



# The Journal of Qigong in America

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## United We Stand

When I stand, the earth is in my hands.  
The universe is in my mind.

You are free. You are a great fire.  
If anything comes toward you it will be consumed in the fire.  
If it does not approach the fire, it will not be burned.  
You are merely the fire.  
You remain where you are, content to be alight.

You are the sea. Whatever anyone gives you, you can take.  
They can also take from you anything they want.  
The sea is vast; it can give up anything and still remain the sea.  
Like the sea, you are endless and unceasing.  
This is the true freedom.

---- Standing Meditation Grandmaster  
Wang Xiangzhai

Michael Mayer's article on the origin and meaning of Qigong  
Standing Meditation begins on pg 2

# WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?

BY MICHAEL MAYER, PHD

Adapted from his new book

## Secrets to Living Younger Longer

The Self-Healing Path of Qigong, Standing Meditation and Tai Chi

*We cannot recreate the original wilderness man. But we can recover him because he exists in us. He is the foundation in spirit or psyche on which we build, and we are not complete until we have recovered him. — Laurens Van der Post, after time spent with the Kalahari Bushmen*

### A Mythic Journey: “Trance-forming” your Posture through Shape-Shifting

What if you took a monkey, removed him from the forest, and for many generations trained him in taking the shape of alien postures? Imagine, if you will, this monkey’s ancestors sitting in ninety-degree angle chairs in their formative years in school and in their later work lives. Imagine these monkeys walking on flat pavement for thousands of generations. Then, imagine that you are this monkey and that one day, towards the end of your life, you take a class in tree climbing. You experience a new Self, awakening within you, and a sense of *re-membrance*—“remembering” is putting back together split off “members” (parts of oneself) into an original wholeness. Your monkey pelvis opens; flexibility and multidirectional, angular movements emerge as your feet are placed at climbing angles that are in your long-lost body memory. Your arms, as they grasp the tree limbs, rediscover a long-lost functionality. Pelvic blockages loosen and latent muscularity develops from forgotten pathways. Postural and structural realignment takes place by moving in accordance with your essential nature. And, your whole Monkey Way of Being becomes revitalized as a primordial energy opens, and you return to who you are in your deepest essence.

Then imagine you are a fish. As part of a scientific experiment your ancestors were taken out of water, and put into a laboratory where they adapted to survive in air for many generations. Your great grandparent fishes adapted and developed new lungs and ways of moving. After tens of thousands of generations, even the stories that you were once a water creature had been relegated to the realm of mythology. Then one day you are put in the water—a Self-awakening happens, and a returning to some deep part of your Self occurs. A healing takes place as joints that were stiff discover a fluidity of movement. A sense of separateness that always felt alien dissolves. And you melt into some awesome sense of Being that connects you to all things.

We are all, not only monkeys and fish—as prenatal research of the phylogenetic development of humans proves, but we have the essential nature of all animals and all life forms. When we return to Being and moving like them, a remembering, awakening and healing of our minds and bodies takes place as long-lost energy is activated.

Human Beings, in our deepest essences are “shape shifters.” We are the elements of creation: fire, earth, metal, water and wood. We are empty space, as modern physics shows us. Qigong practices show us how we can change our life stances by becoming like a tree. We can move like a silk-worm reeling silk, and thereby transform our identities with a lightness of Being that can be as colorful as that of a butterfly. We can transform our linear bodies into the likeness of a ball of energy. And, if current research is accurate, when we shape-shift into the appropriate element for the occasion, and return to our primordial selves, natural health is restored and we live younger longer.

### The Daoist Practice of Cultivating the Golden Ball

The Golden Ball as a vital concept in the East was first introduced to the West by the Chinese scholar Richard Wilhelm. After extensive research in rare Daoist texts such as *The Book of the Yellow Castle*, he discovered ancient practices for “cultivating golden light in the body”. In his book, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, with an introduction by psychologist Carl Jung, he revealed to Westerners these practices, associated with finding the “Elixir of Life.” He synthesizes these secret methods of Daoist Alchemy with the term “Golden Flower (*Chin-tan*)”—in Chinese, *Chin-tan*, literally translates as “Golden Ball” or “Golden Pill”.<sup>1</sup>

Taiji jian (Tai Chi Chuan) is one method of embodying Daoist philosophy, and a practice to cultivate Qi, the vital energy of life. It is the best known system of Qigong. Anyone who takes an introductory course in Taiji will learn that a central aim of the practice is to learn to move like a ball, hold postures like a ball, and change the contours of the body into being rounded like a ball, rather than being stiffly linear. These practices are meant to transform the body from a straight, rigid or broken line into a radiating ball of energy.

In esoteric training traditions, before beginning the movements of Taiji jian, a person first practices *Standing Meditation*. Beginning in stillness embodies the classic Daoist notion that energy comes from the void, or the mother of Qi, called Wuji, and that the movement of opposites, like yin and yang, are born from non-movement. It also reflects the central notion of cross-cultural healing traditions that “healing

derives from returning to the origin of things.”<sup>2</sup>

Yang Lu Chan and Yang Cheng Fu, the founders of the Yang style of Taiji, kept the Standing Meditation practice a carefully guarded secret – though the discerning student will realize that the Taiji set begins with the standing still posture and ends with it. Only on rare occasions was the secret practice of Wuji Standing Meditation shared with outsiders. One person who learned it from Yang Cheng Fu in the late 1920’s in Shanghai, was Mr. Ye Dami. Mr. Dami, in turn, transmitted the knowledge to Master Cai Songfang in the 1950’s.

### **Standing as a Method of Qigong: Cross-Cultural Dimensions**

Standing Meditation is a form of meditation, a system of Qigong, and a way to cultivate Qi. Not only in China, but throughout the world, indigenous peoples have appreciated energy as a sacred and fundamental part of life and of healing. It was called by many names.

In Japan, this energy is called *Ki*, and we see the powerful effects of its use in the art of Aikido. In India it is called *Prana*, and in ancient Tibetan Vinaya texts of Buddhism, *Kum Nye* is used to cultivate it.<sup>3</sup> In ancient Greece, it was called *archaeus*, the vital life force. In Judaism it is called *Chai* or *Ruach*, and in Kabbalah it is called *Chiyut*.

The Kung tribesmen of the Kalahari call this healing energy *Num*, and say it was given to them by the Gods. They use this energy to heal their spouses and their community through dance and massage. Being a healer is part of normal socialization, not the function of a special class. One central event in this regard is the all-night healing dance that takes place approximately once a week and activates *Num*. “*Num* resides in the belly and is activated through trance dancing and the heat of the fire. It ascends or boils up the spinal column and into the head, at which time it can be used to pull out the sickness afflicting others.” The rock paintings of their ancestors show that this dance has origins that go far back into their culture’s past.<sup>4</sup>

Among Native Americans, the activation of energy is an intrinsic part of healing. A common ritual used by various tribes treats the person who falls ill by calling on *Wakantanka* (the Great Mystery) and the energies of the four directions to restore the person to harmony with the forces of nature. In sweat lodges, the medicine person leading the sweat often sprays or throws water into the face of the person doing the sweat to produce a mild shock, thereby raising the level of emotion.<sup>5</sup> According to Ken Cohen, “The Seneca medicine man, Moses Shongo, would hold one hand up, fingers pointed

toward the sky, and imagine that healing power was flowing directly from the Creator’s ‘Light of Love.’ He simultaneously used the other hand to heal, sometimes with light touch, sometimes without touch.”

### **Standing as a Method of Qigong:**

#### **Mysteries and Realities of the Posture**

The Standing position expresses the culmination of the human posture’s evolution from lying to sitting, and finally to its full upright stance. This posture expresses humanity’s evolution from the animal kingdom. Unlike four-legged animals whose anatomy protects the vulnerable underpart of their bodies, we raise our head upward and expose our hearts to our fellow humans, and to the world. The question is, can we really embody the gift of this posture, and find the “heart of standing?”

The gifts that emerge from Standing Meditation are multifaceted. They come from tapping into the vital energy of our most human posture. As we learn to cultivate this energy and the consciousness that derives therefrom, our stance in life may become transformed on physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels. But the best starting point is to let go of seeking any purpose, and to let the posture initiate us in its own way.

If we can relax and “just be” in the posture doing “no-thing,” we have a chance to experience the *mudra* (divine gesture) that is expressed through “just standing.” When we say “stand and do no-thing,” we do not literally mean “do nothing.” What we want is to transform the stance of “trying to do” something into letting go and simply Being. In that Being, we experience the magic and sacredness of our human posture. When we do “things”, life can become an effortful, reified state of being. Postures lose their mystery – we’ve stood so many times before, and we do it again, getting up and going through the same, meaningless act. Standing Meditation gives us a practice to remember our stance in the lightness of Being.

Standing upright on our feet is a remarkable feat. Remember when we were small children and didn’t take standing for granted? We felt appreciation and even awe in not falling down. Though we may not have had the words to express it, we knew balance was an evolutionary event that expressed the uniquely human gymnastic of bringing right and left, yin and yang, into balance in our upright posture. Nowadays when we practice Standing, we similarly seek to become like children again and appreciate the balancing act of standing. Here we have a practice to find the stance of such appreciation.

As adults we have learned to live in a world where spiritual and material, heaven and earth are separate. But when we practice Standing Meditation, we have an opportunity to unite opposites. Here is a practice that may lead to the end of this separation between our earthly and our spiritual Selves. Our two feet speak symbolically of that balance that can be found in the center of seemingly disparate realms—right and left, spiritual and material, yin and yang. We may become aware of how our spines, and our Selves, are a link connecting heaven and earth. Here we have a practice to find the stance of such balance.

On the path to a spiritual state of balance, we first experience “what is.” When we stand still, we discover the truth of where we are in this moment. The felt experience of our bodies calls us to notice our embodied truth. Maybe we are held up off the ground in anxiety. Maybe we become mindful of the gripping sensation in our stomachs which lets us know that we are frozen in fear. Perhaps we become aware of how our bodies hold on to the things we need to accomplish in a day. Many of us clutch onto images of the identities we want to be, and judge ourselves for not being there yet. In Standing, we may experience how our hearts constrict when we don’t embrace our vulnerabilities.

While Standing, we become mindful of our tensions; we feel how we carry the events of the day in our bodies. When we haven’t stood up for ourselves on a given day, this may be held in the body in a variety of ways. We may experience a sense of collapse in our chest area, or perhaps a pent-up anger manifesting as a feeling of overcharge in the body—like a river pent up against a dam. Or maybe it feels like a sense of disconnection from the ground that is associated with an energetic break, and discomfort in the lower back (Ming Men-- known as the Gate of Life Energy, below the second lumbar vertebra), or an overall feeling of being “held back.”

Our Standing practice helps us to get in touch with our “felt experience” at a given moment.<sup>6</sup> While we are Standing we may become aware that this pattern of not standing up for ourselves relates to a sense of not being at home in the world—that we will be rejected if we speak up. We may become aware of how this pattern has dissociated us from our bodies, and disconnected us from life and the peace that comes from being connected to the energy of the universe. Once we can experience where we are, Standing, like many other forms of meditation, may lead to a path of letting go of whatever we are holding. The gateway to Self-transformation is found through having the courage to stand where we are.

Standing Meditation is a pathway to transform our habitual life stances, and who we identify ourselves as being. The energy that is activated through Standing helps us to

transform the ego-bounded skin that separates us from our environment and from others. In addition to changing personal patterns, a transpersonal transformation may take place. The word *transpersonal* is here defined as opening our personal experience to discover the experiential link with the wider whole of which we are a part.

The word “transpersonal” is given currency by the current field of Transpersonal Psychology. This is often called “the fourth force of psychology,” along with the Cognitive/Behavioral, Freudian, and Humanistic/Existential. The Transpersonal Psychology field believes that by drawing on ancient sacred wisdom traditions and combining them with modern psychology, a more integrative and healing psychology can be formed.<sup>7</sup>

We may find a place where who we are is more than our everyday roles. Maybe while we are Standing there, we will discover the sensations of letting go and opening ourselves to the energies of the cosmos that can fill us with relaxed vitality. Every exhalation gives us a chance to let go of the physical container that we identify as ourselves, and to “dissolve” it. Our joints eventually loosen... space opens. It is as if we let go of our identification with being separate droplets of water and return to the ocean of Being that we are.

Some believe that this is the experience into which we are initiated at the moment of death, i.e., we let go of our separate existence and become one with the energy of the cosmos. When we feel tension arising in our bodies while Standing, we can begin our practice of letting go of tension and melting into a oneness with all that is—an experience we may all face in the final hours of our lives. Various meditation traditions, including Standing, seek to find peace in letting go of the separate Self during life, and use meditation as a vehicle to take us to this place. Here we have a practice to find this stance of “no stance.”

In Standing Meditation, we let go of our control of the universe, and find universal energy as we melt into our original nature in luminous emptiness—nothing special, just standing there. We reverse the messages that may have been told to us by our elders that began the constriction—“Don’t just stand there, do something.” After practicing Standing for some time, we might change this message to “Don’t just do something, stand there.” After all, if we are a microcosm of the universe, and the light of the universe was born from the void in a big bang or a gentle flow of light, then perhaps we can give birth to a universe of light by emptying ourselves and returning to the stillness from which we were born. The field of quantum physics now gives theoretical ground and scientific evidence to support the belief of the ancient sacred wisdom traditions that human beings are frozen light.<sup>8</sup>

### What Do You Stand For?

Who are we as we are Standing? Depending upon our life stance, we may describe the experience of Standing Meditation as Wuji, *unos mundos* or a nice feeling of relaxation, a trance state, or an opportunity to work on transforming our characterological and physical blockages.

An ancient alchemist might say that he or she has just experienced the *corpus glorificationis*, the glorious body, freeing the *spiritus mercurious* imprisoned in matter.<sup>9</sup> The scientist wonders and investigates, “What am I feeling when I am Standing this way?” and attempts to measure it quantitatively and qualitatively. The healer wonders, “How can I use this state for healing myself and others?” The spiritually inclined individual may say, “I have just found my ground in Spirit, and am Standing planted in the awesome ground of my divine nature.” The mystic says, “I have found the Secret One inside where exists all of the universe, the galaxies and stars.” The Buddhist, with a half smile says, “This is nothing special. I’m just standing here.”—being in the experience of the ordinary. The Hoku master practicing Standing Like a Tree in Autumn says, “The dead, dry leaves fall to the Earth, and only what is alive, fresh and strong remains.” Kabir, the Sufi mystic, calls out from the other side of the grave and gives us his view of the after death state to help us discover our life stance:

*Whatever we find now, we find then, if we merely live in an apartment now, that is what we will find when we enter the kingdom of heaven.*

What does our posture say about our life stance? What are we aware of? If we lift our hands into the “Golden Ball of the Heart Meditation” we may find that in each moment we stand in the center of a universe of possibilities, and embrace all of them. Perhaps life is, as Grandmaster Wang Xiangzhai said, “When I stand, the earth is in my hands, and the universe is in my mind.”

What is our stance toward life today, and what will it be tomorrow as we draw energy from the earth to do our life’s work? If we can truly Stand holding the earth in our hands, as a loving parent would hold a child, we will be embracers of planetary consciousness—we will be on the path to finding the place where healing ourselves and healing the planet are one.

On a given day our Standing may lead us to feel like we are one with the universe, or like a stick in the mud. If we feel like a stick in the mud, we must remember that through sinking our roots downward into the muck, through being in the waters of life, and learning to find our balance as the cross-currents pull us, push us, try to uproot us or carry us away from the ground of ourselves—all the while we are in the process of growing towards blooming in the air as a lotus.

### ABOUT THE BOOK

**SECRETS TO LIVING YOUNGER LONGER?** Who wouldn’t want to know the answer to that question? The answers: Health and Longevity Practices; A Lost Holistic Lineage Re-discovered; Transformation of One’s Life-- are all here, and enlivened by mythic tales, imaginative teaching stories and quotations from cross-cultural ancient sacred wisdom traditions.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Mayer, PhD. is a licensed Psychologist and Qigong/Tai Chi teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area who specializes in “mind-body healing” methods that help alleviate his patients’ physical and mental health problems. Currently, his unique, integrative approach is offered nationally and internationally at hospitals, universities, conferences and workshops. The author of ten publications in the field, Dr. Mayer was the recipient of an award for his outstanding research and contribution to the advancement of mind-body medicine by The First World Symposium on Self-Healing.

### ABOUT ORDERING THE BOOK

You can order the book from Dr. Mayer’s website: [www.bodymindhealing.com](http://www.bodymindhealing.com) or call toll free **866-636-7881**

Ask for the book at your local bookstore.

<sup>1</sup>Willhelm, R. The Secret of the Golden Flower, Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1962, pg. 23 Also see Cleary, Thomas, The Secret of the Golden Flower, Harper San Francisco, 1991; Yu, L.K., The Secrets of Chinese Meditation, Samuel Weiser, NY, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> See Eliade, Myth and Reality, Harper & Row, 1963, pp14-38

<sup>3</sup>Tulku, Tarthang, Kum Nye Relaxation, Dharma Publishing, 1978, p.12

<sup>4</sup>Parabola Magazine, Spring 1993, The Kung Approach to Healing, by Richard Katz. Halifax Shamanic Voices, Dutton, NY 1979, p.55

<sup>5</sup>Krippner, S., Energy Medicine in Native American Healing Practices,” Volume 5, No 1, Newsmagazine of ISSSEEM, Golden CO, p.8.

<sup>6</sup>For a method of self-transformation through being with our felt experience of the moment, see Gendlin, E., Focusing, Bantam Books, 1978.

<sup>7</sup>For more information, check with the Association for Transpersonal Psychology in Menlo Park, CA.

<sup>8</sup>Gerber, R., Vibrational Medicine, Bear & Co., 1996, pp.39-60, is a good introduction to recent evidence in physics that has been transposed into the field of Energy Medicine that we are, in fact, frozen light. Also, see the journal, Subtle Energies, Golden CO.

<sup>9</sup>Spiritus mercurius is said, by the alchemists, to be imprisoned in matter. And one of the purposes of the opus is to free the matter to obtain the philosopher’s stone, the glorious body, the corpus glorificationis. Eliade, Mircea, The Forge and the Crucible, University of Chicago Press, 1978, Second Edition, p.225.