

On "Grounding" From *The Centered Skier* by Denise McCluggage

The apparent lightness of the well-aligned body should not be mistaken for a flimsy, wafted-about lightness. There is, along with the upward thrust, a flowing downward as well. Indeed, some people, experiencing for the first time their personal energy field in harmonious relationship with the gravitational field, describe the sensation as "heavier." What they are sensing is the downward course of their *ch'i*. What they are experiencing is grounded-ness, contact, connectedness. Maybe they have been flighty types-birds, hard put to alight. Or they might be those who have deadened their legs with tension, holding their energy high in their chest-breathing there exclusively-and holding on to the world hard with their eyes.

When they feel their customary background tension dissipate and the holding-on in their thighs let go, a conduit for energy in their legs opens. The unfamiliar down rush of sensation is experienced as heaviness; not as a ponderous weight, however, but rather as a putting down of roots - a connection from which sustenance can be drawn.

Not strangely, really, lightness and heaviness are *both* correct responses to a coming to the core, an awareness of Center. What has been touched is balance, the still point (Ed: the *T'ai* point). What is experienced is Centeredness; a body/mind in relaxed readiness. Connected to the universal energy, fed by it, *ch'i* flows freely. Circles within circles, unending. No irrelevant muscle contractions impede the *ch'i*, no crimping tensions divert it, no abruptly angular breaks slow its current. All is at ease, alive, alert.

In this way of being in the world the breath is full and unforced. It comes and goes as simply, as surely, as the tides. The feet make a sure, equal contact with the ground-not planted like fence posts are planted, but planted like fruit trees are planted. Alive, the feet are free to feel the pulses of the earth, and do.

Movement starts at the body's core, in the pelvic region and flows outward to be refined, defined, particularized by the periphery-by the arms, hands, legs, feet. Inner to outer. Beginning at the *tan t'ien*, the center.