

FoldUnfold



Qi Gong and Movement Practice
Informed by Body-Mind Centering
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Introduction

FoldUnfold is a Qi Gong and movement practice system organizing the body in different joint relationships that relate center to periphery in four distinct patterns. It's main movement quality is oscillation between sets of complementary joint positions.

The Practice is a synthesis of Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®)*, Qi Gong and movement technique, in the context or setting of Qi Gong practice. The practice is described in this booklet exclusively for standing, though the patterns can be practiced sitting, laying and in free movement. As a Qi Gong practice FoldUnfold is ultimately concerned with sensing Qi and using standing as a path towards centering Qi (life force) and consciousness.

This booklet addresses the Body-Mind Centering student and professional, as well as the general public and especially Qi Gong practitioners. Important terms are defined throughout the text. Some of the BMC terms and explorations require previous BMC training, or information, that isn't included here. However, they are not essential for the basic understanding and use of the practice. One of the aims of the FoldUnfold system is to articulate a movement vocabulary in an analytic and synthetic way that offers an understanding of the deeper organizing and structuring principles underlying Qi Gong forms as well as functional and expressive daily movement. This is done by the simple observation and definition of joint movement combinations, experiencing their different energetic and gestural qualities and contemplating the continuum of form-energy-feeling-gesture.

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I believe that any movement can be a Qi Gong if performed with the right consciousness. Qi Gong is ultimately concerned with the most ordinary movements and postures. The ordinary is the extraordinary.

FoldUnfold and Body-Mind Centering

The key element of the FoldUnfold practice is the SCEY, or fetal rhythm; a movement pattern that has been recognized and named by the creator of Body-Mind Centering (BMC), Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. All movement patterns described here relate to the fetal rhythm as the fundamental pattern of folding and unfolding. According to BMC, the SCEY is the movement expression of the autonomic rhythm, a fluid rhythm that balances the autonomic nervous system and the modulation of internal and external focus and activity. The *SCEY – Simultaneous Condensing Expanding Yield* - movement pattern combines whole body simultaneous flexion, adduction and internal rotation in the condensing phase, and extension, abduction and external rotation in the expanding phase, in a slow rhythm of folding and unfolding that happens effortlessly by yielding to the internal rhythm.

At a certain moment in time I realized that the SCEY feels, to me, like a Qi Gong, and that it feels good practicing it as such. That moment was the initiation of the practice described in this booklet.

The SCEY has a complementary pattern which combines flexion and adduction with external rotation, and extension and abduction with internal rotation. This pattern has a very different feeling. The second pattern has a toning effect while the first has a relaxing effect. The combination of these two patterns and breaking their symmetry into forms in which one side of the body is doing one phase of the pattern (flexion) while the other side is doing the complementary phase

(extension) made it possible to explore many variations. Later I discovered two additional patterns that are not defined in the BMC body of knowledge. FoldUnfold consists of the symmetric and asymmetric variations of these four patterns.

BMC is a very open and explorative approach to movement, as well as a growing body of specific knowledge and techniques, yet it doesn't prescribe many set forms of practice. It lives more in the improvisational, exploratory mode. Qi Gong on the other hand, as a more traditional and highly codified practice is based on the endless repetition of simple set forms. I practiced Qi Gong and martial arts years before I came upon BMC but it is thanks to BMC and dance that I developed an understanding of principles and patterns as well as the freedom of creative exploration of movement. This resulted in the articulation of a Qi Gong technique from the raw materials and principles. I didn't set out to do this, it just happened. I am far from being a Qi Gong master. However, since getting involved with it I feel my experience of Qi has developed rapidly, my enthusiasm for the practice keeps growing and the whole thing keeps unfolding. It works for me and so I hope it can work for others.

Apart from the actual foundation of the FoldUnfold in the SCEY, BMC can be further applied to it by incorporating embodiment of all the body systems and developmental patterns as focuses of sensing and feeling, supporting the formal action in the same way that BMC is applied to yoga asana practice or any other formal movement modality.

Qi Gong, Movement, and Dance

Some years ago, during my graduate studies, I took a course in classical Chinese dance. What struck me about the three styles we studied – classical Chinese (Peking Opera), Mongolian, and Korean – was that they all felt and looked a lot like Qi Gong practice. There was an embodied unity of the formal, the

energetic, and the gestural. These are organic dances. Western dance focuses more on the kinesthetic, the athletic, the abstraction of movement, and the imaginative arrangement of shapes and dynamics, and less on the organic creature wholeness of embodiment. It interests me to bring this organic unity into my own dance and movement. One can often see this in Bhutto dance.

I would say that Qi Gong and contemporary western dance, or movement technique, meet at the interface of two kinds of movement: The first I call 'qi movement' or 'energy movement', and the second – normal kinesthetic movement. By 'energy movement' I mean movement that is slow and constantly sensing Qi.

It feels like the hands are sensing an energetic field and working with that field rather than just moving in space and sensing their own weight, shape and direction. By kinesthetic movement I mean sensation of the body in the ordinary way; its weight, momentum, acceleration, positioning of its parts etc. When one moves fast it becomes more difficult to sense the Qi and the kinesthetic becomes dominant. In FoldUnfold practice we explore a range of movement from stillness and sensing slow energetic movement – Qi, to moving faster and exploring movement per se – kinesthetic. In the process we try to extend the sense of energy into the faster movement and find the possibility of uniting the two aspects. When moving into the kinesthetic, we mainly explore swinging, spinning, and walking.

The Tao of Movement

FoldUnfold can also be described as an experiential study of Yin-Yang, or Taoism, in movement. Taoism is the philosophical/spiritual background of Qi Gong and Tai Chi. The western anatomical and physiological distinction between parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems within

the autonomic nervous system – to which the fetal rhythm is related – fits beautifully into Yin-Yang theory of Taoism and Chinese medicine (sympathetic – Yang, parasympathetic – Yin).

In FoldUnfold we discriminate different levels of the Yin-Yang relationship. The basic one is that the folding movements are the Yin and the unfolding are the Yang. Each pattern moves rhythmically between Yin and Yang extremes as it folds and unfolds. A further discrimination can be made between the two yielding patterns – as Yin, and the two resisting, or asserting patterns – as Yang.

The yielding patterns are those that combine flexion with internal rotation and extension with external rotation. The resisting patterns are those that combine flexion with external rotation and extension with internal rotation. The analysis can continue in more detail. Each of the four basic patterns can be analyzed in terms of its Yin- Yang elements, based on its specific combination of folding and unfolding in different joints.



Chapter 1: **Standing**

Standing meditation is the center of this practice, as it is of many Qi Gong forms. Therefore I will dedicate a few pages to talk just about standing. There is a basic difference between ordinary standing and standing in Qi Gong and Tai Chi practice. This in itself is very intriguing. Why do we bend our knees and our elbows when we practice standing meditation in Qi Gong?

Ordinary standing has been suggested as a dance technique practice by Steve Paxton in the seventies, as part of his development of Contact Improvisation. This is also related to his wider exploration of pedestrian movement in the context of dance. He named it “The Stand” or “The Small Dance”. This is the dance of stretch reflexes that help us maintain verticality with minimum muscular effort. If you try to stand by stacking your bones one on top of the other as closely as possible to the vertical axes you are able to balance with little muscular effort but this stand is not stable. Try it.

Stand, extend - but don't lock - your knees. Try to keep all joints open. You may feel constant small reflexive adjustments keeping you from falling in all directions. This is the 'small dance' of standing still.

However if you place your feet a little further apart, about shoulder width, and bend your knees, you will be much more stable. Try it. The 'small dance' has pretty much disappeared. If you bend your elbows, just a little bit, extending them out to the sides, you might feel a flow of energy moving into your hands. This is standing meditation Qi Gong posture.

It is understandable that the bending of the knees, engaging the quadriceps muscles and stabilizing the knees and pelvis should stabilize the whole body; and at first I thought that perhaps in order to sense Qi and center one's energy it is

necessary to quiet down the “noise” and instability of the small dance. But this explanation didn’t feel satisfactory. The question also remained: why do I feel energy through my hands when I bend my elbows and not when the hands are just hanging there suspended quietly from the shoulders?

Tensegrity

The key to understanding Qi Gong standing, I believe, has to do with the tensegrity model of the body. A compression structure finds its stability by stacking rigid elements vertically, using gravity to stabilize it. This is why vertical walls are better than slanted walls. A tensegrity model uses tensile elements as well as rigid ones. The tensile elements pull on the rigid ones and the structure’s integrity is maintained by this tension; hence – tensegrity. In a pure tensegrity structure the rigid elements do not touch one another and are not vertical. Interestingly, it is quite rare to find a mammal that normally fully extends its limbs. One example is the elephant, another is the human being.

Today, in the somatic field, the tensegrity model is being adopted as a better model for understanding human anatomy than the compression model. The rigid elements are the bones and the tensile elements are fascia and muscle. If you look at the skeleton of a standing cat it is obvious that it cannot be a compression model because the knees are bent, the thigh and the foreleg are not aligned vertically and obviously they would collapse if it wasn’t for muscles that were pulling on them. However when you look at a standing human skeleton it isn’t that obvious, the bones seem to be stacked vertically, more or less. But as we know from balancing a broom on our finger, or from the small dance of standing, keeping this alignment requires constant work of nervous and muscular systems. When we stand with our body extended, as in the small dance, we are minimizing tensegrity

and maximizing compression. We conserve muscular energy and extend our visual horizon.

Tensegrity emphasizes the role of the connective tissue web (fascia) throughout the body and the connection of all its parts. This fascial connectivity might be directly related to the flow of energy – Qi – throughout the body and the connection to the body’s center of gravity in the lower abdomen which is also known as the Tan Tien, where the Qi is centered. The key to standing meditation and the development of Qi in Qi – Gong standing exercises is relaxation and mindfulness within increased tensegrity.

How to stand

Standing and the hips: Two preparations for standing.

These are preparations for the basic standing posture as well as ways to release and adjust the standing anytime during the practice.

1. Unstable hips (belly dance):

Find your standing position. Start tilting your pelvis back and forth, initiating from your tail. Tilt your tail down and in. This will round (flex) your spine. Tilt your tail up and out. This will arch (extend) your spine. Go back and forth a few times. Now tilt your tail to one side. This will create a side bending of your spine. Do the same to the other side and back and forth, slowly a few times. Now create a circular movement passing through the four points around your pelvis: tilting to the front, side, back, other side and front again. Follow this slow and sensual movement of your hips. Change direction. Play with the speed and form of the movement. Let your hip release chaotically in all directions. Notice that the tilting of the hips sequences all the way up your spine into your head.

BMC focuses: Navel radiation and synovial fluid support this movement. It is possible to initiate all directions from the tail or to initiate the tucking in from the pubis, the left tilt from the left sits bone [Ischium], the back tilt from the tail, and the right tilt from the right sits bone. You can also initiate from your viscera.

Find your own little belly dance. Gradually come back to the circles and let them become smaller and smaller until you arrive at stillness with a balanced pelvis centered at the perineum (the center of your pelvic floor, between the genitals and the anus).

BMC focus: Find the support of your perineal body. Women can find extra glandular support for this exercise in their ovaries.



2. Stable Hips (Floating Pelvis):

This is the classical Qi Gong rolling of the hips. Imagine your pelvis is a basin filled to the rim with water. You want to move it but not to spill the water.

Place your hands on your waist and hips as support and as a visual indication of the balance of your hips. Try moving your pelvis back and forth and side to side and then in a circle, both ways. What will occur is a shift of your weight. As you shift your weight to the front your heels might leave the floor, all the weight will be on the balls of your feet and toes, and your knees will extend. As you shift back, the weight will move onto your heels and your knees will bend. It is as if you are going to sit down on a chair. As you shift to the left your weight will go onto your left foot. Check that this is so by lifting your right foot off the ground. The same applies to the right.

Connect the feet with your pelvic floor: pubis-balls of the feet, tail-heels, right sits bone-right foot, left sits bone-left foot. In this sort of circling the hips are drawing a circle around your feet. Your spine stays centered and close to vertical. You are moving your torso as a unit, continuously pouring your weight into the ground. Let your upper body become empty as your lower body becomes full. Play with this gliding of your hips parallel to the floor in all directions; let it develop into a deep grounded step in all directions.

*BMC focus: initiate your movement from your perineal body.
Men may find extra glandular support for this exercise in their testicles.*



Just Standing

Stand in a normal, balanced standing position. Now move your feet slightly apart, about shoulder width, inner (medial) borders of feet parallel. Bend your knees and find your comfort in this stand; try to maintain a neutral pelvis, not tilted forward or backward, left or right. Play with the amount of flexion in your knees, ankles and hip joints. They all go together of course, but you can initiate from each. Find your ease in this sitting-standing. Imagine you are sitting on a high stool.

As you are standing still your consciousness is most important. This is a meditation practice and the focus of the mind affects the ability to stand and to center the Qi. You want to develop a witnessing consciousness. You are both inside your body and witnessing as if from a distance. You are aware of your body and also of the environment all around you, gazing at the horizon. You are aware of your thoughts and feelings, constantly coming back with your awareness to the present moment and its sensations. You may use all the embodiment tools you have to move in more focused ways through your body with your mind. You may bring some awareness to your Tan Tien in the lower abdomen. You may bring awareness to the falling of your weight into the ground through your skeleton. You want to keep an open, awake awareness, balanced between the infinite different active choices of focus it might take and the openness of simply witnessing what is.

BMC Exploration: Comparing normal standing and Qi Gong standing positions.

There are obvious and subtle differences in the experience of the two ways of standing - normal standing (the small dance) and Qi Gong standing. BMC teaches us how to differentiate our sensations, and mind states by centering our awareness on the different body systems and the structures within each one of them. This offers us a means to compare the two stands in great detail.

Following is an exploration of ordinary standing and Qi Gong standing in which we just stand and notice which fluids, body systems and patterns come to the foreground in each stand. This exploration is for those practiced in BMC.

Take a few minutes to stand a normal extended stand and notice what you notice. Then go through the six fluids and notice how they are present. Now move your feet slightly apart, bend your knees and elbows, find your comfort in this stand, and try to maintain a neutral pelvis, not tilted forward or backward, left or right. Play with the amount of flexion in your knees, ankles and hip joints, they all go together of course, but you can initiate from each. Find your ease in this sitting-standing. It's a little like sitting on a high stool. As you are working on your Qi Gong stand notice what you notice and then go through the six fluids and notice how they are present. Switch back to normal stand and notice your skeletal, muscular, and nervous systems. Go into Qi Gong stand and notice these systems now. Go back to normal stand and notice your organ and endocrine systems and compare with Qi Gong stand.

(This order of exploration is arbitrary so you can find your own order; add the sensory systems, breath... My emphasis on the fluids first is just my own preference.)

I offer some of my experience of this comparison: Normal standing, I sense, is more skeletal than Qi Gong standing which feels more muscle. This is predictable as there is more engagement of muscle in Qi Gong stand. Furthermore, in normal standing, "The Stand", we are encouraged to sense our bones stacking one of top of the other with minimum muscle holding. As we experience muscle and bone also as different mind qualities the comparison becomes more telling. This becomes more detailed as we add the fluids and other systems, and perhaps a picture emerges of the different "creature" we are in each stand.

My experience is that Normal Stand emphasizes CSF, synovial

and cellular fluids, while in Qi Gong stand I feel blood, lymph and interstitial fluids come to the foreground.

The blood-CSF polarity: This fluid polarity relates to the earthy, grounded, weighted, passionate, visceral feeling of the Qi Gong stand compared to the tall, light, neutral, detached feeling of normal standing. I feel more in touch with my organs, especially the abdominal ones and the earth in Qi Gong stand and to my nervous system and the heavens in normal stand.

The Lymph-synovial polarity: This fluid polarity relates to the focused, ready for action, martial artsy feeling of the Qi Gong stand compared with the unstable, loose, wobbly, hanging out feeling of the small dance of normal relaxed standing.

The interstitial-cellular polarity: this fluid polarity relates to the toned resistant feeling of the Qi Gong stand compared with the relaxed yielding low tone feeling of the normal stand. This polarity relates to the greater engagement of muscle in Qi Gong stand and bone in normal stand.

A note on this division of the fluids into 3 polarities: Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen introduced the first polarity in her teaching as the earth-heaven polarity, blood underlying push and CSF underlying reach. I like to pair up the other four fluids in the way I just did. The lymph-synovial polarity underlies order-chaos, focus-confusion, rigidity-flexibility, holding-releasing, control-abandon, seriousness-humor. The cellular-interstitial polarity underlies internal-external, yielding-resisting, being-doing, merging-separating.

Standing and the Hands

The human standing position has created a division between the limbs: The lower limbs relate mostly with the earth and the upper limbs relate mostly with space. The legs are the Yin and the hands are the Yang. In standing practice the legs stabilize and ground the posture and the hands create the fine tuning

and the specific expression, gesture, mudra. I use the yogic term 'mudra'. In yoga there are many mudras – hand positions that really are different ways of holding internal and external space. While in Yoga or Indian dance these might be many and often have very abstract symbolic meanings, like a sign language, they still are grounded in an energy field and flow they create. Unfortunately I am not an expert in Qi Gong theory, so I might be missing a Chinese term for hand positions that is better than the borrowed 'mudra'. In Qi Gong the mudras are essentially energetic and not symbolic. They are not as various. In Tai Chi there are basically 3 hand positions: The soft open hand, the soft fist, and holding all the finger tips together. In different Qi Gong forms there are others. "The Five Animal Frolic" has a specific hand position for each animal.

The basic limb positions of the FoldUnfold practice can also be seen as mudras, as ways of holding space energetically and expressively, as gestures. It is this unity of form-energy-gesture that is so interesting to explore.

Basic Standing Meditation Positions:

Notice that these three basic standing positions are close yet, due to the hand positions, each has a different energetic quality. Each holds space in a different way.



Standing and the Fetal Rhythm

The fetal rhythm develops in the womb, in its weightless fluid environment, while standing is the posture most related to gravity. Standing limits the freedom of the fetal rhythm because the feet must stick to the ground. Though the feet do not fully flex and extend, adduct and abduct, or internally and externally rotate in the standing practice, they do some of these movements in a slight way that is still quite effective. These small shifts alter dramatically the distribution of forces throughout the body because the feet transfer the whole body weight into the ground. Because the feet are in a closed chain they affect the rest of the body in a gross, concrete way. The hands are in an open chain and so can move independently of the rest of the body and affect it in a more subtle way. (Standing on one leg we can engage one leg together with the hands and get closer to the whole body experience of the fetal rhythm.)

Though the fetal rhythm developed in the fluid weightless early womb environment, it actually is very logical in terms of standing and its relationship to gravity. The fetal rhythm in its two phases corresponds to two natural equilibrium responses: spatial reach and navel yielding.

If you stand a normal stand and let your pelvis fall forward there will be a reflexive rearrangement of the body to prevent falling in the following way: the legs and feet will extend, heels coming off the ground. The back will extend too, as well as the head, going backwards to balance the weight of the pelvis. The arching back of the torso will cause the scapulae to rotate backwards towards the spine - simply the effect of gravity on the scapulae. This rolling back of the shoulder blades will create a slight passive external rotation of the palms. This equilibrium response is called Spatial Reach.

If you stand a normal stand and let your pelvis fall backwards,

the reflexive rearrangement of the body in relation to gravity will be as follows: the legs will flex shifting the weight onto the heels. The torso and head will flex forward at the hip joints and along the spine to balance the weight of the pelvis going backwards. As the torso falls forwards the scapulae will rotate forwards upon the ribs, again simply because of gravity, and create a slight passive internal rotation of the palms. This equilibrium response is called Navel Yielding.

It is beautiful how a very early whole body movement pattern underlies and reinforces the mature equilibrium response in standing so that the standing body naturally moves into this pattern.

Chapter 2: FoldUnfold - The Four Patterns

Joint Movements and Planes of Movement

The FoldUnfold practice is based on the SCEY. The SCEY can be analyzed in terms of the three planes of movement and the kinds of joint movements they involve. FoldUnfold uses the language of anatomy and kinesiology for description and analysis of its movement patterns. This language has been formative even in the discovery of some of the patterns, as will be explained. So first let us clarify the technical terms. I include only the main joint movements, those that are needed for the purpose of this study.

Joint Movements

Flexion



Adduction



Extension



Abduction



Internal and External Rotations

Internal rotation of the femur at the hip joint



External rotation of the femur at the hip joint



Pronation: turning the palm so it faces down, thumbs turned in.



Supination: turning the palm so it faces up, thumb turned out.



Inversion: turning the foot in



Eversion: turning the foot out



Folding movements are flexion, adduction and internal rotation.

Unfolding movements are extension, abduction and external rotation.

The Planes of Movement

There are six directions: up, down, front, back, right, and left.

These combine into three dimensions as follows:

The vertical dimension: up & down.

The sagittal dimension: back & front

The horizontal dimension: left & right

A plane is a combination of two dimensions:

The vertical plane combines the vertical and horizontal dimensions.

The sagittal plane combines the sagittal and vertical dimensions.

The horizontal plane combines the horizontal and sagittal dimensions.

The planes relate to joint movements as follows:

The joint movements in the sagittal plane are flexion and extension. The main joints for these movements, for the purpose of the Fold/Unfold patterns, are the elbows and knees.

The joint movements in the vertical plane are adduction and abduction. The main joints for this movement are the shoulder and hip joints.

The joint movements in the horizontal plane are internal rotation (hand pronation, foot eversion) and external rotation (hand supination, foot inversion). The main joints for the upper limbs are in the forearm between the radius and ulna bones. In the lower limbs the main joint for this movement is the hip joint (together with the sub-Talar joints in the ankle).

The Joint Movements and the Definition of the Four FoldUnfold Patterns

The SCEY- The Fetal Rhythm, is the foundational pattern because, phenomenologically, it is the early embryonic movement pattern, and logically, because it is the one in which folding movements occur together in all three planes of movement and unfolding movements occur together in all three planes of movement. In the condensing phase the SCEY involves flexion, adduction and internal rotation. In the expanding phase it involves extension, abduction and external rotation. The movement in each plane goes from one pole to its opposite, from flexion to extension, from adduction to abduction and from internal rotation to external rotation.



The second pattern involves a contradiction: The movement in the horizontal plane contradicts the movement in the sagittal and vertical planes. While flexion and adduction join together in the folding phase they are joined by external rotation which is an unfolding movement. In the complementary phase extension and abduction (unfolding) are joined by internal rotation (folding). I call this pattern "Boundary Maker".



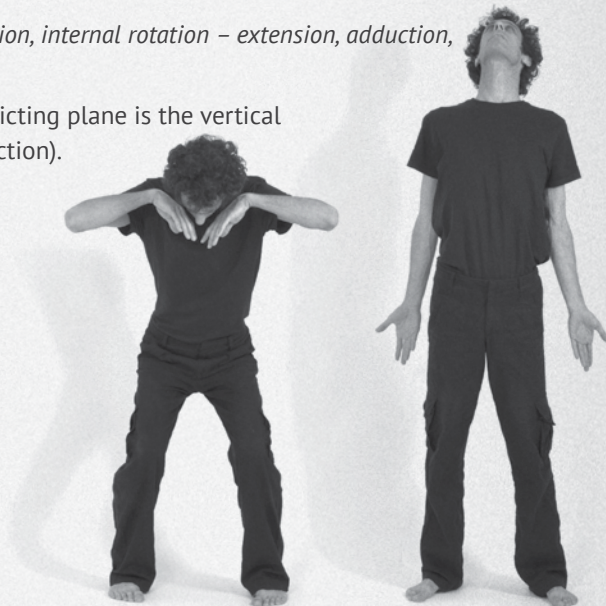
At some point it came to my mind that there are other movement patterns that exist in which the sagittal or vertical planes move against the grain of the two other planes. I realized it is possible to extract a more general principle of movement operating in both the SCEY (Fetal Rhythm) and Boundary Maker:

Moving in all three planes simultaneously, oscillating, independently in each plane, from one pole which is either the center of the body (folded) or it's periphery (unfolded) to the opposite pole which is either the periphery or the center.

By applying this rule we can construct two more patterns that combine flexion with abduction and extension with adduction. I call these the elbow-knee patterns because as the arms and thighs abduct and elbows and knees flex the elbows and knees stick out to the sides:

1. Flexion, abduction, internal rotation – extension, adduction, external rotation.

Here the contradicting plane is the vertical (adduction, abduction).



2. Flexion, abduction, external rotation – extension, adduction, internal rotation.

Here the contradicting plane is the sagittal (flexion, extension).



The Four Patterns

The SCEY is the simplest of the patterns that can be constructed by this principle. This is because it unites the three movements that go towards the center (condensing/folding) in one phase and the three movements that move away from center (expanding/unfolding) in the other phase. It is the one pattern that holds no internal contradiction - no tension. This helps to understand its yielding quality and its primary role.

All together there are four FoldUnfold patterns:

1. *Flexion, adduction, internal rotation – extension, abduction, external rotation* known as SCEY or “The Fetal Rhythm”. I also call it “Large Yin”.

2. *Flexion, adduction, external rotation – extension, abduction, internal rotation* which I name “Boundary Maker”, or “Large Yang”.

3. *Flexion, abduction, internal rotation – extension, adduction, external rotation* which I name “Roller”, or “Small Yin”.

4. *Flexion, abduction, external rotation – extension, adduction, internal rotation* which I name “Compressor”, or “Small Yang”.

Note: In all of these patterns flexion of the limbs is united with flexion of the torso and head and extension of the limbs with extension of the torso and head. If we decide to separate the torso from the limbs we will double the number of patterns (the added ones would resemble ISNR reflex).

Two Yin Patterns and Two Yang Patterns

I find that the adduction/abduction plane of movement is less important in determining the energetic quality of the pattern and that the main relationship is between flexion/extension and internal/external rotations. So there are two meta patterns:

1. *Flexion, internal rotation – extension, external rotation* - The Yin Patterns.

This is the Yin, or yielding pattern, including patterns 1 & 3 – Fetal Rhythm & Roller (and variations in all the different degrees of adduction-abduction between the two).

2. *Flexion, external rotation – extension, internal rotation* – The Yang Patterns

This is the Yang, toning or resisting pattern, including patterns 2 & 4 - Boundary Maker & Compressor (and variations in all the different degrees of adduction-abduction between the two).

One of the reasons, perhaps, that the vertical plane is less important is that in most functional movements it is pretty much excluded. The inclusion of full abduction brings the movement primarily into the vertical plane, the limbs move out to the side; while most functional movements, including locomotion, physical confrontation and exchange, manipulation of objects, as well as most gestures, stay close to the sagittal plane - the limbs move forward and back. The elbow-knee patterns are more functional than the large patterns.

Simultaneous Movement in Several Joints, Each Moving in a Different Plane - Resulting in Linear Movement

The combination of movement in the three planes simultaneously, but in different joints is very organic and functional. Surprisingly it can result in simplicity and directness of movement of the hand or foot: the combination of the movements in the vertical plane (adduction and abduction) at the shoulder and hip joints together with movement in the sagittal plane (flexion and extension) at the elbow and knee results in linear movement of hand or foot - in space. If you want to bring something to your mouth in a straight line, not in an arc, you must flex your elbow and abduct your arm at the same time. If you just flex the elbow the hand moves in an arc. The addition of the spiral of the rotation (the horizontal plane) adds integrity and flow, and a dynamic distribution of energy to the movement as well as a functional reorientation of the hand or foot towards an object.

The Yin-Yang Division and Relationship

Let's compare the Yin and Yang patterns with greater detail. What defines the Yin patterns is the alignment of the sagittal and horizontal planes of movement - the alignment of flexion with internal rotation and extension with external rotation. Folding is folding and unfolding is unfolding. This gives the pattern its flowing, yielding, effortless quality. What defines the Yang patterns is the twist and tension created by the combination of folding and unfolding in the same phase of movement - flexion with external rotation and extension with internal rotation. This twist goes against the grain of the passive movement of the skeleton. It demands some effort and creates an active spiral.

I will try to demonstrate this: Stand with arms hanging passively from the shoulders. Now fold/flex the elbows with

the least possible effort. Did your hands rise internally rotated or externally rotated? If they rose externally rotated try again eliminating all extraneous energy. If your hands ended up externally rotated (in the Yang pattern) this is probably because the Yang pattern is a more mature, familiar, functional and acceptable pattern. They rose this way out of habit. Holding the flexed Yin position might feel awkward, strangely passive, even meek, but this is the path of least resistance for the skeleton to fold in.

A BMC speculation: Yin Sliding, Yang Binding

When moving in the Yin patterns it feels to me like there is more sliding in the muscles and in the Yang patterns more binding. While the SCEY is a very slow folding and unfolding the movement can also happen easily very fast with a sense of sliding and less control. The Yang patterns feel much more controlled and held by binding in the muscle fibers. I wonder if the twist created in the connective tissue in the Yang patterns goes down all the way to the microscopic level of the fascia increasing the binding factor in the muscle fibers.

The Gestural and Functional Aspect of the Patterns

A fascinating aspect of the Yin-Yang division is the gestural quality of the patterns. A gesture is a movement that functions as human communication. The gesture means something, it does not do something. It doesn't physically act on the environment, it is essentially symbolic.

The extended phases are the more obvious gesturally, perhaps because one stretches out one's hand when wanting to communicate across the empty space towards another person. What is the expressive difference between an extended hand facing up and an extended hand facing down?

In the Yin pattern the palm faces upward (it is supinated). What is the feeling of this gesture and what conventional gestures use this position of the hand? Gestures have both a felt quality

and a conventional meaning (a sign language). Usually there is a correlation between the felt sense of a gesture and the conventional meaning it conveys. The conventional meaning most probably has its origin in the felt quality. What I want to point out is that there is continuity from the formal level of joint movement definition, through the energetic qi level, the psychological feeling level to the communicational level.

Let's look at the Yin pattern first: What do you feel when you stretch out your hand palm facing up or when you see another performing this gesture? In what social interactions would you perform this gesture or see another performing it?

A few examples: A host welcoming you into their home, saying "come", offering a helping hand, a beggar asking for money, somebody asking "why?", "please", pleading, reconciliation, traffic policeman signaling you to move on. With both hands open to the sides – the initial movement of an embrace, gesture of surrender, "I give up".

And how does it feel extending a hand palm facing down (pronated)? And in what social interactions is this gesture used?

A few examples: The traffic police man signaling you "stop", any variation of "stop" like "enough", one hand up, saying, "Here I am!", asking to speak, volunteering for a task.

The Functional Aspect

When we observe functional movement involving these two joint movement combinations we can discover the Yin-Yang division is quite distinct.

In movement relating to the floor, or any resistant surface, pushing will always involve extension combined with internal rotation. Pulling an object, or taking an object will, usually, involve the complementary phase – flexion with external rotation. The hand to mouth pattern is an example. However in an Aikido roll, one is yielding to the floor. The hand reaches to the floor facing up, back of hand touching the floor. This is the

Yin pattern.

Most telling are actions involving both hands. The dominant hand will be extended and pronated, manipulating the object, while the other hand, extended and supinated, will be holding the object. Examples are: Writing on a note pad, feeding a baby, peeling an orange. The Yang, dominant hand is above the receptive hand and facing down, while the passive, Yin hand is underneath facing up creating the space, container and stability for the action of the Yang hand.

The Yin hand creates the ground, the container for the event and the Yang hand creates the specific focus, pathway and action.



Thanks to our opposing thumb the Yin-Yang division also occurs within each hand. The young generation today is developing this differentiation of the thumb more rapidly through the use of smart phones. The smart phone is held by the four Yin fingers while the Yang thumb moves around on the surface of the touch screen.



Chapter 3: The Practice Forms

The four patterns can be played with in a variety of ways that are divided into two main categories: symmetrical forms and asymmetrical forms.

Symmetrical Forms

2 Hands

The hands form the patterns while the feet, on the floor, join with the little movement that is possible: some flexion and extension and some internal and external rotation. There are two options for the feet: The feet can either stay on the ground which limits their participation in the rotations, or the heels may rise which enables significant internal and external rotation. Raising the heels, however, compromises stability and grounding.

2 Hands Circular Forms

(The text does not include a detailed description of these patterns.)

The oscillatory nature of the patterns is modified into a circular pattern so that the hands rise and descend while folding and unfolding, creating a circular movement instead of the simple back and forth oscillation of the pure patterns. These forms resemble classical Qi Gong forms.

The two circles are created by combining the large Yin pattern with the small Yin (elbow-knee) pattern, and by combining the large Yang pattern with the small Yang (elbow-knee) pattern.

Another variation are the horizontal circles - hands moving on a surface, like swimming, the hands moving back and forth and to the sides.

Semi-Symmetrical Forms:

2 Hands + Leg - Balancing Forms

Balancing on one leg, the free leg joins the hands with full range of motion. This mode is the closest to the whole body executing the pattern that is possible while standing.

There are 2 variations:

1. Kick - the leg is free and extends and abducts as far as is comfortable.
2. Stretch - the hand on the same side holds the moving foot enabling fuller extension, abduction and rotation. This variation gives a real stretch and enables holding the extended position with ease for some time. It requires a relatively supple body for its execution.

Note: It is possible to perform asymmetrical movement with two hands and one leg. These patterns are not shown in this booklet. You can figure them out yourself after learning the asymmetrical hand patterns.

Asymmetrical Forms - Rotations & Spins

In the asymmetrical forms one side of the body performs one phase of the pattern while the other side performs the complementary phase.

Example: If we are doing the fetal rhythm, the left upper limb will fold while the right upper limb unfolds and vice versa. This is performed in various speeds and degrees of spinal rotation. From slow hand movements only, to slow rotations of the whole torso and head, to faster swinging from side to side, to spinning.

Note: Every pattern has two rotational variations: one in which the body rotates in the direction of the extending hand, the other

in which the body rotates in the direction of the flexing hand. The photos show only one rotation for each pattern.

In the asymmetrical patterns the quality of the movement also varies. It changes from slow 'qi feeling' movement to faster, 'normal kinesthetic' swinging movement involving acceleration and momentum in faster rotations that develop into spins.

Stages of development of a rotation:

1. The hands performing the opposite phases of a pattern, or even just holding the positions. Head and torso not rotating.
2. As the hands move the torso and head begin to follow with a growing range of slow rotation.
3. The rotation gradually becomes a swing from side to side as the movement becomes faster and shifts from feeling qi to normal feeling weight (kinesthetic).
4. The rotating swing develops into a spin as the body cannot twist further and the momentum of the rotation is released into a spin. (It is possible to practice at first half spins, turning 180° instead of 360°, and later double spins.)
5. The process can then be reversed slowing down through the stages back to stillness.

This booklet presents only movements in which the whole body is expressing one pattern. Once these pure patterns are embodied it is possible to begin to combine them, different limbs performing different patterns, and so there are endless possibilities.

Opposite page: Examples from left to right: symmetrical, semi-symmetrical and asymmetrical forms.



Chapter 4: The Four Patterns in Detail

The Large Patterns

The two large patterns are the ones that join flexion with adduction and extension with abduction. The rotations do not affect the gross size and shape of the movement. So in both the yielding fetal rhythm and the complementary pattern, the mature, asserting, boundary making pattern, the general shape of the body moves from a very condensed position in one phase to a very expanded position in the complementary phase. These patterns express two basic relationships to self and to world.

SCEY - Simultaneous Condensing Expanding Yield Large Yin - The Fetal Rhythm

Flexion, adduction, internal rotation – extension, abduction, external rotation

This is the large Yin pattern, the foundation of movement in all the planes and of all the other patterns. It is the only pattern that has no internal tension. All planes fold together and unfold together. During the folding (condensing) phase the body assumes the most condensed position and during the unfolding it assumes the most expanded position.

BMC explanation: This pattern is the outer movement expression of the internal autonomic rhythm that underlies the balance between the two complementary basic modes of being governed by the two parts of the autonomic nervous system: the sympathetic (Yang) and the parasympathetic (Yin). This rhythm is a slow folding and unfolding that you can feel and follow. The autonomic rhythm develops during the first month of embryonic development.

Stand in the basic standing position and listen to your internal movement.

When does it feel like you want to expand and when does the body feel drawn in, condensing.

Begin to ride this wave effortlessly. It is a yielding pattern, it happens without effort when you let go into it, when you yield to it. If you don't feel any internal rhythm, just start moving, folding and unfolding your limbs and torso and trust that your body knows when to expand and when to condense.

Once you have the general feeling and movement, begin to pay attention to the precise movements of the joints. Make sure you are internally rotating your palms (pronating) and feet (inverting) during the condensing phase and externally



rotating them (supinating and everting) during the expanding phase. It is most possible that you did the opposite because this feels more natural and familiar.

The feet are on the floor and cannot move freely, however you can slightly bring your toes closer during the folding phase, and shift your weight onto the medial part of the sole, and during the unfolding phase you can lift your heels from the floor and bring them closer together (turning out the toes) shifting the weight to the lateral side of the foot.

Notice that you want to move all joints simultaneously so that the movement takes place equally everywhere in your body. Maintain the yielding quality, don't push yourself to open more than what feels effortless and tensionless. Don't create tension in your lower back or neck. Find the range of movement that fits your own body and not some ideal body.

This movement isn't a stretch. Try not to lock your elbows and knees when extending. Keep all joints open. When unfolding extend your head back as much as feels right and look up to the sky. When folding, flex your neck forward and look at the ground in front of you. Your back will extend when unfolding and flex when folding.

Notice how the back and forth movement of the pelvis is balanced by the forth and back movement of the head. Align the rhythm with the equilibrium responses: navel yielding in the folding phase and spatial reach in the unfolding phase, so that you keep your standing balance.

As you move, folding and unfolding, look for the moment, in the middle of your path, where you are upright and balanced on your vertical axis between flexion and extension and your hands are facing one another in the middle of their path, neither pronated nor supinated. Your weight at this point is balanced on your feet between front and back and medial and lateral sides, and your gaze is straight ahead to the horizon.

This point during the folding phase is like the fall equinox. The folded position is like the winter solstice. The balanced point in the middle of the unfolding is like the spring equinox and the open, unfolded position is like the summer solstice.

What is the energetic feeling of this pattern? What is the emotional feeling of this pattern? Identifying with it as a gesture, what does it mean and communicate?



Balancing Forms

Once you are familiar with the symmetrical hand movements you can add the balancing, or 'kick' patterns, adding one leg to the two hands.

First do just the leg. The lower limb is trying to make the same shape as the upper limb. Shift your weight to one foot, and riding your internal rhythm, find the moment to fold in the other leg, flexing the knee and bringing it up towards your chest as you flex your back towards the knee. Then, extend the foot out to your side (extension, abduction, external rotation).

Add the hands, so that as you fold (condense) one elbow comes towards your knee, even touching some part of the folding leg. As you unfold (expand) your hands spread out to the side together with your foot. A further challenge is to look up to the skies while opening and balancing. Extending the foot requires flexibility and this is very much an innate, genetic factor, so don't push yourself. You can extend your leg very low, the height doesn't matter. It is about feeling freedom of movement of hands and leg together, the closest we can get to all limbs moving together. Enjoy the freedom of movement.

The leg stretch option: As you fold and unfold hold the big toe with the hand on the same side and hold the stretched (extended) position for as long as you like.



Asymmetrical Form

Stand in standing meditation position and recall the symmetrical fetal rhythm. Now let one hand fold while the other unfolds (one hand is flexed, internally rotated and adducted and the other is extended, externally rotated and abducted). Reverse the movement so the folded hand unfolds and the unfolded folds. Notice that there is a point at the middle of the hands' journey where they are facing one another holding the space right in front of your heart. Notice also that your torso is not rhythmically flexing and extending during the asymmetrical pattern; it stays upright and balanced, the gaze to the horizon.

Gradually let your head and torso turn towards the extending hand, looking beyond it, then turning to the other side as the hands rotate. As you rotate from side to side your weight shifts to the foot towards which you are rotating. Gradually increase the rotation so that you are looking further behind yourself.

Let the quality of movement gradually change from slow qi sensing to a faster swinging movement, letting the hands fall and rise in the swing, feeling their weight.

The next stage is letting the swinging rotation develop into a spin. It might be easier to start with half a spin going continuously in one direction. If you are spinning to the right, spin 180° , swing back to the left without moving your feet, then spin another 180° to the right again, completing the circle, and continuing, changing direction if you are getting dizzy.

When performing the full spin do the spin each time on the third swing, so that you change direction every time: Swing left, swing right, spin left, swing right, swing left, spin right...

As you are practicing this development, notice that you can

put an emphasis on the extending hand and the centrifugal movement going out following the open hand into space, or on the folding hand and the centripetal movement falling into your heart. It might be easier at first to play with these two initiations by moving only one hand. When you are moving both hands after differentiating the centrifugal and centripetal movements, you can integrate both, feeling how both can contribute equally to the spin.

You can experiment with lifting the folding foot off the ground, initiating the spin from the knee rather than the hands.

The picture on the right shows the beginning of a spin.



Large Yang - Boundary Maker

Flexion, adduction, external rotation – extension, abduction, internal rotation.

This is the large Yang pattern. It probably feels more familiar and more natural than the fetal rhythm because it is the mature pattern. An inner tension is created by the horizontal plane movements of internal and external rotations that go against the direction of the sagittal and vertical plane movements. There is a sense of resistance and of establishing boundaries, and division between self and the world.

Stand in basic stand. Fold your hands towards your heart palms facing your heart. This is a much more familiar position than the fetal rhythm. The thumbs are turned out in external rotation. The hands cross one another, they cross the midline. Simultaneously bend your knees, your weight coming back to your heels and pushing the knees out, bring the weight onto the lateral side of your feet.

Now unfold until your hands are extended and open to the sides, palms facing out. Your hands have internally rotated now, thumbs pointing in. Simultaneously extend your legs' weight coming onto your toes and balls of your feet and onto the medial side (inversion of the foot). Let the heels open to the sides with the internal rotation of the thighs. Let your spine extend, as well, with the unfolding and flex with the folding.

You may find that the movement doesn't go as far as it did in the fetal rhythm, your head not sinking as far forward and down to the floor and not looking as far up to the sky. Find your own rhythm. You might find that it is a faster one than the fetal rhythm.

What is the energetic feeling of this pattern? What is the emotional feeling of this pattern? Identifying with it as gesture, what does it mean and communicate?



Balancing Form

Try the one legged pattern in the same general way as in the fetal rhythm. This one looks like the classical karate side kick (Yoko Geri).



Asymmetrical Form

Following the same progression as with the fetal rhythm, explore alternating the hands slowly, staying centered, then rotating the torso. As you rotate from side to side your weight shifts to the foot towards which you are rotating. Continue swinging and spinning, and slow down again back to stillness.

Notice that in this pattern the palms face away from each other, while in the fetal rhythm they face each other. This creates a difference in the energetic feeling and meaning of the movement. The Yin patterns maintain a wholeness, the hands holding the space between them. The Yang patterns create a separation pushing one part of the space toward the body (the flexing hand), and the other part of space away from the body (the extending hand). This tension, stretching of the space, duality and friction are essential elements of the Yang patterns. There is an assertion: "This is me/mine and this is not me/mine."



The Elbow-Knee Patterns, Small Patterns

These patterns are smaller in terms of the size of movement in space. They don't move between extremes of condensing and expanding as do the large patterns. They are less dramatic, and are more about a functional relationship to the world.

There is an inner-outer balance between the two phases of each pattern due to the contradictory pairings of abduction of the shoulder and hip with flexion of the elbow and knee, and adduction of the shoulder and hip with extension of the elbow and knee. Notice that the flexed hand rises higher in these patterns – up to the mouth, while in the large patterns it comes to the heart. The extended hand is in, close to the thigh, aligned with the body, while in the large patterns it moves out to the side perpendicularly to the body.

The hand has a general up and down, vertical movement compared with the center to side, horizontal movement of the large patterns.

The elbow-knee patterns and especially the asymmetrical variations resemble classical Qi Gong forms, much more than the large patterns. They will be very familiar to the Qi Gong and Tai Chi practitioner.

Small Yin - Roller

Flexion, abduction, internal rotation – extension, adduction, external rotation.

This is the small Yin pattern. The opposing plane here is the vertical (movements of adduction and abduction).

The feeling of the movement is of inversion, or of rolling in and unrolling. The image I have is of rolling and unrolling a rug. The leg in the flexed position is like that of a male dog peeing or of a human getting on a bike.

Stand in basic standing position. Raise your elbows to the sides while flexing them and pronating your thumbs so that the back side of your fingers arrives at the level of your mouth as your mouth comes towards the hands with the flexion of the spine. Simultaneously flex your legs and sink lower, your weight into your heels and toes medially rotated, weight on the medial side of the foot.

Now extend your whole body while lowering your elbows to the side of your body, extending them and supinating them so the hands end up by the sides of the legs, palms facing out. The legs extend, weight coming on to the balls of feet and toes. Heels may leave the floor and move towards each other with the external rotation of the hips.

What is the energetic feeling of this pattern? What is the emotional feeling of this pattern? Identifying with it as gesture, what does it mean and communicate?

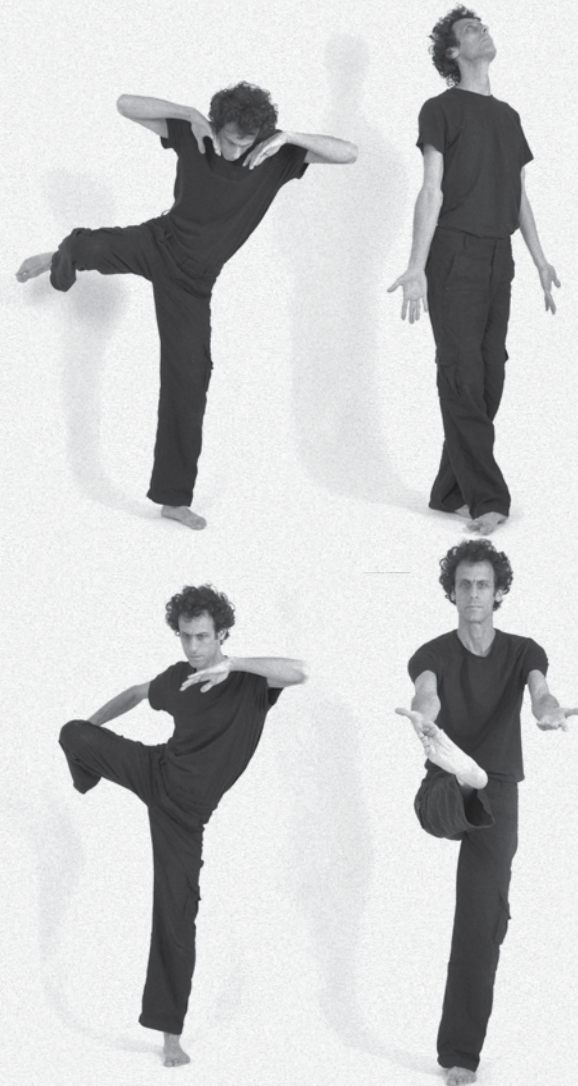


These pictures are the same as in the previous page only from a slight angle.



Balancing Form

Follow in the same way as the previous patterns. Lifting the knee to the side while, internally rotating it, might not be so easy at first, it is like getting onto a bicycle.



Asymmetrical Forms

As you alternate the asymmetrical folding and unfolding hands, you will notice that it is like you are stroking the circumference of a large ball, or turning the round rudder of a ship. You are holding an energetic sphere in front of you, and at the same time inside of you.

Here I include pictures of the first stage of the asymmetrical form. I haven't done this with the other patterns. I include this stage here because it is a favorite of mine, rotating the sphere.



Note that in the elbow-knee patterns it makes almost equal sense to rotate in the direction of the elbow as it does to rotate in the direction of the extended hand.

Rotating in the direction of the extended hand goes with the rotation of turning the sphere, it is a little like rolling a large tire around you. Rotating in the direction of the elbow goes against the direction of the rotation of the sphere. As you rotate from side to side your weight shifts to the foot towards which you are rotating.

Gradually increase the speed and change the quality of movement into a swing, sensing the weight of the hands and their momentum rather than the energetic qi quality of the field in which they are moving.

Let the swing develop into a spin, spinning every third swing. Gradually reverse the progression slowing down into the stillness of standing meditation.



Small Yang - Compressor

Flexion, external rotation, abduction – extension, internal rotation, adduction.

This is the small Yang pattern. The opposing plane here is the sagittal.

The feeling of this pattern is of compression or pumping. A variation of this pattern is used in Qi Gong as a building up of qi with the breath. The inner tension is greater in this pattern than in all the others.

BMC Developmental Movement connection: The leg movement and positions in this pattern are exactly those of the homolateral belly crawling pattern – like a lizard. And the hand position is that of the homolateral hand to mouth reflex. (In the FoldUnfold pattern the hand extends downward, but if we let it extend upward it would be as it is in homolateral crawling.)

Stand in basic standing position. Flex your elbows (together with your hips, knees and ankles) while bringing them up to the sides (abduction) and supinating the hands (turning the thumbs out) so the hands come close to the mouth. This is the 'hand to mouth' pattern. Bring your weight onto the lateral side of the feet (the knees are moving to the sides). This is a slight inversion of the feet.

Now extend the elbows (together with the whole body) while bringing them close to the body (adduction) and pronating the hands (turning the thumbs in). The legs extend and the weight comes onto the medial side of the feet and heels move slightly out to the sides (eversion and internal rotation).

What is the energetic feeling of this pattern? What is the emotional feeling of this pattern? Identifying with it as gesture, what does it mean and communicate?



Balancing Form

The hands in the semi-symmetrical forms do the same and one leg is added. The leg moves in a similar pattern to the hands, in this case flexion, abduction and external rotation (inversion). Lift one knee out to the side and bend it. This position is like that of a lizard, the leg moving out to the side of the body.

Now extend the leg while adducting internally, rotating and everting it (turning the sole of the foot out). The leg almost touches the ground as it aligns with the standing leg.

This movement pattern of the leg is exactly the homolateral crawl developmental pattern.

Add the hands. Fold and unfold a few times on one side, then change legs. Find your own rhythm of folding and unfolding and of changing legs.

Try the stretch variation. In the elbow knee patterns the leg normally extends towards the floor. This takes it out of reach for the hand. So we modify the pathway of the leg, extending it to the front. This enables us to hold the foot with the hand.



Asymmetrical Form

Start in basic standing position. Perform the pattern symmetrically a few times, then let one hand stay flexed as you extend the other into the opposite phase. Note that in this Yang pattern you are not holding a sphere but rather you are separating it into two: one half moving up and the other moving down.

Continue moving the hands in their opposite paths, moving them slowly and sensing the energy field they bisect as they cross in the middle.

Gradually begin to rotate in the direction of the extended hand, until you reach the maximum of rotation that is comfortable. As you rotate from side to side your weight shifts to the foot towards which you are rotating. Begin to change the quality of movement from slow sensing of qi to a swinging kinesthetic sense of the weight and momentum of the arms.

Let this develop into a spin. Perform the spin every third swing, so that you change sides each time.

Play freely with the swinging and spinning, taking it into space and into an improvisation if you wish.

Gradually start slowing down back to the slow qi movement, then decreasing the rotation of the spine until it is stable, and eventually letting the hands come to a symmetrical position in front of the body, and find the stillness of standing meditation.

Try the rotations in the opposite direction, the direction of the flexed arm – the elbow hand.



Walking Exploration

It is always worthwhile to integrate formal movement into everyday movement. Often we feel the effect of a movement more distinctly when it is performed in its daily practical context.

Walk in the regular daily way and begin to emphasize the contralateral swing of the hands. This is similar to the asymmetrical form of the Fold/Unfold Elbow-Knee patterns, only that instead of just shifting weight from side to side you are stepping forward continuously.

Now shape the swinging hands into the Roller pattern (small Yin). The hand coming up is pronated (facing down) and the hand going down is supinated (facing up). How does it feel to walk this way?

Change the hands into the Compressor (small Yang) pattern. The hand coming up is supinated, facing your face (hand to mouth). And the hand going down is pronated (facing the ground). How does it feel to walk this way? Shift back and forth between the two patterns until you get a distinct sense of how they differ.

Do you feel like you embody two different characters as you move back and forth between walking in Roller and walking in Compressor?

ENJOY!



Recommended reading:

BMC:

Bainbridge Cohen, Bonnie. (2013) Sensing Feeling & Action (third edition), Contact Editions

Qi Gong:

Cohen, Kenneth, S. (1997) The Way of Qigong, Ballantine Books, New York

Tensegrity:

Myers, Thomas W. (2009) Anatomy Trains (second edition). Churchill Livingstone



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