



## IMAGERY TOOLS

Ed Altman

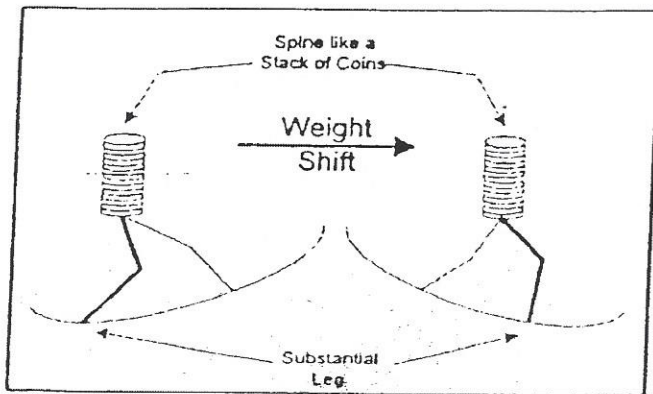
The shifting of the weight during T'ai Chi Chih is what causes the yin-chi and yang-chi to separate and circulate through the body. As a result, it is absolutely important that the weight shift be done *very gradually* or the chi will not flow smoothly. T'ai Chi Chih teachers often emphasize this point by telling students to move with "softness and continuity."

I often use the following two images to help students further understand how to move with softness and continuity by shifting the weight gradually from the center of the body. These examples involve the forward-and-backward motion of the legs, but they work equally well using the side-to-side leg movements.

### Rocking Chair

Have the student imagine they are standing on the rockers of a rocking chair while doing the forward-and-backward shifting of the weight -- legs connected to the rockers of the chair where they touch the ground. They can ignore the arm portion of the movement while they do this.

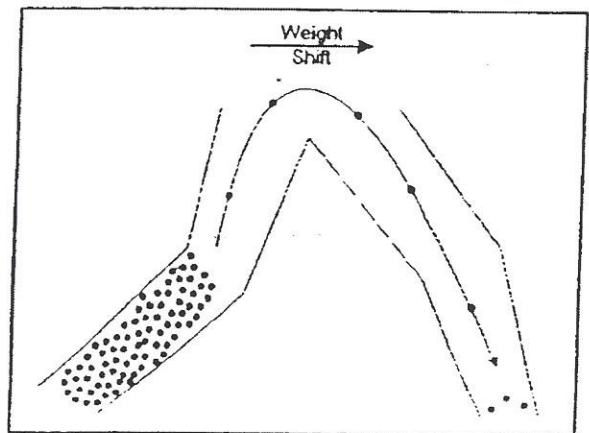
Now, when the student does a very small shift of the weight from the center of the body it will translate into the chair gradually rocking forward or back. However, if the student moves in a sudden, or jerky manner the chair will lurch quickly rather than rock slowly, and most likely the student will fall off.



### Hourglass

Have the student visualize an hourglass where the top chamber is full of sand (yang) and the bottom chamber is completely empty (yin). Gradually, as each grain of sand falls from the top chamber to the bottom, the character of the chi in each chamber shifts to its opposite. Now tell the student to imagine that each leg is a chamber of the hourglass.

When the weight is on the back leg it contains all the sand, and the forward leg is completely empty. Now, each grain of sand, one at a time, moves from the back leg to the front. During this time, the character of the chi in each leg shifts to the opposite as the yang leg empties, and the insubstantial leg fills with sand and becomes yang. The natural reaction to this change is that the body effortlessly glides forward or back.



These images should not be considered part of T'ai Chi Chih, but are tools that may help students understand *how to move*. Eventually, students come to realize the importance of shifting the weight very gradually from the center of the body and can then move with increased softness and continuity in their T'ai Chi Chih practice.