



Continuity - "Push Pull" and "Rocking Motion" Through the Lens of Expansion and Contraction

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Published in the October 2017 of the Vital Force Journal

Another aspect of feeling the *chi* more strongly in Push Pull has to do with the palms at the backward flowing transition point of the movement. What I have observed is that practitioners loose out on the full power of both this movement and Rocking Motion by turning the hands around too soon, prior to completing the backward weight shift.

First, let's delve into Rocking Motion. From the point in the movement where the practitioner has fully shifted forward and is up on her toes (heels lifted) and the hands are at shoulder height, the hands turn gently over and begin their cascade downward in sync with the downward/backward weight shift. As the hands pass by the hips, the wrists release completely (this, too, is easy to forget and very powerful! Holding tension in the wrists where it is not necessary blocks the flow of the *chi*, just as engaging the wrists where appropriate enhances *chi* flow), but the hands DO NOT turn palm up just yet. The body is still shifting backward from the tan t'ien, and so, too, the hands continue to travel back led by the backward invitation from the tan t'ien, palms facing the wall behind the practitioner as the toes lift. The palms complete their trace around a tiny circle in the back before facing forward as the body, initiated by the forward movement of the tan t'ien cultivates the palms to move forward as well. I have found that the movement loses its power if the hands prematurely turn around to face the front wall in an effort to cultivate continuity while the body is still moving back in space.

Continuity in all of the movements is more powerfully achieved through feeling the expansion and contraction inside the body as activated through the dynamics of the weight shift and aligning with it, not applying seeming smoothness to the movement of the hands by turning them around prior to the weight fully shifting in a given movement. In fact, for me when I turn the hands around too soon, the flow of the *chi* seems to be cut off rather than enhanced.

Rocking Motion and Push Pull seem very closely related to me when viewed through the lens of expansion and contraction. More and more in my own practice, I am aware of dimensionality

being created? joined with? as the body shapes and accords with the *chi*. And it is this experience which has led me to understand the principle of Continuity through a larger lens.

Push Pull has the same potential for missing its full power if the practitioner cuts short the completion of the return of the hands over the top of the ellipse by turning them forward (fingertips staying upward the whole time) before the weight has fully shifted back. Instead, after coming over the top of the ellipse, by dropping the hands into the heart slightly, lifting up (not dropping down and around) from the index finger and allowing palms to face forward again at the shoulders, one can experience the completion of the weight shift, a simultaneous powerful opening into the heart as the hands drop slightly down (and the activation of the side of the wrist--again, Wrist Vitality) as well as find a fuller strength and synchronization in beginning the next repetition moved by the tan t'ien as it shifts forward when palms start at the shoulders open to the opposite wall (please observe Justin practice this movement on his DVD).

In presenting Push Pull at the 2017 TCC Teachers' Conference, a couple of friends raised a wonderful question. If the hands drop into the heart so that the pinkies are almost parallel to the ground at end of the backward weight shift (which can initially be interpreted as an abrupt stop, rather than a continuous flow), where is the continuity? The practitioner must then lift her hands from this more sideways position and return them to the point where the fingertips are pointing upward before the tan t'ien carries her forward again. The answer, I believe, comes from understanding TCC through the movement of the tan t'ien and the weight shift. Justin often commented that TCC is done below the waist. The tan t'ien is our guide; it must initiate all, all must emerge from and return to this center from which the movements originate. Thus I would encourage us to allow continuity to be held in the larger container of movement of the tan t'ien. Can we feel what occurs in each of the transitions of the movements, where the tan t'ien, once flowing in one direction, expands in that direction, reaches an apex, contracts, shift direction, and then expand in another direction. I struggle to find words for this inner experience, however.

Maybe there are others who would like to comment?

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Uniformity of pace is essential. Justin used to say, "Don't rush the back swing!" Justin also used to comment, "The concept you have of T'ai Chi Chih is all-important." Continuity, as one of the principles of TCC, can be understood more deeply as a felt-sense in the body expressed within the flow of the weight shift as originating from the Tan T'ien and contained within the inner experience of expansion and contraction. Thus, the seeming contradiction of the way Push Pull has been presented here and through Justin's presentation of Push Pull in his DVD will be felt differently in the body as well as in one's own enhanced feeling and relationship with the continuous flow of the *chi*.

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