical experience as your guide.

Otherwise, this kind of ancient literature can only be used as a reference and

should not be blindly worshipped as a practical guide.

There are many classics in ancient qigong literature, some of which have long been famous across the world including Dao De Jing and Wu Zhen Pian (Essay on the Understanding of the Truth), and some of which are waiting for the opportunity to be known. These qigong classics, as guiding lights and a kind of cultural heritage, are worthy of our comprehensive study to achieve mastery and will guide the latter generations to explore the secret of life.

Are there any contraindications in practicing qigong or for women during period? There are corresponding precautions, requirements and even contraindications before and during qigong practice in all cultivation sects. This is related to the overall design and features in different stages of the qigong methods, and also related to individual conditions. Thus, we cannot make

sweeping generalizations. Commonly, qigong practice proceeds in an orderly way, and during the process, it requires quietness, relaxation, combination of movement and stillness, attention to practice and nourishment, unity of three regulations, etc. Contraindications for qigong exercise include some mental diseases, acute attacks of chronic diseases and infectious diseases. There are also some protective measures for females before parturition such as stopping practice, but no contraindication for qigong exercise for women during normal period.

What is fan bing (turning the hidden disease out)? When will this condition appear? How do we differentiate fan bing from the occurring of disease?
Turning the hidden disease out is a normal condition in qigong practice. A certain amount of “qi” energy will gradually accumulate in the body through qigong practice, and the accumulated “qi” will flow to dredge and impact those obstructed qi-channels and lesions, which is the so-called “qi chong bing zao (qi breaks the lesions)”. It will be easier for us to understand this condition if the obstructed position is located in the area where we usually feel painful, but if the obstructed position is hidden and imperceptible, this condition

seems to be a disease caused by practicing qigong. Actually, “turning the hidden disease out” is a process in which “qi” pushes out the hidden and latent lesions within the body and then treats them.

Generally speaking, fan bing is an early manifestation of effective practice, which is relatively common. This condition will not appear if you are healthy without any latent and hidden diseases. If you have such diseases, whether you know them or not, “qi” will automatically find these lesions and treat them. The more severe the hidden disease is, the more severe this condition will be until the disease is cured. It is easy to differentiate fan bing from the occurring of disease because the former is a process of treatment while the latter is a process of occurring of disease. With the repeat of fan bing, the disease symptoms will be relieved, our own feelings will be improved, and our body and mind will be more and more relaxed. While the repeat of the occurring of disease will aggravate the disease, and there is rarely the case of self-healing immediately after the onset of the disease.

Are there any limitations for qigong to treat diseases?

Definitely. Everything should be treated dialectically. Qigong therapy boasts its own strengths but also has limitations. Generally speaking, its strength

lies in the variability and pervasiveness of “qi”, which can penetrate into both

the tangible zang-fu organs and invisible mind-spirit, and can make up for the

limitations of material therapy. Its limitation is that “qi” is unfixed, and thus it is

difficult for ordinary people to gather qi to attack diseases.

Whether qigong therapy is effective or not depends on whether we can gather

the “healthy qi” to defeat the disease we contract, and whether we can keep our

body and mind in the state without “I myself”. Being in the cultivation state without

“I myself” is crucial for gathering the healthy qi to defeat the pathogenic qi. Just as

the Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor’s Internal Classic) observed,

“Keeping the

mind free from avarice, in this way Zhen-genuine qi in the body will be in harmony,

essence-spirit will remain inside and diseases will have no way to occur.”

Generally speaking, it is difficult for beginners to enter the state of meditation and cultivation, and for them, practicing qigong can treat some functional diseases and chronic diseases. For those skilled practitioners, qigong can also treat many organic diseases, difficult diseases, and even acute diseases.

Do patients still need medical treatment after practicing qigong? Definitely. Our physical conditions, living environment, practice quality, ability to resist diseases are greatly different. Practicing qigong can neither cure all diseases nor protect us from all diseases. On the whole, disease is a very complex physical reaction process and also a natural phenomenon of life. Birth, senility, illness and death are the natural laws. Even if qigong exercise is indeed conducive to health and health preservation, we should not blindly reject medical treatment.

Is the obstruction of qi-channels a disease?

The “obstruction of qi and blood” in traditional Chinese medicine is different from the “obstruction of qi-channels” in qigong. The former talks about

“no obstruction” and “obstruction” at the physiological level. “No obstruction”

is the physiological basis of health, while “obstruction” is a pathological change.

Therefore, the “obstruction of qi and blood” in traditional Chinese medicine is

a disease. The latter talks about “obstruction” and “without obstruction” from

the perspective of cultivation. The condition of qi-channels, especially whether

the essential internal channels are unobstructed or not, is crucial for entering

a higher state of qigong. Poor conditions of the internal channels are just not

conducive to going deep into the state of qigong. In qigong terms, it means that

the “foundation (talent)” for practicing qigong is not good enough.

Therefore, the

“obstruction of qi-channels” in qigong is not a disease.

In addition, the “obstruction” and “without obstruction” of each person’s qi-channel conditions are relative, and constantly change with the subjective and objective conditions. After a period of time, the original “unobstructed” qi channels may become “obstructed”, or the original “obstructed” qi-channels may become “unobstructed”. Many factors in the acquired period, including qigong practice, are responsible for changes in the qi-channel conditions.

How to protect ourselves from the external pathogenic factors after the opening of orifices?
With the deepening of qigong, the orifices inside the body will be opened gradually and the internal channels will be gradually dredged. Then the sensitivity of the body will be further improved. The body begins to perceive some previously imperceptible information from some completely unknown areas. This kind of information will inspire us to further explore the body,

ourselves, life, existence and the unknown world. Perhaps the things we think we are familiar with are not just as we know, and they may contain richer and deeper connotations. Why is it that what exists in the state of qigong is not real at all or even does not exist in the real world? If you are a serious person, you will have more and more such kind of questions that will push you to think independently with your own dao practice experience until you find a satisfactory answer.

This process of exploration is called “wu (enlightenment)”, that is, to constantly understand the self and the mystery of life. Qigong learning will transition from simple practice at the beginning to the stage of both “practice” and “enlightenment”. The process of “enlightenment” is dominated by independent research, often accompanied by classic reading, interpretation from teachers, communication and inspiration. If the focus at the practice stage is on “qi” and “ming (life endowment)”, the focus at the enlightenment stage is on “spirit” and “xing (inherent nature)”. They constitute “spirit-qi” or “xing ming” that is what the ancients called the theory of xing ming

From the perspective of “qi”, after some internal orifices are opened, the body’s feeling towards the qi field and qi movements in the surrounding environment will become more and more acute. With the improvement of sensitivity, the innate nature of “seeking healthy qi and avoiding pathogenic factors” will reveal clearly. Our nature will feel uncomfortable and thus naturally avoid those places with heavy pathogenic qi but go to places with healthy qi field. Therefore, after the sensitivity is improved, life will naturally know how to protect itself and how to go after profit and avoid harm. All these, however, can only be perceived by ourselves.

From the perspective of “enlightenment”, with the improvement of the enlightenment, we understand that “everything must be discussed in a specific state and under a certain standard”. When the state and standard change, the connotation of the concept will also change. The law in the state of “unity of body and mind” is different from that in the state of “separation of body and mind”, because the mind plays a decisive role in the state of “unity”. The key to avoid the invasion of external pathogenic factors lies in that the “mind” is not disturbed by the pathogenic qi field. If the mind is able to be alert and away from the external pathogenic factors all the time, qi will not easily contract the external pathogenic factors or be haunted by them.

Over time, the qi movements of the body will change gradually, and the health status will change correspondingly. This happens with the improvement of our qigong cultivation and wisdom. It is a natural process.

How to clearly explain the three terms “essence, qi and spirit”? What is the relationship between them? And what is the relationship between qigong and them?

In short, essence, qi and spirit are the three levels or three dimensions of life described in traditional Chinese culture. We can understand and grasp life from the three dimensions: essence, qi and spirit. Relatively speaking, “essence” is more concrete among the three, and is close to substance. “Qi” is vague and is close to gaseous state. “Spirit” is abstract and invisible, and is close to emptiness. essence, qi and spirit coexist and cannot be separated. The nature of life is the “unity” of essence, qi and spirit. We separate essence, qi and spirit in three dimensions in order to clarify the key points. “Essence, qi and spirit” are three dimensions to describe each living individual by the ancient Chinese people, and they are the expressions of life. Therefore, we find out the nature of life by clarifying essence, qi and mind, and we cultivate life by cultivating essence, qi and spirit.

Then we can easily understand the value of the theory of essence, qi and mind, we are not confused by their name and appearance, and we can better understand various hypotheses and theoretical models of life in modern science, so that both ancient and modern theories can help us understand the nature of life.

Now let's talk about the relationship between qigong exercise and essence, qi and spirit. Based on the three dimensions of essence, qi and spirit, qigong contains the theory and method for self-exercise and understanding the truth of life.

The greatest value of traditional qigong exercise lies in that it has been improved by predecessors and thus the later generations can avoid many potential risks in exercise. When practicing qigong, predecessors entered the "qi stage" from the "essence stage", entered the "spirit stage" from the "qi stage", entered the "emptiness stage" from the "spirit stage", and then further went into the stage of "great dao". They helped us point out the direction of exercise and eliminate potential dangers, but the road of practicing qigong still needs us to walk on personally.

What is the difference between the practice of "xing-body" in the primary stage of qigong and that in the ordinary body building exercise?

The practice of “xing-body” in the primary stage of qigong is very different from that in the ordinary body building exercise. Although both seem to do body exercises, the purpose and method are different. Generally speaking, qigong exercise aims at the spiritual world, and the practice of “xing-body” in the primary stage is the basis for entering the spiritual world in the future. While ordinary body building exercise only aims to practice the body and hardly involves the spiritual world.

In terms of exercise methods, qigong emphasizes the exercise under the “unity of three regulations” and the state of qigong. While ordinary body building exercise, mainly practiced under the state of daily life, does not require “unity of three regulations” or the state of meditation. Therefore, their final exercise effects are various. The effect of qigong will transfer to qi and spirit from the body, which is manifested in the three fields. While ordinary body building exercise focuses on the body and indirectly involves the level of qi and spirit

What are the important roles of the preparatory exercise and the ending exercise?
Since qigong should be practiced under the “qigong state”, the preparatory exercise before the formal exercise is of great significance. Without a good preparatory exercise, it is difficult for our physical and mental states to quickly transfer from the daily life mode to the exercise mode with the unity

of three regulations. If we do not achieve the unity of three regulations, we will fail to enter the “qigong state” and thus fail to realize the effect of qigong exercise. Some students have practiced qigong for a long time but cannot enter the “qigong state”. This is because they do not pay attention to the physical and mental relaxation in the preparatory stage or the “unity of body and mind” during formal exercise.

Understanding this feature of qigong exercise, we can understand the importance of the ending exercise. At this stage, we gradually return from the “qigong state” to the daily life state, in which, without the “unity of body and mind”, the body, breath and mind will perform their respective duties. Here we explain “qigong state” and “daily life state” separately in order to emphasize the difference between them. If you are a skilled qigong practitioner, you are capable to organically integrate the “qigong state” with the “daily life state”, and thus the preparatory exercise and ending exercise are naturally integrated into daily life. When practicing qigong, you do not need to deliberately separate qigong state and daily life state.

Should we take the time and direction into consideration when practicing qigong? When do we need to pay attention to them? Generally speaking, beginners do not need to emphasize the time and direction when practicing qigong. The focus is whether you can keep practicing qigong every day. Fixed time and direction, such as practicing qigong in the face of the sun every morning, is mainly a psychological hint to build confidence and perseverance.

Since beginners cannot form the qi field in their early stage of practice, they do not possess their own time and direction. When they practice qigong to a certain extent, their body and mind will form an increasingly obvious qi field effect, and thus they possess their own direction, waning and waxing of qi field.

At this time, practicing qigong at the proper time and direction will yield double the result with half the effort. The proper time is not necessarily midnight and noon, but it must be the time when the qi of heaven and earth rises and grows.

The appropriate direction is not necessarily facing south and back to north, but often the direction in which their own qi field is consistent with that of heaven and earth.

To sum up, the time and direction are taken into consideration in the middle and advanced stages of practice. The purpose is to connect the great qi field of heaven and earth. Before the middle and advanced stages, the purpose of time and direction is to help to cultivate good habits and perseverance.

Why do we have involuntary body movements during practice?
How to deal with this situation?

It is common to have involuntary body movements during practice, especially under the state of meditation. Actually, this is a natural law.

Extreme

quiescence generates movement, and vice versa. As long as the body and mind

are in quiescence to a certain depth, it will naturally lead to movement

The most obvious “movement” is limb movements. In fact, “qi”

and “spirit” also conform to this law, and thus there is the corresponding

movements involving qi and mind. On the contrary, when the body and mind

are in movement to the extreme, they will naturally return to quiescence.

This is what we say extreme movement generating quiescence. If we observe

carefully in daily life, we will find numerous phenomena of extreme movement

generating quiescence and extreme quiescence generating movement.

All

kinds of involuntary body movements during qigong practicing are the natural manifestations of this law. We do not have to be surprised.

Most qigong exercises have follow-up measures to deal with involuntary body movements. Therefore, after the involuntary body movements, just go ahead steadily by following the measures. A few of qigong exercises cope with all movements by inaction. When the body “moves” enough, it will naturally turn to “quiescence” again. With the continuous transformation between movement and quiescence, the connotation of qigong is gradually manifested, and our cultivation also continuously improves. However, this process may take a long time and may repeat many times, and each time it is the readjustment of the internal qi movement. Thus, we should not allow the involuntary body movements to disturb our mind but follow the steps of qigong steadily

The most difficult part for beginners is to “shou nian (hold a thought)” all through the exercise. How to understand the importance of “holding a thought”? What experiences can we learn?

The most difficult part for beginners is how to quickly enter the “qigong state”. “Holding a thought” is a common method.

It helps us subdue the distracting thoughts when we are under the state of meditation, in which we can hold just a single thought or one thought as the representative of ten thousand thoughts.

The key to “holding a thought” does not lie in keeping which thought but temporarily subduing all the distracting thoughts to allow ourselves to enter the “qigong state” via holding a single thought.

“Qigong state” is the key state of qigong exercise. In a strict sense, the exercise not under the “qigong state” cannot be called qigong exercise, which is particularly important in static qigong.

Holding a thought is not the only method to enter the “qigong state”. Daoyin, Tuna, pronouncing the sounds, keeping silence, understanding the heart and meditation are also helpful. However, the effects of different methods vary from person to person. Some people think that “holding a thought” is effective. Some people think it is not ineffective, but the interference that hinders them from entering the qigong state. And some people feel that Daoyin and Tuna can relax themselves and calm their mind.

Rational beginners may feel that any methods are not of substantial help. They must fundamentally understand their hearts and minds, and thus they are capable to put their thoughts aside.

For these people, they must go deep into the mind by understanding the mind and meditation, and cut off the endless distracting thoughts with reason and wisdom.

It should be pointed out that “always free from distracting thoughts” is not the goal of the “state of meditation”. Besides, it is difficult for us to achieve free from distracting thoughts. Even if we do, we only reach the state of nothingness that cannot produce wisdom.

Sometimes, thoughts could appear under the state of meditation. They are not only a kind of interference, but also a way to present wisdom. Consequently, we should treat the thoughts dialectically. Just as the sentence in the Jin Gang Jing (Diamond Sutra) goes, “Only when you forget all the obsessions with secular materials can you really understand the Buddhist doctrine.” If my “heart” does not fluctuate with the thoughts, what can those thoughts do to my “heart”?

How can we get rid of all distracting thoughts and forget the selfish motives when practicing qigong? Actually, this question is the same as the previous one. The key is how to eliminate the distracting thoughts and make yourself enter the “qigong state”. If you try many methods without effect, perhaps the focus is not on methods, but on understanding the operation mechanism of the mind.

The reason why we are not able to stop our thoughts is that we are used to granting thoughts freedom. Gradually, the mind cannot perceive the thoughts, and over time the mind is controlled by thoughts.

Finally, the distracting thoughts turn the mind into a chattering machine.

You cannot stop it at this time.

We should deeply understand the operation mechanism of our unconscious

mind, and then constantly contemplate this unconscious operation, neither

repress it nor let it go.

Over time, the unconscious operation will be interrupted and gradually return to the state that the thoughts are controlled by the mind. Then we think

when it is allowed by the mind, and we stop thinking when we receive the order

from the mind. Just as the proverb goes, "If your thought is controlled by your

mind, you are a sage. If your mind is controlled by your thought, you are a

mortal."

What really needs to be done here is a deep understanding towards the

operation mechanism of the chattering mind and the contemplation on it. Then

we can get rid of all distracting thoughts and forget the selfish motives when practicing qigong.

In addition, you mentioned the selfish motives. They are indeed a barrier

that hinders we entering the state of meditation. Strong selfish motives mean

strong wo zhi (Ego attachment) and fa zhi (Dharma attachment), mainly

manifesting as obsessions with self, body, fame, wealth, wine and sex.

Our heart will be controlled by these mental attachments and will not calm

down. Thus, we should get rid of these selfish motives, and we can concentrate

on practice.

How does qigong open the door of wisdom?

Wisdom is an instinct and also a kind of potential that everyone has.

Maybe

some people cannot discover or feel their wisdom because their wisdom seems to

be hidden in somewhere and covered up by something

What we should do is to find the hidden wisdom, remove the sundries covered on the wisdom, and let our original wisdom emerge naturally.

Actually,

the process of learning qigong is the process of constantly removing the sundries

that cover our hearts and bind our potential.

In the process of practicing qigong, our focus gradually turns from the external world to the internal world. Then we notice that this internal world has

always been here, and has always been ignored by us.

For all kinds of external convenience and interests, we have been ignoring

the voice from the internal world. This neglect is so long and unconscious that

we completely forget the existence of the internal world. In the unconscious

state, the original wisdom of the mind begins to dull and dry up, and the flow of

life energy tends to be superficial and solidified.

Essentially, the state of practicing qigong is opposite to the unconscious

state of daily life. Qigong gradually reactivates the vitality of the mind, promotes

the renewal of spiritual energy, and restores our innate ability and potential.

This is an overall process of opening our hidden wisdom. In fact, the “blind spot” and “dark spot” in everyone’s heart are different. Most of these spots vary from person to person, manifest as mental attachments, tension or even fear, and finally turn into leaves to blind our mind. Therefore, the process of practicing qigong is to find the leaves covering our mind, and then remove them to restore the original brilliance of our mind. For some people, this internal cleaning process is relatively easy, while others think it is extremely difficult. Qigong is just a tool for us to clean up the internal garbage and enlighten our wisdom.

Does doing good deeds have anything to do with practicing qigong well? They are two different things. Doing good deeds is an act in the real world, which conforms to social norms and moral requirements. The same behavior may have great differences between good and evil in different social and cultural backgrounds. While practicing qigong requires us to enter our spiritual world and get rid of various mental attachments and shackles. What qigong pursues is the spiritual state that is natural and lets things take their own course. Therefore, doing good deeds is not directly related to qigong exercise.

Doing good deeds, on the other hand, can indeed make our mind more peaceful, because doing good deeds is in line with the mainstream values of society and is supported by both public opinion and ourselves. Therefore, we often say “if we have not done anything wrong, we are not afraid of ghosts knocking at the door”. Peace of mind is an important prerequisite for practicing qigong well. From this perspective, doing good deeds can help us enter the state of stillness when we practice qigong

Many people hold that “if you believe in qigong, it will work; if you do not believe in it, it will not work.” How should we think about this view? Can a person who does not believe in qigong practice qigong well?

Qigong is a highly practical subject, and thus the key to learning it well lies in practice. Qigong is fundamentally different from religion. Religion requires people to believe, or it will not work, and lost the motivation for its development.

While qigong requires people to practice physically and mentally. It does not matter whether you believe in it or not. As long as you practice it by following the methods, it will work. Many people initially did not believe in qigong at all, but experienced amazing feelings after entering the state of qigong. Thus, their doubts and disbelief collapsed and conceived the motivation for further exploration. This is because in nature, qigong is a technique to explore self and life, and self and life are each individual’s biggest mystery.

This is also a significant difference between “dao” and “religion” in traditional Chinese culture. “Dao” needs to be practiced physically and mentally step by step, and then you are capable to verify or falsify. While “religion” requires people to believe in authority, and does not focus on practice

Of course, a person who believes in religion is probably easier to practice; however, what really matters is “doing or acting”. As for qigong, the view that “if you believe in qigong, it will work; if you do not believe in it, it will not work.” should be changed into that “if you practice qigong, it will work; or it will not work.”

Qigong is always a fighter against superstition, but why is qigong easy to be regarded as superstition? Qigong is a kind of practical method for Chinese ancients to understand themselves and explore life. The title “qigong” gradually became popular after the 1950s and became known to the world in the 1980s. There was not a unified title before that. In Taoism it is inner alchemy, Taiji or contemplation. In Buddhism it is concentrated meditation, contemplation or seated meditation. In Confucianism, it is sitting-forgetting or meditation. In the school of martial arts, it is Tuna, Daoyin, Zhan Zhuang (post standing) or Neigong.

These techniques more or less emphasized the exercise of two levels: “xing (inherent nature)” and “ming (life endowment)”. They were gradually combined and called the theory of “xing ming (inherent nature and life endowment)” after the Ming (1368—1644) and Qing (1636—1912) Dynasties, and it is now generally termed as “qigong”.

Historically, qigong is closely related to the traditional Chinese culture of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Although “qigong” was popular, it was not really known by the world and sometimes clothed in a mysterious cloak, and even used by people with ulterior motives to cheat and steal fame and wealth.

In the past century, there have been cracks in the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture. Most young people tend to regard qigong as superstition.

In fact, traditional qigong is not only different from religious belief, but also against superstition. Qigong, integrating the self-cultivation thoughts from a hundred schools in ancient China, was established step by step in the long-term self-exercise. It is the practical product of the thought— “unity of heaven and man”.

The process of learning and practicing qigong is actually the process of constantly understanding ourselves and fulfilling our potential and wisdom. Fundamentally speaking, qigong is an art and also an academic to understand life. It has always been a fighter against superstition.

What are the primary and advanced stages of practicing qigong?
Does the advanced stage of qigong refer to the supernatural abilities?
Traditional qigong believes that the fundamental purpose of practicing qigong is to cultivate dao. By this standard, the primary stage of qigong means that there is

still a long way to go from dao and the advanced stage is close to dao

Since practicing qigong requires constantly entering the state of stillness, whether we can steadily enter the state and produce wisdom (the “meditation” and “wisdom” in traditional Chinese culture) is the main standard to measure the level of qigong practice.

Actually, the supernatural abilities we are talking about are similar to the very magic arts and supernatural powers described in ancient books. Actually, they are not supernatural because they are our potential abilities and may manifest under specific conditions. Although some situations under the qigong state are different from that under the normal state and seem to be mysterious, they cannot bring us wisdom. In addition, they cannot be regarded as the ultimate goal of practicing qigong because they can easily make us lose our mind and thus hinder our cultivation.

Therefore, in ancient times, the traditional cultivation sects did not allow their disciples to talk and demonstrate their powers. Their abilities were only used between the disciple and his teacher. They never regarded those abilities as a sign of entering the advanced stage.

Similarly, as for qigong, whether our practice enters the advanced stage depends on our meditation and wisdom levels. In a word, the advanced stage of qigong is not equal to supernatural abilities.

What should we do when the supernatural abilities appear during qigong exercise?

During qigong exercise, due to the “unity of body and mind”, we have entered a deeper spiritual state, which is easy to stimulate the potential of the body. People with sensitive qi-channels and adolescent children may present some amazing abilities.

The basic attitude towards these situations is not to be surprised or frightened, and do not tell or demonstrate to the irrelevant people. We should tell our instructor so that he can guide the follow-up dao practice in time, and subsequently we can get rid of mental ignorance and enlighten wisdom.

As long as we correctly deal with these situations and do not lose ourselves, they will disappear swiftly without hindering the follow-up dao practice.

The fundamental goal of qigong exercise is to cultivate our “xing (inherent nature)” and “ming (life endowment)”, achieve the harmony of heaven, earth and ourselves, and further to understand life and integrate ourselves into great dao. This is also the main purpose of our academic proposition of “Qi-Dao harmony”

Compared with practicing qigong to promote physical health, how does qigong practice promote and uplift our mental health?

Life is a “unity of body and mind”, and body and mind are two poles of life.

Body is the pole of material, while mind is the pole of spirit.

In traditional Chinese philosophical terms, it is “yin” and “yang”. The two are opposite and also transform into each other. Life is such a phenomenon that the body and the mind coexist with each other. The bridge between them is “qi” that possesses some features of both the body and the mind, falls between half yin and half yang, and has the ability to communicate and transform yin and yang.

In terms of Taiji terminology, the form, qi and spirit are attributed to boundedness, presence/absence of boundedness and boundlessness. Through the exercise of “qi”, qigong practice can exercise our body and mind, promote the circulation of qi and blood, and enlighten our wisdom.

Body and mind, form and spirit, and yin and yang are in constant and dynamic balance. They influence and regulate one another and improve our overall health.

On the contrary, the division and disunity of body and mind is a key factor to impair our health. Either body or mind may cause this division and disunity. We often have the following experience in daily life: Great and continuous psychological pressures eventually turn into physical sufferings, and the physical sufferings, in turn, gradually impair the psychology and mind, leading to depression or schizophrenia. This type of diseases falls under the category of “psychosomatic diseases” in modern medicine.

We can adopt strong and positive psychological energy to treat psychological diseases and organic diseases. By exercising the body, qi and mind, qigong therapy makes full use of the unity between body and mind to balance the two and maintain our health.

Therefore, practicing qigong can enrich our spiritual world and promote our mental health.

When practicing qigong, we should achieve that “qi is not qi” and “gong is not the physical strength”. How to correctly understand the words “qi” and “gong”?

When it comes to “qigong”, many people tend to understand it from the literal meaning of the words “qi” and “gong”, and think that practicing qigong just means obtaining more qi and physical strength.

This is because they are misled by the modern name of “qigong” and do not understand its original meaning. To interpret qigong in traditional terms, it should be a practical knowledge for self-cultivation and life cultivation.

“Qi” is the medium for physical and mental exercises. From “essence” to “qi”, from “qi” to “spirit”, from “spirit” to “emptiness”, the form of “qi” is always changing

Through the exercises of essence, qi and spirit, we constantly reflect, experience and understand, so that our cognition can jump out of the shackles of the old model and inertial framework, and thus we know our real nature and follow “dao”.

In this spiral process, we gradually recognize that “qi” is only a phenomenon, an intermediary and an expedient statement. Qi, originating from dao, is the reflection of dao. Dao, producing qi, is also the truth behind qi.

Similarly, the word gong in qigong does not refer to physical strength. It refers to the potential abilities of each individual. The only difference is whether this potential can reveal after being stimulated.

Thus, we say “qi is not qi and gong is not the physical strength”. This is the essence of qigong and life, and also prevents us from being ignorant in the ever changing world. That “qi refers to qi and gong refers to the physical strength” is just an expedient statement.

How to distinguish between healthy qi and pathogenic qi? What are the features of all kinds of “qi”? “Qi” is something between “existence” and “nonexistence”. Although qi is not as obvious as other objects, we can still perceive it clearly. From the perspective of perception, healthy qi, pathogenic qi and all other qi have their own features, and they are supported by corresponding “qi fields” behind them. At first, we are slow to feel “qi”. With the improvement of qigong skills, our perception becomes more acute, and our feelings for different qi fields become much clearer, so that we can finally adjust and convert our small qi fields in accordance with the great qi field of heaven and earth.

Generally speaking, healthy qi is relatively soft and dense, giving us healthy, harmonious and beautiful feelings.

While pathogenic qi is relatively abrupt and surly, giving us obvious feelings of exclusion, discomfort and disgust
With the ability to further distinguish the pathogenic qi, we can find that
there are different types of pathogenic qi, and it may be difficult for them to
tolerate each other. Specifically, some pathogenic qi may obstruct the body and
impair the harmonious healthy qi. Some pathogenic qi is so severe that it may
exhaust the healthy qi and cause death. Some pathogenic qi may result in an
epidemic and some may disturb the mind. In addition, even under the same qi
field, different people may have different feelings. Just as a man drinks water,
only he himself knows whether the water is hot or cold.

Once we can steadily feel both “qi” and the “qi field” behind it, with the
help of information given by them, we can expand our cognition to know the
world and subsequently open a hidden “qi” world.

What is the relationship between “gong (exercise)” and “wu (enlightenment)” in qigong?

Qigong is a knowledge concerning physical and mental exercises. It regards the body and spirit as two aspects of a complete life, namely “yin” and “yang”. Yin and yang are the unity of opposites. Reflected in the relationship between body and spirit, it is that the body and spirit coexist and can transform into each other.

During qigong exercise, the physical body needs to “be built” often, which is “lian (practice)” in Chinese, and the ego needs to “be understood”, which is “wu (enlightenment)” in Chinese. The two aspects mutually benefit each other.

Definitely, most beginners start qigong with physical exercise. They are not capable to start with “enlightenment” directly, but only “practice”.

Over time, there will be changes in both our body and mind, and we reach a higher level of qigong. With the corresponding physical and mental conditions, we are able to transfer from “practice” to “enlightenment”.

Since then, our qigong exercise begins to go into a new stage in the spiritual level, in which “enlightenment” is adopted to promote the improvement of qigong skills and “practice” in the physical level is not the focus any more.

The level of “enlightenment” is directly proportional to qigong skills. The general features of qigong exercise can be summarized as follows: At the beginning, it focuses on “practice” and emphasizes exercises under qigong state. In the middle stage, both “enlightenment” and “practice” should be under a specific state. The advanced stage is dominated by “enlightenment”,

and it
cannot be further improved without “enlightenment”.

What is the relationship between “xing (inherent nature)” and
“ming (life endowment)” in qigong exercise?

The term qigong was put forward in modern times. Actually, the real
meaning and value of qigong lie in the theory of “xing ming (inherent
nature
and life endowment)” that is often mentioned in traditional
cultivation. “Xing
(inherent nature)” refers to the nature and origin of life, which
requires people to
gradually understand and perceive in cultivation.

The ancient people practiced qigong in order to know their nature.
Only when
they achieved this goal can they be regarded as skilled qigong
practitioners. Definitely,
there are great differences between people—Some people may go a
long way to know
their nature, while some just take a short time and know their nature
swiftly.

However, their swiftness is supported by some preconditions; that is to
say, he (she) already has the corresponding conditions to be “swift”.
“Ming (life
endowment)” specifically refers to such expression forms or carriers of
life as
body, essence, blood, qi movements, etc.

“Life endowment” needs to be repeatedly exercised under the qigong state, during which we gradually build a strong body and qi movement, and subsequently achieve the purpose of health preservation as well as longevity. Qigong is an exercise of one body with two sides. The exercise at our spiritual level is to cultivate the “inherent nature” while that at the physical level is to cultivate the “life endowment”. This is because for people, spirit and body are always the unity of opposites, as well as the unity and transformation of yin and yang.

What are the definitions of hun po (yang spirit and yin spirit), yuan shen (yuan-primordial spirit) and shi shen (shi-acquired spirit) mentioned in traditional Taoism? What corresponds to them in qigong? What is the relationship between them and the “spirit” in “essence, qi and spirit” in the theory of traditional Chinese medicine? According to yin and yang, traditional Taoists divide people’s spiritual qi into hun and po. Hun (yang spirit) belongs to yang while po (yin spirit) belongs to yin. Traditional Taoists hold that there are three yang spirits and six (or seven) yin spirits within a human body. The three yang spirits govern our nature, mind and heart respectively. They integrate with and also separated from each other. The six yin spirits govern our sense of sight, sense of hearing, sense of smell, sense of taste, sense of touch as well as our thoughts. They integrate with and also separated from each other. Yuan shen (yuan-primordial spirit), also known as yuan xing, is the innate spirit of human. Shi shen (shi-acquired spirit), refers to the roles of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind in distinguishing, recognizing and applying in our daily life. Yuan-primordial spirit is the essence, and shi-acquired spirit is the utility. Qigong theory borrows many cultivation terms from both Buddhism and Taoism, such as yang spirit and yin

spirit, yuan primordial spirit and shi-acquired spirit. However, in the primary and middle stages of qigong practice, we are not capable to cultivate the spirit directly. Only when we enter the advanced stage of spiritual cultivation can we cultivate the spirit

The exercise in the early stage is to cultivate the body and qi, and “qi” is the focus. In qigong practice, we often talk about “essence, qi and spirit”, and traditional Chinese medicine also has the theory of “essence, qi and spirit”. They seem to be equal, but sometimes they are different. We should understand it in this way: When explaining physiology and pathology, the two theories are very similar, and often learn from and inspire each other. Qigong, however, pays more attention to the state behind the physiological stage, which is the potential state that life may reach. This content does not exist in traditional Chinese medicine. Since then, the two academic traditions developed independently along their own directions and goals, and finally established their own theoretical frameworks. Qigong serves the cultivation of inherent nature and life endowment while traditional Chinese medicine serves the clinical diagnosis and treatment. This is the fundamental reason why the theory of qigong has both similarities and differences with the theory of traditional Chinese medicine. And then we understand why the theory of “essence, qi and spirit” seems to be the same and different in qigong and traditional Chinese medicine.

Whether the “qi” cultivated in qigong practice is hun yuan qi (congenital qi) or not?

Hun yuan qi (congenital qi) refers to the qi produced in the chaotic state

before the heaven and earth separated. When we came to this world, we were

already in the acquired period in which the heaven and earth had already

been separated. Then how can we practice the congenital qi?

Subsequently,

we can only cultivate the acquired qi instead of the congenital qi when we

practice qigong. The traditional qigong theory holds that “the acquired qi can

be transformed into congenital qi”, which is possible. It reveals the direction

and goal of practicing qigong, but it is impossible to practice the congenital qi

directly

How to understand the “unity of heaven and man”?

“Unity of heaven and man” is a very important philosophical concept in

traditional Chinese culture, and also the theoretical cornerstone of self-cultivation

for various schools. Safely speaking, the broad and profound traditional Chinese

culture will be a castle in the air without the thought of “unity of heaven and

man”. How to understand this concept?

First of all, experience in our daily life tells us that everyone exists independently. A person’s joys and sorrows can only be experienced by himself.

Other people, other things, and even the heaven and earth are not capable to

know his feelings directly. Similarly, whether one feels hungry or full only

he himself knows, and other individuals cannot know it directly, unless they

communicate with each other. This sense of self independence derived from

life experience is constantly strengthened for various reasons, and gradually

solidified and recognized by our mind. Manifesting in daily life, it is that each of us will gradually establish an internal ego as we grow up, which is not only

an important symbol of growth, but also a main factor to separate one from

another. With the increasingly strengthening sense of self and the solidification of

our internal model, we are completely locked in our self-identity and separated

from the whole, and all kinds of life problems come one after another such as

pain, helplessness, frustration and abandonment. Therefore, the self-righteous identity produces separation, isolation and closure, and the unconscious mental attachments of separation, isolation and closure leads to further division. The thought of “unity of heaven and man” is the very prescription to cure this common human psychological disease fundamentally. Only “unity” can heal the separated and isolated self and subsequently allow us to truly feel freedom and unity

But why do not we feel this way in daily life? Can we spontaneously produce a strong feeling of “unity”? Traditional Chinese culture of self cultivation, including Taiji, qigong and meditation, can help us to experience the profound sense of “unity”. The process of practicing qigong is to gradually integrate the body, breath and mind, and enter the state of the unity of both body and mind, and further enter the state of “the unity of heaven and man”. Practicing qigong helps us experience the original state of the unity of heaven, earth and man and the unity of all creatures, and also helps us get rid of the obsessions formed in the long-term unconscious state. Therefore, “the unity of heaven and man” is the profound practical experience of ancient practitioners and the highest embodiment of the unity of knowledge and action.

Secondly, the profound and holistic “unity of heaven and man” seems to be opposite to the physical world that is more like a world of “separation of heaven and man”. How to understand and deal with the coexistence of “unity” and “division” will guide us to explore the mystery of life. Based on the theory of “unity of heaven and man”, many branches of traditional Chinese culture have emerged to further explain and elaborate the dialectical relationship between “unity” and “division”. Therefore, the emergence of traditional theories such as Taiji, yin and yang, five elements, essence, qi and spirit theory, is easy to understand. Understanding the thought of “unity of heaven and man” from the perspective of these branch theories allows us to better understand and grasp the important value of “unity of heaven and man” as the cornerstone of holistic thinking. Safely speaking, the thought of “unity” is the background of the whole traditional culture, and various theories are the specific application and presentation under this background. We should not forget the “unity” of our lives.

How to achieve “bao yuan shou yi”—preserving the unity among essence, qi and spirit in qigong exercise?

This is an important mnemonic formula in static qigong. Yuan means the origin, and yi means one. It is to keep our essence, qi and spirit always filled

in the body so that they will not be consumed and escape, and thus they can

integrate with the physical body. If we deliberately take great effects to achieve

“bao yuan shou yi” (the unity among essence, qi and spirit) when practicing

qigong, it just suggests that our body and mind are behind “Two” and “Three”.

Actually, we are totally unaware of it when we really achieve it.

Therefore,

“bao yuan shou yi” (the unity among essence, qi and spirit) is a direction for

practice, and a cultivation from “action” to “inaction”. As for how to enter the state of “yuan” and “yi”, it lies in how to get rid of our own mental attachments

and habits with the help of regulating the body, breath and mind. Bao yuan

shou yi not only involves the practice and understanding of qigong, but also the enlightenment of qigong. The enlightenment of qigong goes before the understanding of qigong. And the understanding of qigong goes before the practice of qigong. By understanding and practice going hand in hand, we can possibly achieve “bao yuan shou yi”—preserving the unity among essence, qi and spirit.

Are “tian, dan, xu and wu” the four states of qigong? How to correctly understand these four levels?

The four Chinese characters tian, dan, xu and wu can be regarded as one term

and can also be separated as four terms in Chinese. As one term, it means keeping

the mind free from avarice. This term comes from the classic Huang Di Nei Jing

Su Wen (Basic Questions, Yellow Emperor’s Internal Classic): “When the sages in

ancient times taught the people, they emphasized the importance of avoiding the

external pathogenic factors in good time and keep the mind free from avarice.

In this way zhen-genuine qi in the body will be in harmony, essence-spirit will remain inside and disease will have no way to occur." Later generations of doctors

and Taoists respected "tian dan xu wu" as the standard of health preservation.

Separated as four terms, tian, dan, xu and wu are four spiritual states obtained by

cultivation. They reflect the different heights of mind and nature.

"Tian" means that after long-term cultivation, we gradually obtain a kind

of stable quietness and slight joy, and our mind is no longer easily affected

by external temptations. "Dan" goes a further step ahead, which means that

our mind is more and more open and indifferent to everything, and thus we

gain a deeper level of freedom. This is an important sign that the mind moves

from a narrow qigong state to a life state. "Xu" is the manifestation of the

continuously deepened mental cultivation. At this level, the myriad phenomena

in the world begin to be emptied and dissolved, no longer clear at the level of

mind and nature. This internal process, however, does not affect the sensitivity

of external identification, which is more like an internal integration and a

trend of "unity". Eventually, here comes "wu", under which all

differences and relativity integrate into a "unity". The sense of division melts, the boundary

consciousness disappears, and the existence and nonexistence combine with each

other. In theory, everything seems to be integrated into a "unity", but in feeling,

everything is more like falling into "wu".

In short, “tian dan xu wu” can not only express the state of keeping the mind free from avarice, but can also be divided into four levels to allow us to gradually experience the infinite depth of the spiritual world. The continuous exploration towards the inner, the mind and the infinite spiritual world is not only the direction of traditional Qi-Dao cultivation, but also the direction of “Qi-Dao harmony” advocated by us.

How to understand “wan fa gui zong (in various guises to serve the single purpose)” from the perspective of qigong cultivation? It means that all kinds of exercise methods and cultivation skills will be eventually integrated into the fundamental purpose. From the perspective of qigong cultivation, this fundamental purpose refers to the nature of life. All skills and methods guide us to go deep into our nature, and the skills and abilities we obtain in qigong exercise are just our original potential. What

hinders the
happiness of life is all kinds of self-righteous “mental attachments”.
And thus, we
have numerous cultivation methods to help us get rid of the mental
attachments,
returning to the original state of life. As for how to understand “in
various guises
to serve the single purpose” from the perspective of qigong
cultivation, just as
a man drinks water, only he himself knows whether the water is hot or
cold. We
need to find out “what is overshadowing our eyes” via both dao
practice and
comprehension of qigong, and then resolutely remove it.

Dao De Jing states, “He diminishes it and again diminishes it,
till he arrives at doing nothing on purpose. Having arrived at this point
of
inaction, there is nothing which he does not do.” What does it have to
do
with qigong practice?

They have a close relationship. Qigong cultivation is a process of
returning life to what it originally is. Dao De Jing states, “Man takes his
law from the earth; the earth takes its law from the heaven; the
heaven
takes its law from dao. The law of dao is its being what it is... The dao
produced One, One produced Two, Two produced Three, Three
produced

all things.” Qigong cultivation just goes against it. Thus, Lao Zi (a thinker and philosopher in ancient China) observed that “He who devotes himself to the dao seeks from day to day to diminish his doing. He diminishes it and again diminishes it, till he arrives at doing nothing on purpose.” He who devotes himself to learning seeks from day to day to increase his knowledge, while he who devotes himself to the qigong exercise seeks from day to day to diminish his doing. The original state of life is invisible and free, but we forget this innate state and are caught in our own trap in the acquired period. Qigong is to eliminate all kinds of acquired habits and obsessions, thus make the body and mind enter the original state of life, and finally release the original brilliance of life.

In the Chan sect, there is a view that “When you saw the mountain and water for the first time, the mountain was the mountain and the water was the water; When you saw the mountain and water for the second time, the mountain was not the mountain and the water was not the water; At present, the mountain is still the mountain and the water is still the water.” How should we think of it from the perspective of qigong?

Actually, what it talks about is the three levels of dao practice. “When you saw the mountain and water for the first time, the mountain was the mountain and the water was the water.” This is the primary stage, in which we see and understand as ordinary people, we are often confused by the landscape and thus we forget our nature. “When you saw the mountain and water for the second time, the mountain was not the mountain and the water was not the water.” This is the middle stage, in which we are not often confused by mountains and rivers, and what we see and understand is different from ordinary people. “At present, the mountain is still the mountain and the water is still the water.” This is the advanced stage, in which with great wisdom after completing the leap of “negation of negation”, we see and understand similar to ordinary people.

From the outside, it seems that “the mountain is still the mountain, and the water is still the water”, but from the inside, the person who looks at it is not what he used to be, and the landscape can no longer confuse his mind. The process of qigong cultivation is exactly the same. We will go through the transformation of various states until you see the true nature.

How to understand “wo (self)” and “wu wo (without self)” in qigong exercise?

“Wo (self)” and “wu wo (without self)” are two concepts of great significance in the cultivation system of ancient China and they point out two different cultivation directions. Walking along the two different paths respectively will produce very different results.

At the beginning of cultivation, everyone comes with him “self”... “I’m very distressed”, “I want to cultivate” and “I want to be healthy”. Without this awareness of self, it’s impossible to take the first step of cultivation. At the same time, this “self” and desires of self also bring endless troubles that always force him “self” to find a way out. Therefore, “self” is not only the source of sufferings, but also the driving force for cultivation. But what if one’s cultivation process is only “self-oriented” and meets all the “self-desires”? Definitely, there will be a more inflated “self” and more desires until he collapses. Such negative examples can always be found and the lessons from them are unforgettable.

Therefore, the traditional Chinese cultivation system advocates “without self” and respects it as a pursuit orientation of cultivation. Only “without self” can eliminate all kinds of troubles and pain caused by “self”, and produce freedom and liberation. Therefore, it is among the core concepts of qigong practice. Of course, it is difficult to transfer from “self” to “without self”. We need to constantly reflect, perceive, polish and practice under qigong state. The following Buddhist chant can summarize the dialectical relationship between “self” and “without self” in qigong practice:

Self and without self are two directions in qigong practice.
With self, we fail the cultivation.
Without self, we make some achievements.
I come with self and cultivate self without self.
I myself is not the self I see but the true self in nature.
Cultivation is not the cultivation I see but the dao in nature.
This is the law.

How to correctly understand the concept of “Taiji Health”?

“Taiji Health” is a simplified title of adopting traditional Chinese Taiji thoughts and culture to promote modern people’s health. By refining the experience and wisdom of health preservation and medical practice in traditional Chinese culture, it will improve the health of people in modern society. We hope that these health preservation techniques characterized by “Taiji” thoughts can make a contribution to the cause of Big Health.

“Taiji” is an important philosophical concept in traditional Chinese culture. It contains “yin-yang” and “eight trigrams”. Together with “yin-yang”, it established the core of Chinese native philosophy. The word “Taiji” first appears in Yi Jing (Book of Changes): “In the Yi there is the Supreme Ultimate (Taiji). The Supreme Ultimate produces the Two Forms (yin and yang). The Two Forms produce the Four Emblems, and the Four Emblems produce the eight trigrams.”

Taiji and yin-yang thoughts are the core of Chinese culture including Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, traditional Chinese medicine, traditional martial arts and qigong health preservation. Taiji and yin-yang theories are the cornerstone of Chinese civilization. They are a remarkable feature that distinguishes Chinese civilization from other civilizations.

The term “Taiji” conveys the wisdom and achievements of Chinese civilization spanning five millenniums. The core of “Taiji Health” is to adopt Taiji thoughts and culture to improve human health in modern society

Why do we put forward the new concept of “Taiji Health”?

The big health is a common pursuit for all humanity at present. People across the world pay more attention to their own health. The 193

member states of the United Nations unanimously adopted the global sustainable development agenda for the next 15 years in August 2015. On September 25 of the same year, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was held in New York. The conference officially passed the outcome document—the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which included 17 goals. The third goal is to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

This is an excerpt from the 2030 agenda for sustainable development: “Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all at all ages are essential for sustainable development. Countries all over the world have made considerable progress in increasing life expectancy and reducing common diseases that lead to maternal and infant deaths. Significant progress has been made in strengthening the provision of clean water and sanitation facilities, eliminating malaria, tuberculosis, poliomyelitis and HIV / AIDS. However, we still need to redouble our efforts to eradicate a series of diseases and solve a variety of stubborn and emerging health problems.”

The United Nations has clearly affirmed that human health and well-being are key issues that must be faced in the sustainable development of modern society

The World Health Organization (WHO) has also made a new definition for health: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." In other words, the modern concept of health involves not only people's physiological and psychological levels, but also social issues. Physical health, mental health and social health constitute the overall concept of modern health.

Physical health means that we have a strong body to resist common colds and infectious diseases, and also have proper body weight, bright eyes, beautiful hair, elastic muscles and skin, good sleep, etc. Physical health, as the fundamental health, is the basic guarantee for our normal life and work. Mental health refers to the good state in mind, emotion and consciousness, including normal intellectual development, stable and optimistic moods, a strong will, coordinated actions, full of energy, able to adapt to the environment, capable to calmly cope with the pressure from daily life and work, willing to take responsibility and harmonious interpersonal relationship. Mental health is as important as physical health. According to Western medicine, a good mental state can promote the human body to secrete more beneficial hormones that can enhance the disease resistance, and promote human health and longevity.

Social health is also a part of modern health. It mainly means that we can restrict ourselves, control our thoughts and behaviors according to the social morality, and have the ability to distinguish truth from false, good from evil, beauty from ugliness, and honor from disgrace. Bringing morality into the health is supported by scientific research. Modern medical research has found that actions against the social morality are easy to cause stress and fear that will impair the health. For example, those who embezzle money and engage in corrupt practices are susceptible to develop cancer, cerebral hemorrhage, heart disease and mental stress, while those with moral ethics—kindness, honesty and integrity are often happy and healthy.

How to implement the modern health concept proposed by WHO?
How to give full play to the advantages of traditional Chinese culture on health preservation and help all humanity live a healthier and happier life?
As an ancient oriental civilization, China possesses a broad and profound culture including Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and traditional Chinese medicine. The medical theories and health preservation practices of traditional Chinese medicine are unique and outstanding. Taiji, Daoyin and qigong have also played an important role in the health and wellness of Chinese nation. We should combine the Chinese culture on health preservation with the

health of all
humanity to benefit the people across the world.

Taiji Health, given by traditional Chinese culture, is a theoretical model and technical method of physical and mental health and harmonious coexistence between man and environment. Under the guidance of Taiji theory, it adopts Taiji exercise, Daoyin, acupuncture-moxibustion, Tuina, qigong and mindfulness to adjust the body and mind to achieve a healthy state between the body and mind and between the individual and society. Modern medicine holds that Taiji health involves three levels, namely: physical health, mental health and social health. It focuses not only on individual health but also the well-being of all humanity, and integrates the pursuit of individual health into the overall health of the environment, which is fully in line with the elaboration of the United Nations on human health and well-being.

“Taiji Health” is more than an empty concept. It contains Taiji Health techniques. They are under the guidance of Taiji theory, and can help to achieve harmonious health among the body, mind and spirit by adjusting the body, cultivating the essence, transforming qi and calming the spirit, and seeking natural harmony among people, society and environment, so as to further explore the nature of life. Taiji Health techniques include active techniques and passive techniques. Active techniques focus on self-exercise and self-adjustment, such as Taijiquan, qigong and Daoyin. While passive techniques include treatment received such as Tuina, cupping and moxibustion

What are the contents and features of Taiji Health?

The contents of “Taiji Health” are extensive and can be divided into different levels to meet the needs of different people. These levels are independent but also interconnected. In order to facilitate learning and application, we divide it into five levels from the technical perspective: Taiji exercise, Taiji health preservation, Taiji cultivation, Taiji wisdom and Taiji life. The first three are suitable for Taiji beginners and people in need of health regulation, and the last two are suitable for people in pursuit of spiritual uplifting. The connotation of each level is as follows.

Taiji exercise mainly focuses on physical exercise and practice that are more suitable for beginners. It mainly includes simplified Taijiquan, Daoyin in dynamic qigong, dietary health preservation and basic Taiji theory.

Taiji health preservation focuses on health regulation and knowledge learning, such as exercising essence and qi and learning the culture of traditional Chinese medicine. It mainly includes acupuncture-moxibustion, Tuina, qigong and theories of traditional Chinese medicine.

Taiji cultivation mainly focuses on the exercise of mind and spirit to achieve the harmony between humanity and the environment. It is suitable for those who love Taiji Health and have a certain foundation of Taiji. It mainly includes Taiji Kungfu, Taijiquan, static qigong, traditional Chinese classics and Taiji philosophy.

These three levels are to achieve the integration of body and mind, the harmony with the nature, and the sublimation of people's spiritual quality.

Taiji wisdom mainly focuses on the spiritual fields including dao practice of Taiji, meditation, harmonious wisdom and critical thinking. In Taiji culture, the harmonious wisdom is the key symbol to achieve physical, psychological and social health.

Taiji life integrates Taiji practice with daily life. It pays more attention to the sublimation of spiritual quality and the common well-being of humanity

How to understand the relationship between Taiji and Taiji Health?

“Taiji”, with extensive academic contents, is an important concept in traditional Chinese culture. It is generally believed that Taiji is an intermediate stage in the process of generation, transformation, extinction and return of all things. Taiji is in a chaotic state before the separation of heaven and earth. The word “Taiji” first appears in Yi Jing (Book of Changes), “In the Yi there is the Supreme Ultimate (Taiji). The Supreme Ultimate produces the Two Forms (yin and yang). The Two Forms produce the Four Emblems, and the Four Emblems produce the eight trigrams.” Besides, Taiji is also recorded in the Taoist literature Zhuangzi, “the great Dao exists beyond the highest point, and yet you cannot call it lofty; it exists beneath the limit of the six directions, and yet you cannot call it deep. It was born before Heaven and earth, and yet you cannot say it has been there for long; it is earlier than the earliest time, and yet you cannot call it old”.

“Taiji” can be explained from the following perspectives in traditional Chinese culture: 1- The emptiness is “Taiji”. 2- The yuan-primordial qi during the original universe is “Taiji”. 3- The period before the separation between yin and yang is “Taiji”. 4- The forty-nine numbers formed from the two forms, four Emblems and eight trigrams are “Taiji”.

Taiji theory gradually emerged from “Taiji”, including Wuji and Taiji, dao and qi, existence and non-existence, yin and yang, body and spirit, movement and stillness, as well as the state differences, generation, transformation and changes of them. Traditional Chinese culture uses a simple symbol to summarize and represent “Taiji”. This symbol is “Taiji diagram” .

The Taiji Health we are talking about adopts Taijiquan, Daoyin, acupuncture-moxibustion, Tuina, qigong, meditation and other methods under the guidance of Taiji theory to adjust the body and mind in order to achieve a healthy state between the body and mind, and the individual and society. Taiji Health is a health prescription given by traditional Chinese culture to contemporary human society. It is a theoretical model and technical method for human beings to live in harmony with the environment. The denotations of Taiji Health involve three levels of the health concept advocated by modern medicine, namely: physical health, mental health and social health. It focuses not only on individual health but also the well-being of all humanity, and integrates the pursuit of individual health into the overall health of the environment, which is fully in line with the elaboration of the United Nations on human health and well-being. If “Taiji” is regarded as a symbol of traditional Chinese thought and culture, “Taiji Health” is a concrete manifestation of applying it to promote the health of modern people.

What is the relationship between qigong and Taiji Health?
There are many techniques and methods applied to practice based on Taiji thoughts and Taiji culture in Taiji Health. The most famous is Taijiquan. In addition to Taijiquan, qigong is also an important part of Taiji Health techniques and closely related to self-cultivation. Ancient Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and other schools all had their unique techniques and methods for self-cultivation. These techniques for cultivating essence, qi and spirit have converged into today's qigong. Broadly speaking, "qigong" involves almost all kinds of cultivation methods.

In the primary stage of Taiji Health, our understanding towards “Taiji” is biased towards its philosophical name and concept, rather than the personal experience and feeling of “Taiji”. The real experience and feeling of most beginners are derived from “qi”, which is the health improvement after the exercise, saving, cultivation and circulation of internal “qi”. Just as the Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor’s Internal Classic) states, “The pathogenic factors cannot invade the body when the body is full of healthy qi.”

“Taiji” and “qi” here are dialectical relations: unweighted versus weighted, knowing versus doing, and yin versus yang. The former represents unweighted, knowing and yin while the latter represents weighted, doing and yang. The implementation of Taiji thoughts and culture is to improve the physical and mental health by adjusting qi movements. From this perspective, it is easy to understand the importance of qigong in Taiji Health. In the advanced stage of Taiji Health, the connotations of “qi” and “gong” will change.

How about the development of Taiji Health in recent years?
On December 22, 2016, the first “Taiji Health Center” in China established by Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine was based in Shanghai Qigong Research Institute. The center is committed to applying

qigong, Taijiquan, Daoyin, acupuncture-moxibustion, Tuina and other methods to the Big Health, in order to achieve a harmonious and balanced health state between body and mind, between individual and collective, and between humanity and nature. Upholding this principle, with the support of the WHO and relevant domestic ministries and commissions, Taiji Health goes into communities and schools and cross the borders. In the past five years, we have successively established multiple “Taiji Health practice bases”. “Taiji Health Sub-centers” have been established in Athens and Barcelona. Teaching and training have been conducted in France, Germany, Serbia, Australia, and Japan. The network radiation of Taiji Health concept and techniques has expanded to 83 countries and territories. In addition, in Shanghai, the birthplace of Taiji Health, three international symposiums on Taiji Health were held in 2017, 2019 and 2021 respectively to promote the popularization and academic discussion.

How to deal with the cultural differences between China and other countries in the process of Taiji Health going out? The cultural differences between China and other countries are indeed a problem for Taiji Health going global, but it is also an opportunity to show the unique charm of Chinese culture and Taiji Health. First of all, we unswervingly

uphold the principle that “health goes first and culture follows”. What the Taiji Health advocates includes “I myself deciding my own health”, “knowing myself and improving myself”, “health required by body, mind and spirit” and “a community with a shared future of health”. All these ideas are easy to be accepted by people with different cultural backgrounds. With the study of health preservation techniques and the popularization of health preservation knowledge in traditional Chinese medicine, the unique efficacy of Taiji Health will attract more and more attention. After all, nothing speaks louder than efficacy.

Secondly, driven by the clear efficacy, more and more beneficiaries will turn their attention to the culture behind qigong, Taijiquan and traditional Chinese medicine. At this time, the culture of Taiji and traditional Chinese medicine will easily embark on the world stage of health and will not be resisted by people with different cultural backgrounds. Thirdly, in the process of Taiji Health going out, we have found that the introduction forms, public acceptance and the depth of integration into local culture in different countries also follow that “dao models itself after nature”, which is fully in line with that “The dao produced One, One produced Two, Two produced Three, Three produced all things.” Therefore, what Taiji Health spreads are ideas, wisdom and the dao of “unity of heaven and man”, not just

standardized techniques.

Finally, in the localization of Taiji Health in various countries, the local people engaged in cross-cultural communication are needed in large number, which is also a process from non-existence to existence, and also a natural process to solve the problem of culture, language and understanding differences.

Definitely, the value of traditional Chinese culture is always the fundamental driving force for the introduction of Taiji Health. In addition, the popularity of Taijiquan, traditional Chinese medicine and qigong all over the world and the active promotion from overseas Chinese play an important role in allowing Taiji Health to embark on the world stage of health.

What are the main academic thoughts of Taiji study?
Taiji study is a traditional Chinese study with an extensive history. And now, it is a noted school of thought that has integrated the core ideas and wisdom of traditional Chinese Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, and polished and inherited by Daoist Taijimen disciples for thousands of years.

Taiji study sets great store by “the unity of knowing and doing”. The knowing is reflected in its strong philosophical tendency, and it falls under the philosophical thinking and distinguishing school. The doing is to constantly practice both physically and mentally that “The dao in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it does not do”. From a traditional point of view, the “knowing” belongs to theory practice entering Taiji, while the “doing” belongs to dao practice entering Taiji. With the combination of the knowing and doing, Taiji study comes into being. The theory practice of Taiji study centers on the “jing jie guan (view of states)”. It emphasizes that all things, all existence and nonexistence are the manifestations of states, including qigong cultivation. Starting from the most fundamental thought of the view of states, Taiji study conceived the “three states” theory that is to summarize and explain all phenomena and laws through the three states of Wuji, Taiji and Youji (Figure 8). In short, the “dao” in traditional culture is illustrated clearly by the “three states” theory. In order to further elaborate the “three states”, Taiji study vertically summarized nine philosophies, covering all possible problems from the three states. Taiji study also horizontally summarized nine academic theories to clarify the word “dao” from the state of existence. In the terms of Taiji study, they are “Three states and Nine axioms” and “One dao and Nine theory sections”

The dao practice of Taiji study also lies in the view of states. The three key elements in practice include mnemonic rhyme of stage, scene of state and application of cultivation. They all have the features of state and stage, and should not be known in advance by beginners, otherwise they will become an obstacle to the follow-up dao practice. Taiji study summarized the whole process of dao practice into nine orders to guide specific cultivation. In the term of Taiji study, it is “Three practice levels and Nine secrets”. The theory practice and dao practice of Taiji study accompany each other, with the common purpose of guiding the beginners to gradually enter the innate and original state—“Taiji”

From the perspective of the overall academic establishment, Taiji study is established based on “Taiji”, that is, on “the state of existencenonexistence”. The three principles for establishing this study are as follows:
Establish nothing but everything;
Establish something and give it up after using;
If it matters, establish the thing concerning all humanity

The three principles are progressive from nonexistence to existence. This kind of establishment makes Taiji study have distinct features different from other ancient and modern schools of thought. Unprecedentedly, Taiji study is established based on “the state of existence-nonexistence”. From the perspective of the third principle, based on stimulating the inherent wisdom of life, Taiji study helps us understand, connect and practice the traditional Qi-Dao culture, and thus we can truly trace back to the origin of life from the perspective of cognition.

How to correctly understand and establish our “Taiji thought”? First of all, we should learn to analyze and treat everything through “view of states”, which is the key to establish our Taiji thought and also a shortcut to go deep into the traditional dao culture and accurately grasp the core of “Qi Dao Harmony”. The word “state” is often mentioned in traditional Chinese Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. In modern Chinese, it mostly refers to “ideological level”, while In Taiji study, it not only refers to ideological level, but also includes various states and levels involving the body, mind and spirit. To summarize philosophically, it includes “you jie (the state of existence)”, “you wu jie (the state of existence-nonexistence)” and “wu jie (the state of nonexistence)”.

Theoretically speaking, “the state of existence” refers to all the states that we can perceive. It is the most abundant and complex existence, which can be perceived and interpreted from various perspectives and levels. It is also the existence we first know and the state we live in. “The state of nonexistence” is the opposite of “the state of existence”, referring to the state of imperceptibility and nothingness. The cognition of the state of nonexistence is the negation of the state of existence.

“The state of existence-nonexistence” is between the two. It is a state of semi existence and semi nonexistence. The three states are divided based on human liu gen (six senses). They are independent of each other and have their own laws of existence. The state can be divided into three levels when it is applied, and the three levels are integrated into one when they return to the original state. The “view of states” allows us to constantly switch perspectives and states when we are dealing with anything and any problem so that we have the ability to break common constraints and make our thoughts alive like “Taiji”.

To establish the “view of states” is not an easy thing. It requires us to constantly break through the daily thought inertia and break the habitual mental attachments. In the learning process of Taiji study, it can be gradually established by the repeated polishing and penetration of the three philosophies in the state of existence—generation and transformation, treatment as well as popularity. In particular, beginners need to constantly conduct independent research and reflections. After gaining the “view of states”, we will not stick to only one perspective when we dealing with everything. Our thoughts really begin to flow, just like the feeling of “obtaining qi” during qigong practice. They are no longer limited by the perception from the six senses, and gradually enter the state of existence-nonexistence and the state of nonexistence. With the breaking of common thought constraints, the original wisdom of life gradually appears. This way of thinking is like that thought itself is in the state of “Taiji”, which is called “Taiji thought”. Taiji thought is not only an important symbol of the theory practice entering the state of existence-nonexistence, but also the dao practice entering the stage of spiritual cultivation

What is the outlook on life from the perspective of Taiji Health?
From the perspective of Taiji Health, the understanding towards life is a dynamic process under the view of states. It is close to the WHO's interpretation of modern health and is displayed step by step. Life is an organic whole with various levels and dimensions, but our understanding towards life can only improve slowly from shallow to deep, from one-sided to relatively complete, and from unidimensional to multidimensional. The earliest understanding towards life started from the understanding towards all things with form and quality including animals, human bodies, plants and microorganisms. Later, we realized that the existence of things without form and quality is also a kind of life such as qi and qi fields that demonstrate their life in another state.

Traditional culture holds that life exists in at least three states: form, qi and spirit. On the basis of absorbing traditional wisdom, modern Taiji study further puts forward that “life is the existence under the view of states”. In short, life itself is the endless existence, and life is the great dao. Life can present only in the corresponding state, and it cannot be perceived without the corresponding state. The life phenomena presenting in different states follow different laws. For example, the operation law of life in the existence state is birth, senility, illness and death. Different states depend on how people think of them. The state itself is also a form of life, and also conforms to the law of birth, senility, illness and death.

The outlook on life from the perspective of Taiji Health starts from focusing on human physical and mental health, further pays attention to the harmonious coexistence between man and the collective, the surrounding environment as well as nature, and finally concentrates on the health, harmony and happiness of the whole nature.

What are the contents about “qi” and “dao” in the classic Dao De Jing?

Dao De Jing is a treatise on “dao” and “de” written by Lao Zi (a thinker and philosopher in ancient China) in the Spring and Autumn Period (770 — 476

BC). He initially put forward in this book that “dao” is the origin of all things.

As soon as the concept of “dao” was put forward, it soon became the peak of

Chinese thought and culture. Enriched and improved by the cultural baptism of

over two millenniums, it is the symbol of Chinese culture. Though there are not

many words talking about “qi” in Dao De Jing, these words are widely cited by

later generations, including modern qigong. Here we provide some excerpts for

beginners:

The dao that can be told of is not the absolute dao. (Chapter 1)

Dao is a hollow vessel and its use is inexhaustible. Fathomless like the fountain ahead of all things. (Chapter 4)

In embracing the One with your soul, can you never forsake the dao?

In

controlling your vital force to achieve gentleness, can you become like the

new-born child? In cleaning and purifying your mystic vision, can you strive

after perfection? In loving the people and governing the kingdom, can you rule

without interference? In opening and shutting the Gate of Heaven, can you play

the part of the Female? In comprehending all knowledge, can you renounce the

mind? (Chapter 10)

Looked at but cannot be seen—That is called the wei (Invisible).
Learned to
but cannot be heard—That is called the xi (Inaudible). Grasped at but
cannot be
touched—That is called the yi (Intangible). These three elude our
inquiries and
hence blend and become One. Not by its rising, is there light. Nor by its
sinking,
is there darkness. Unceasing, continuous, it cannot be defined and
reverts again
to the realm of nothingness. That is why it is called the Form of the
Formless, the
Image of Nothingness. That is why it is called the Elusive. (Chapter 14)

The thing that is called dao is elusive and evasive. Elusive and evasive,
yet
latent in it are forms. Elusive and evasive, yet latent in it are objects.
Dark and
dim, yet latent in it is the life-force. The life-force being very true,
latent in it are
evidences. (Chapter 21)

Before the heaven and earth existed, there was something nebulous:
silent,
isolated, standing alone, changing not, eternally revolving without fail,
worthy to be the mother of all things. I do not know its name and
address it as dao. If
forced to give it a name, I shall call it “da (great)”. (Chapter 25)

Man models himself after the Earth; the Earth models itself after the Heaven; the Heaven models itself after dao; Dao models itself after nature.

(Chapter 25)

The dao in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so

there is nothing which it does not do. (Chapter 37)

The dao produced One, One produced Two, Two produced Three, Three produced all things. (Chapter 42)

The created universe carries the yin at its back and the yang in front. Through the union of the pervading principles, it reaches harmony.

(Chapter 42)

The dao of Heaven, is it not like the bending of a bow? The top comes down and the bottom-end goes up. The extra is shortened and the insufficient

is expanded. It is the way of Heaven to take away from those that have too

much and give to those that have not enough. Not so with man's way: He

takes from those that have not and gives it as tribute to those that have too

much. (Chapter 77)

With all the sharpness of the Way of Heaven, it injures not; with all the doing in the way of the sage he does not strive. (Chapter 81)

How to understand the “dao” advocated by Chinese culture from the perspective of qigong practice?

“Dao” is the concept at the highest level advocated by traditional Chinese culture. All things have and follow their own dao, and finally return to the totally unique “dao”. Lao Zi (a thinker and philosopher in ancient China) observed, “The dao produced One, One produced Two, Two produced Three, Three produced all things.” We can clearly see the significance of “dao” in the system of traditional Chinese culture. This “dao” is not only “standing alone, changing not, eternally revolving without fail”, but also often turns into all existence to cultivate and nourish all things. Qigong cultivation is also among all existence and all things, and is contained in “dao” and “One”.

How to understand “dao” from the perspective of qigong practice?

First

of all, we must make it clear that it is “I myself” who practice qigong and “I

myself” who understand dao. Therefore, to understand “dao” must start from

“I myself”, from my own cognition and from my own heart. Keeping this in

mind, we will find that no matter practicing, working, resting or sleeping, it is

“I myself” who conduct the actions and my “cognition” that perceives.

Thus,

we can experience “dao” with our “heart” at any time, even under the practice

state. Generally speaking, in the state of practice, we are more focused, more

alert and more integrated both physically and mentally. Everyone is different

but roughly so

With the deepening of our practice, we will enter the unique practice state in

which we find that this “I myself” is different from the “I myself” we are familiar

with in our daily state. In other words, the state differences brought by qigong

allow us to experience the feelings of different “I myself”, and qigong practice

breaks our solidified self-identity. This inspired us to further explore “I myself”

and “who I am”

With the gradual in-depth experience of “qi”, we will slowly open the door to the “world of qi”. This world seems different from the “physical world” we are familiar with. Everything in this world is closely related to “I myself” and “my cognition”. It is as real as the physical world. Since the “world of qi” exists based on my “cognition”, I am a real experienter even if others do not believe in “qi”. With this feeling ability getting more expansive and sensitive, the state we perceive becomes more and more rich and unified. Eventually, we will embark on a journey of “Qi-Dao”.

In addition to experiencing “dao” from the perspective of “I myself”, “cognition” and “qi”, there are also many other perspectives that vary from person to person and from time to time. The differences and subtleties of these perspectives can only be perceived by “I myself”. The emergence of various experiences, perspectives and states is also the regular evolution of that “The dao produced One, One produced Two, Two produced Three, Three produced all things

What does “Qi-Dao Harmony” mean? Why do we put forward the academic initiative of “Qi-Dao Harmony”?

“Qi-Dao Harmony” is an academic proposal to direct the development of qigong put forward by Shanghai Qigong Research Institute at the 13th international seminar on qigong in October 2015. It received extensive attention

and echoes from the qigong circles across the world. Here we provide the original text of the Advocacy for “Qi-Dao Harmony” in Modern Qigong at the 13th international seminar on qigong for you to better understand this academic initiative:

The year 2015 is a Chinese year of yin wood sheep (Yi Wei in Chinese). Wood, in Chinese culture on five elements (Wu Xing), is connected to the season of spring. The year 2015 also marks the 30th anniversary of the founding of Shanghai Qigong Research Institute. With a strong belief that the spring of 2015 will bring new hope to qigong study, we hereby advocate the concept of “Qi-Dao Harmony” for its academic advance.

The term Qi-Dao Harmony has two underlying implications. First, it implies that dao is the ultimate goal of traditional Chinese culture and the general orientation for academic qigong advance. Second, it implies that our lives shall combine into one with the dao through perception and understanding of qi. In summary, this term means to achieve and perfect dao through qi exercise. The “qi” here is weighted and refers to practice. The “dao” here is unweighted and refers to principles. Without dao, qi cannot extend; without qi, dao cannot become weighted. Qi finds its origin in dao and dao manifests itself in qi. Qi returns to dao eventually and dao supports qi theoretically. It’s essential for people in academic qigong field to pay equal attention to qi and dao. The two have a principal-subordinate relationship.

The metaphysical dao is the origin of all methods. The physical qi is the practice of all methods. Dao is about the abstract thinking and reveals the laws and rules. Qi is about the subjective feelings and tells experience and perception. Qi and dao constitute the essence of academic idea in Chinese qigong

Let's get a deeper look into the concept of Qi-Dao Harmony. Also known as the "learning of internal evidence", dao is the way to truth. It contains humanistic spirit and physical and mental experience of our ancestors. Dao extends to exercise (gong) and a variety of magic arts including mysterious, qigong and extrasensory phenomena. Today, modern scientific qigong research offers a new insight into the mysteries of life. The phenomenological research rekindles our reflection and respect towards life and enables us to re-discover humanism from modern civilization greatly impacted by science and technology. This is the real value of scientific research on traditional qigong in this materialized world.

We believe the combination of traditional Chinese culture and modern science can help us to reveal the truth of life and return to the origin of the great dao.

Whether the “dao” in the “Qi-Dao Harmony” is “chang dao (absolute dao)” or not?

This is a specialized question. We need to tell the origin of “chang dao (absolute dao)” and “fei chang dao (not absolute dao)” first. These two terms

initially appeared in the first chapter of the classic Dao De Jing: “The dao

that can be told of is not the absolute dao. The names that can be given are

not absolute names.” This classic was compiled by Lao Zi (a thinker and philosopher in ancient China). He put forward the concepts of “absolute dao”

and “not absolute dao”, and held that they were very different from each other.

In short, the so-called “not absolute dao” refers to experiences and laws

that we are familiar with in daily life and that are not eternal, for example,

the seasonal changes, sunrise in the east and sunset in the west, and human’s

birth, senility, illness and death. The so-called “absolute dao” refers to the

eternal origin that cannot be perceived clearly in life and that is similar to the meaning of Taiji. Although both are “dao”, “absolute dao” is the essence

while “not absolute dao” is the utility. Expressed in modern Chinese, the

invariable origin is the essence of “dao” while the eternal change is the utility of “dao”. Interpreting from “Qi-Dao Harmony”, it means that we will gradually recognize the invariable origin behind “qi” through exercise,

application and research of “qi”. This origin is the very “dao” we pursue.

Actually, “Qi-Dao Harmony” covers both “not absolute dao” and “absolute

dao” observed by Lao Zi, namely, the acquired phenomena and laws, and the

innate origin and truth.

What is the relationship of qigong, Taiji Health and Qi-Dao Harmony

“Qi-Dao Harmony” is an academic proposal that clearly expresses the basic attitude of the academic community towards qigong exercise and qigong

research. It is a direction of academic construction in this field. “Taiji Health”

is more about culture to promote health and a platform to introduce new health

concepts and techniques. If Taiji Health is regarded as the carrier to spread Taiji

culture and health techniques, “Qi-Dao Harmony” is its academic core.

Qigong is a physical and mental exercise guided by theories of Taiji and traditional

Chinese medicine. Although the three are interrelated, they have different

connotations and denotations.

Why do we say that one's most direct feelings on "dao" are his feelings on his own life?

"Dao" points to the origin and nature. Lao Zi (a thinker and philosopher in ancient China) defined "dao" as that "Before the heaven and earth existed, there was something nebulous: silent, isolated, standing alone, changing not, eternally revolving without fail, worthy to be the mother of all things. I do not know its name and address it as dao. If forced to give it a name, I shall call it da (great)".

Since it is "worthy to be the mother of all things", it must exist before the heaven and earth existed, and it falls under "Taiji" in theory. All lives are in the state in which all things came into being after the heaven and earth existed, and it falls under "Youji" in theory.

According to the philosophical inference of “existence comes from nonexistence”, Taiji generates all existence, which means that Taiji contains all the lives of all existence, including our own lives. Therefore, life phenomenon itself is the product of the continuous evolution of “dao”. In other words, one’s most direct feelings on “dao” are his feelings on his own life.

This is a theoretical inference, but what are the facts and how is the experience? We need to experience, practice and prove by ourselves.