



Double-weighted

By Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang

Being “double weighted” is a key concept in Tai Chi Chuan. The ancient Tai Chi theory talks of people who have spent several years practising very hard but cannot divert an incoming force simply because they have not understood the notion of “double weighted-ness”. This is basically saying that if we cannot understand and resolve the problem of being double weighted, then, no matter how hard or how long we train, we will accomplish nothing at all. Only after we have resolved this problem can we make progress.

So, what is double weighted-ness?

Many people say it is the even distribution of body weight between the legs; 50:50. This is not correct. If it were, then the standing posture would be double weighted. So would form preparation. In addition, every time we change weight from one leg to the other we would make the mistake of being double weighted once. If that is the case, we would have made countless mistakes of double weighted-ness every time we complete a form. More importantly, if one of the most important concepts in Tai Chi Chuan can be so easily explained, we could hardly call Tai Chi Chuan a profound and complicated art. If all we have to do to make progress in Tai Chi Chuan is to just change weight distribution on the legs, it wouldn't be worth all the effort spent in many long years of practice.

*To understand the real meaning of being double weighted, we first need to understand one important thing; double weighted-ness is a specialised concept in Tai Chi Chuan and therefore cannot be simply understood by the words themselves. The key to understanding double weighted-ness is to be found in the Chinese term, which really means double **heaviness**. “Heavy” is the opposite of “light” and in Tai Chi it actually means “sluggish”, since if something is too heavy, it is very hard to move it. Double heaviness is present when the Dantien's central status is lost, both legs are locked, and the body weight cannot easily be switched from one leg to the other. For example, in Pushing Hands, if we are pushed so that the central status of the Dantien is lost and the body cannot change position, that is double heaviness. By contrast, if we can maintain the Dantien's central status to successfully deflect the incoming attack, then there is no double heaviness. Another example would be section 1 in Silk Reeling. If the body stiffens and the Dantien's central status is lost, that is double heaviness. Conversely, if all the body positions are correct and the centre is formed at the Dantien, there is no double heaviness. In a Form, double heaviness can happen at any moment. Take, for example, the Opening of the Form. Both hands move up, driven by the second kind of motion. When the hands move up, the Dantien rotates backwards. When the hands move down, the Dantien rotates forwards. If the pelvis (kua) does not settle properly after the hands have been lowered, the body will tilt. This is also double heaviness. When the body is naturally straight and the central status of the Dantien is maintained, there is no double heaviness.*