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Jonathan Bluestein's

Research of Martial Arts



Skill is acquired through continuous practice, sophistication
& depth (are achieved) by giving thought to it

功夫憑苦練 奧妙賴深思

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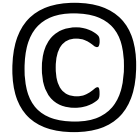


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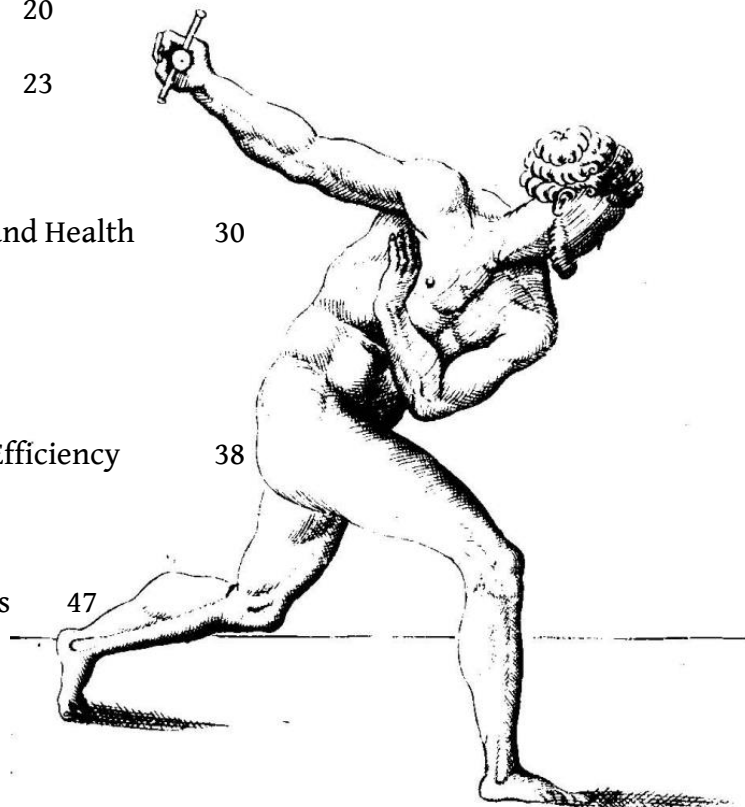
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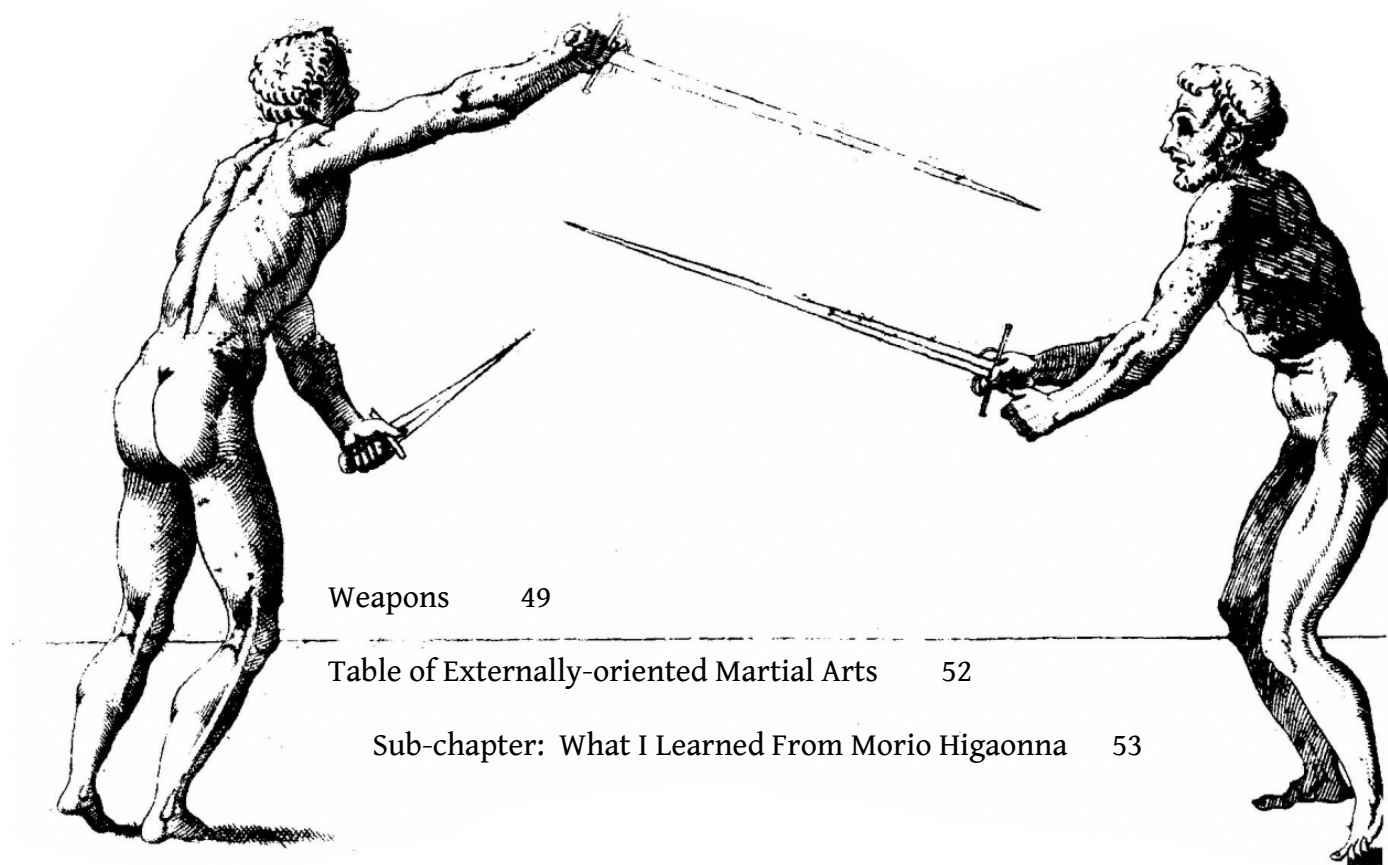
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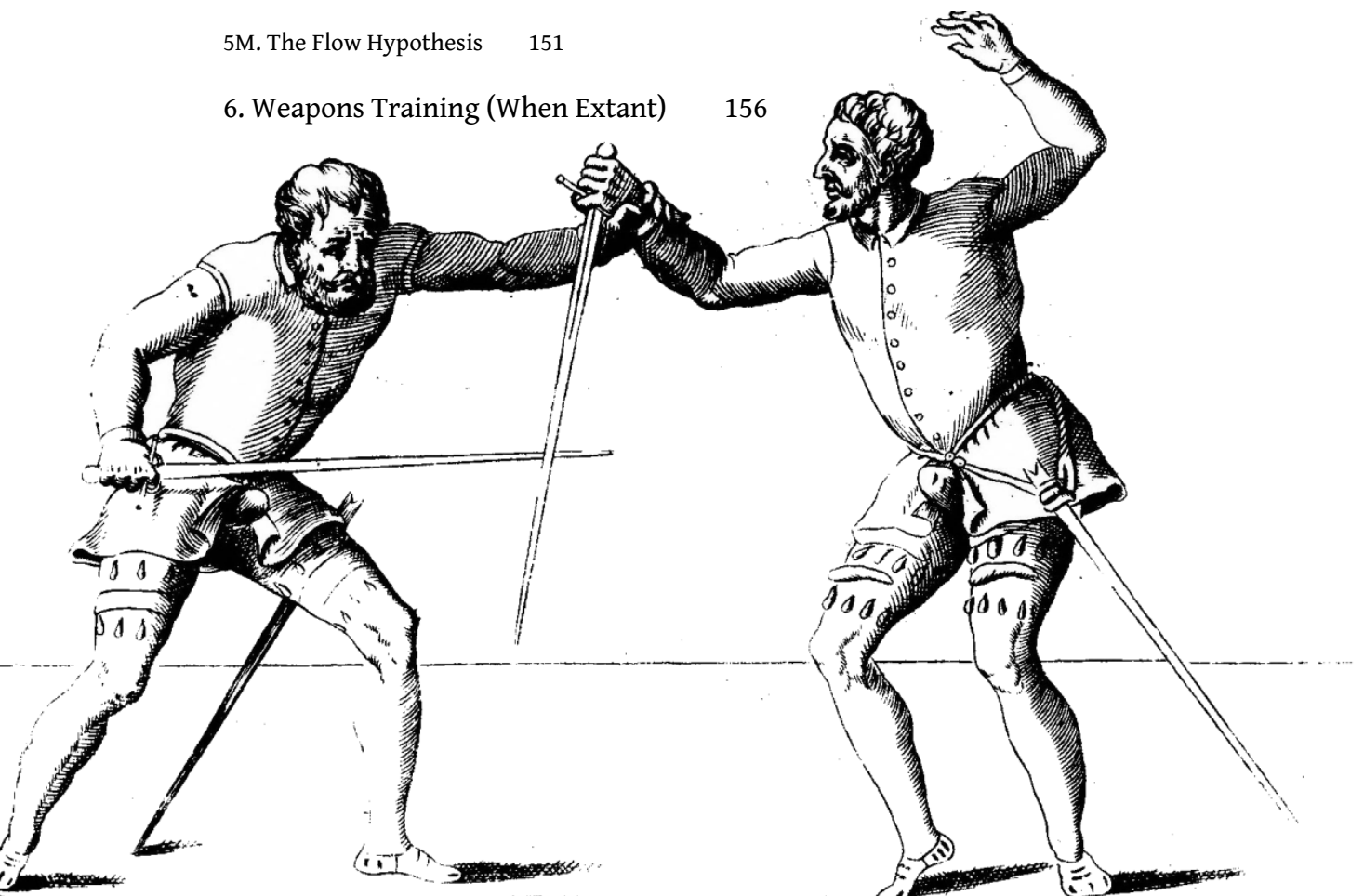
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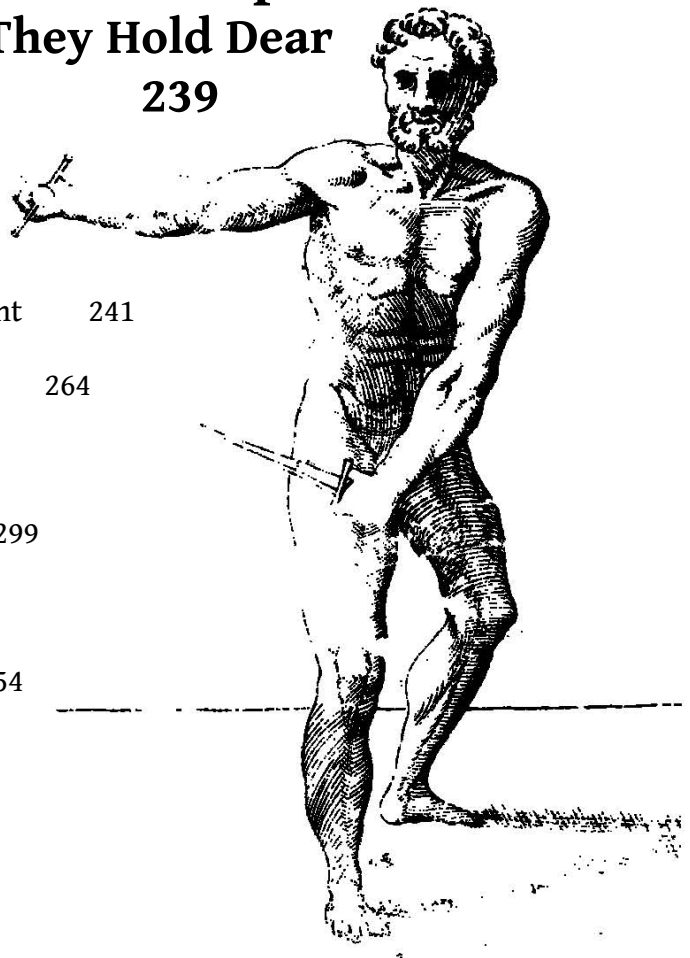
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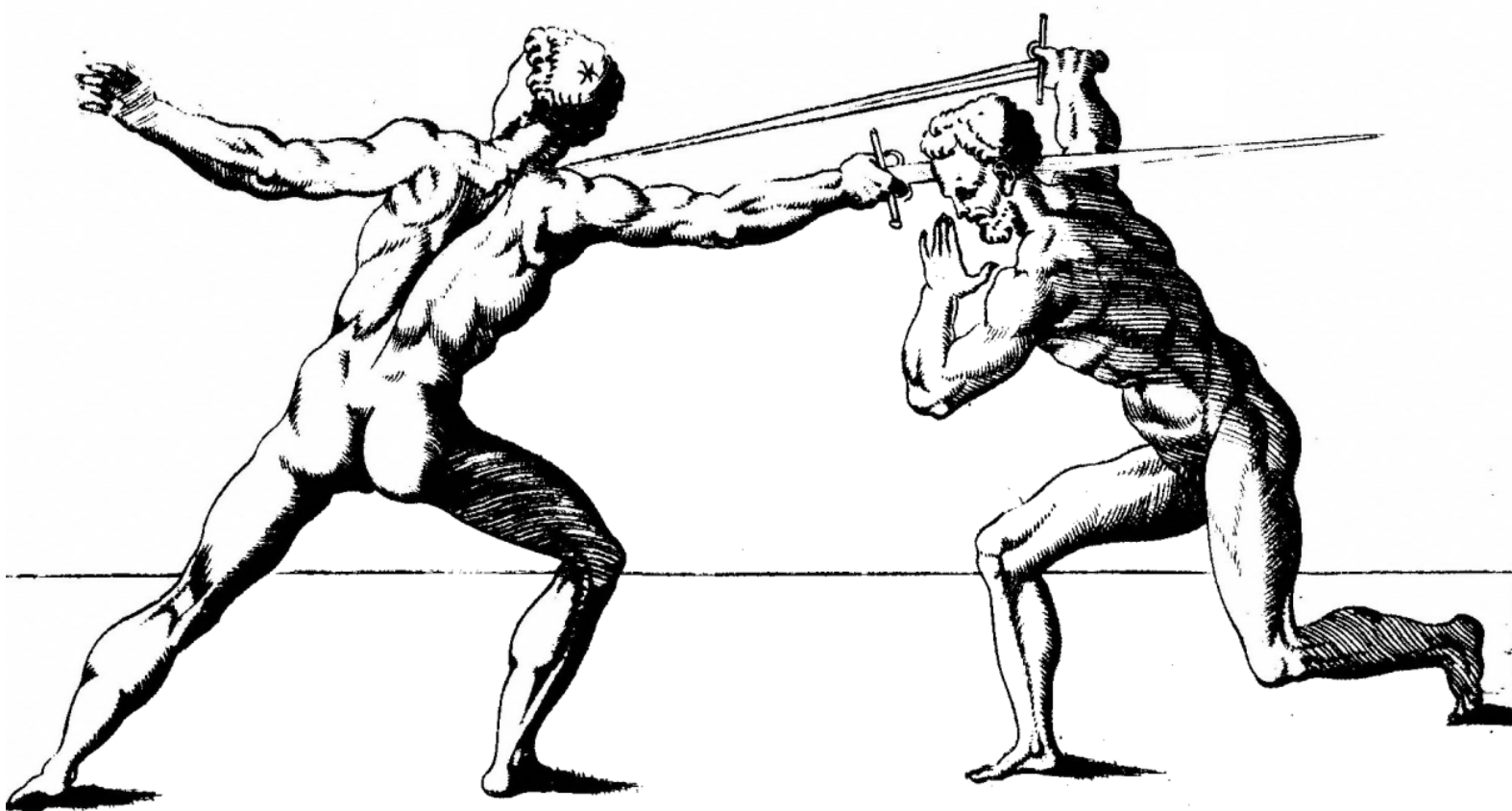
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Pictures presented throughout the table of contents were taken from Camillo Agrippa's fantastic book, "His Treatise on the Science of Arms and Philosophy", dated 1553AD.

The Old Teacher

His arms are heavy and his heart is light

His belly is filled with Qi and might

An old sage sees a moment bright

Neither past nor future will disturb him at night

A noble cook whose knife never dulls

An Eastern-sea turtle not bound by walls

He flows like a river, but is hard as a rock

A formless cloud to which the birds flock

He smiles without smiling and thinks without thought

His spirits are high, and his illness grows-not

A steady stance he holds to the ground

A tree with roots which are deep and profound

Yet he skips as a bird and hears as a hound

His presence speak loudly, but he makes no sound



In the picture:

Wu Tunan 吴图南 (1884-1989). Master of Taiji Quan, and a notable martial arts historian.

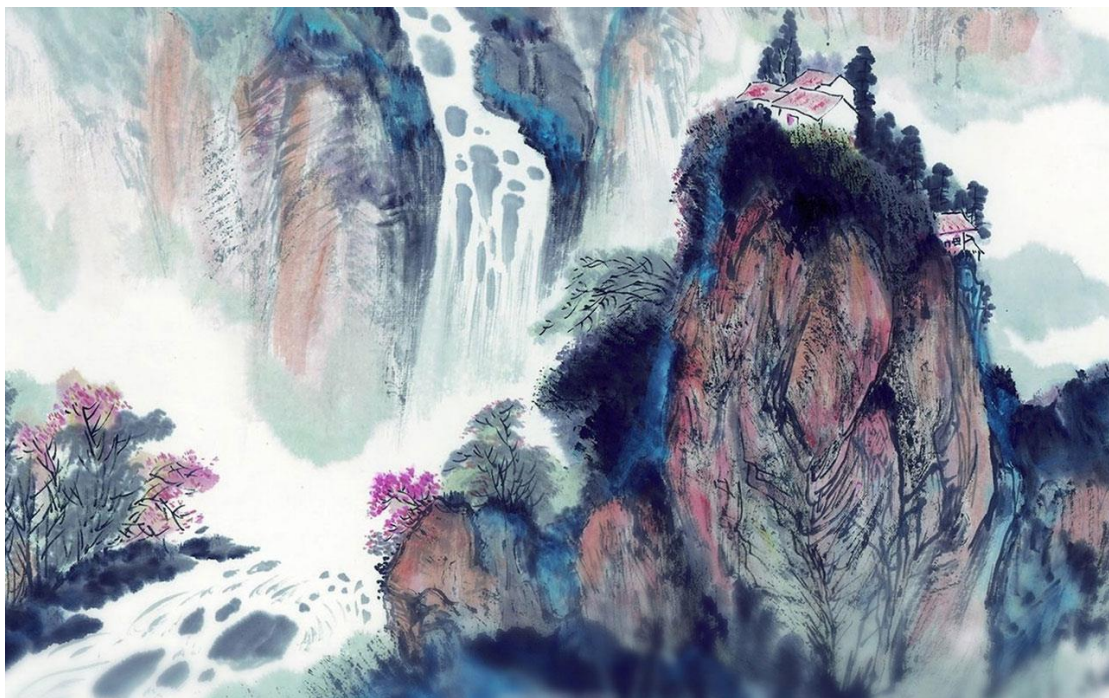
A note on poems: All of the poems in this book, as well as other texts, were written by Jonathan Bluestein, unless mentioned otherwise.

Introduction

My teacher, Nitzan, passed on to me a saying that his teachers have told him: "***Skill is acquired through continuous practice, sophistication & depth (are achieved) by giving thought to it***". This book, my research, is the means by which I have tried accomplishing the latter part of that saying.

Being the author, editor and visual designer of this book, I have put a lot of personal thought and intentional emphasis into it. Do try to read through it solemnly, as it holds more than appears at first glance. Though each of its three parts may be enjoyed separately, it was constructed in a layered form, and meant to be read by the order of the chapters one by one. A lot of reference from earlier chapters is evident in later ones in the book, and so one may miss-out on important anecdotes, concepts and themes if he or she will choose to skip ahead arbitrarily. Chronologically speaking, I have also written much of the material in the book in correlation to the order of its three parts.

One could write 100,000 pages about martial arts, and still not cover the vast richness and variety they have to offer. Within my theoretical discussions in this book (primarily the **first** part of it), I have therefore tried to focus on the things which are common between groups of martial arts, rather than constantly delve into the unique attributes of each art, which are endless. I have also focused, in my technical and theoretical analysis, on the empty-handed aspects of martial arts. The role of weapons in martial arts has also received a lengthy discussion well-worth reading, but it is certainly not the core of my work. I do not think, however, that this matters much, for both aspects of the arts are two sides of the same coin. I believe that once a good theoretical foundation is built for the discussion and analysis of one of them, the other could be easily understood, and vice-versa.



For the newbie, this book may serve as a knowledge treasure-chest. I assumed the reader has at least a minimal amount of experience in martial arts. In case you encounter something you do not understand or cannot find an explanation for in the book (this will **not** happen often), do not

be shy – look it up somewhere else and learn. After you have finished reading the book, I advise that you make sure to read it again a few months or years from now. I guarantee that considering you keep on your diligent practice and research of martial arts, you **WILL** be surprised at how your interpretation of the text has changed by the time you read it again, and for the better. As I was writing this book, I too had found new inspiration and ideas with each re-reading of it every few months.

For the teacher or the expert, I believe this book has much to offer as well. Even if you may not discover or come to understand anything new from this work (which I find highly unlikely because of its scope & depth), it will still maintain its value as a great tool to aid in analyzing, teaching and explaining your art to others.

This book was written to promote understanding – of martial arts, life and other human beings. It is through understanding that we grow. Still, it is only natural that many of you will have disagreements with some parts of my book, or with my personal opinions, and I wholeheartedly accept this reality. This is my interpretation; my unique writing and research on the subjects presented before you. As long as you have finished reading this book and managed to have fun throughout, and gain even the smallest bit of newfound knowledge or understanding – then I shall be very pleased. Yet, I perceive this to be a good "worst case scenario", for I have tried my best, day and night, for quite a few years, to have this work delivered to you in 'prime condition'; As something you'd really benefit from reading.

I wish you all an enjoyable read, prosperous study, and success in your training.

Jonathan.





- Part I -

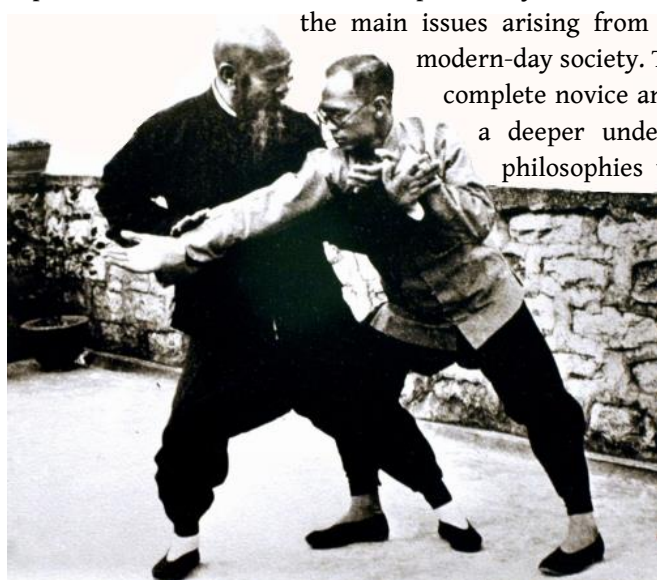
From The Inside Out – External & Internal Gong Fu

"...Indeed, there are few people who do justice to the machinery they are" – Moshe Feldenkrais¹⁴⁰.

Background

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in it" - Shakespeare

To the common Westerner, martial arts are defined by their ability to cause bodily harm. This has been brought about by the misrepresentation of the arts on television and cinema, and various famous martial artists (such as **Bruce Lee**) whom, in their attempt to popularize the subject, unnecessarily simplified their spoken and written descriptions. It is greatly evident in the way layman individuals think and analyze the martial arts they have been exposed to. Simplistic punching and kicking, or various forms of sports-fighting, are what people usually perceive as **MARTIAL ARTS**; alternatively, the elegant movements of arts such as **Taiji (Tai Chi)** are supposedly to be classified as an exercise for the elderly (for the elderly move in a slow Taiji-like manner, and generally find dubious pleasure in that kind of strange activity). Fortunately, thousands of years of empty-handed fighting* (especially in the Orient) have accumulated into more than just punching and kicking. There lie hidden some incredibly sophisticated theories and practices behind this mad endeavor called martial arts, which deserve public recognition and proper representation of their own. In this part of my book I wish to therefore adequately address one of



the main issues arising from the very definition of martial arts in modern-day society. This, I sincerely hope, would aid both the complete novice and the experienced practitioner to grasp a deeper understanding of the ideas, concepts and philosophies that are the heart and soul of martial

arts. For my discussion and explanations to properly explain themselves, though, a brief historical survey is first required.

In the picture: Wu Jianquan (on the left; son of Wu Quanyu, founder of Wu style Taiji Quan) and a student, demonstrating a martial application; circa 1930.

In the early days of my research into martial arts I first encountered the interesting separation that was made by contemporary authors between "External" martial arts ("**Waijia**", also sometimes inaccurately called "Kung Fu") and "Internal" ("**Neijia**") martial arts. Some researchers claim^{32, 65} to have traced the origin of this separation to as far back as 17th century, but this is difficult to verify nowadays. Even if there were some groups who used terms like Internal and External to distinguish between martial arts several centuries ago¹⁴³, their relationship with modern practices and arts is vague and obscure. In any case, these terms were not wide-spread until several centuries later.

Common usage of the Internal/External distinctions first arose circa 1894, when masters of what are now called "The Three Internal Arts" (Xing Yi Quan, Bagua Zhang & Taiji Quan), led by Cheng

* Do note that while empty handed fighting have indeed existed for thousands of years in the Orient and elsewhere, empty-handed martial arts, in their modern form, can rarely be dated back over 200-400 years¹⁶⁶. Still, we do have records¹⁸⁴ proving that empty-handed fighting had existed even before the 16th century, at least in China and Japan, and by that time already included movement-forms, AKA Kata in Japanese, or Xing or Tao Lu in Mandarin Chinese.

Tinghua, decided to unite their styles under the name of "Nei Jia"^{67, 119, 143, 153}. Those teachers realized there were many similarities between their arts, and thus referred to themselves and their lineages as belonging to the same "Internal Family" (this occurrence have also been recorded in Sun Lutang's book "*Research of Xing Yi Quan*", published 1915. Lin Chaozhen¹¹⁹ and others¹⁵³ suggested that by forming this "alliance", these teachers also created a common ground for their schools to share martial knowledge and skills in a constructive fashion).

At the beginning of the 20th century, another group of famous Chinese masters founded the Beijing Physical Education Research Institute (among these were Wu Jianquan, Yang Shaohou, Yang Chengfu, and Sun Lutang). At the time there was a technical need to separate the classes held at that school to different categories. From that situation came about further adoption of the separation concept (Neijia vs. Waijia, or "Internal vs. External"), in order to differentiate between martial arts classes taught at the school. Historically speaking, as explained before, the categories created for that purpose were to include three martial arts – Taiji Quan, Xing Yi Quan and Bagua Zhang – within the so called "Internal" group, and all the rest in existence in the other, "External" group (A similar separation was made in the public martial arts school founded in 1927~ by Zhang Zhijiang and Li Jinglin^{119, 143} – The Central National Arts School in Nanjing). In that school, the "Internal" were nicknamed "Wudang (mountains/temple) styles", and the "External" were referred to as "Shaolin (mountains/temple) styles". The martial arts were to only differ by name and category, yet over the following decades the titles endorsed by the old masters stuck and gave strong roots in oral and written traditions, with each side trying to use the Internal vs. External argument to his advantage, to show his art's superiority, etc.

In the public eye, those who practice martial arts utilizing primarily "External" methods have become synonymous with power, stiffness and fighting, while the ones who favour "Internal" methods of training and application are often associated with softness, health practices, and the use of "Qi". This should not stand as testimony to the true nature of any martial art, yet it is the state of things through the untrained view of most of the general public (at least as it was when this book was written, in the beginning of the 21st century). One should take note that many martial artists fall in-between, using a combination of both approaches. Thus, although certain martial arts do tend to be associated with Internal or External methods, one shouldn't succumb to the temptation of quickly attaching one title to a certain art, and understand that there are many shades of grey involved. That issue will be further analyzed in-depth later in this part of the book.

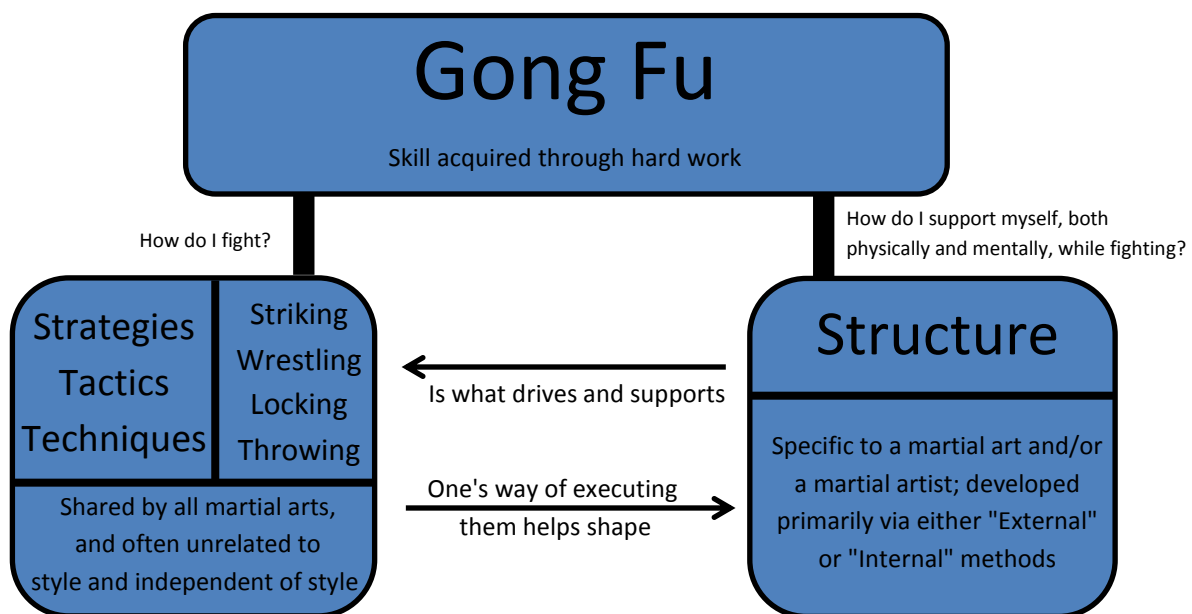
That concludes our brief historical background.

Although, as I mentioned, the original separation was purely technical and was meant to hold only by name, I find that there is a basis for the differentiation between various martial arts (and not only Chinese arts) using big words like EXTERNAL and INTERNAL. This is justified mostly by the different ways in which martial artists approach the subjects of **Training**, **Combat** and **Health**. Let us now try and make general sense of things, as we look more closely into the matter in the following chapters.

Please bear in mind that External and Internal are merely commonly used names. I could have written the entire book referring to these as "The Yin Approach" and "The Yang Approach", and things would have still remained the same. If you wish, drop the names, and keep the theory. Only the latter is important. Zhuang Zi wrote⁹⁰: "*A basket-trap is for holding fish; but when one has got the fish, one need think no more about the basket. A foot-trap is for holding hares; but when one has got the hare, one need think no more about the trap. Words are for holding ideas; but when one has got the idea, one need think no more about the word. Where can I find people who have forgotten words, and have a word with them?*". Reach beyond the words – grasp the ideas behind them.

Different Approaches to Martial Arts

All martial artists engage in building a better '**structure**' – a modified bodily-frame which will efficiently support them when coming in-touch with a possible adversary, and help them overcome that physical confrontation. This includes a buildup and assimilation of physical and mental patterns of movement and strategy, which in turn are gradually realized in combat, and life in general. The **structure** is the physical foundation that one creates with time and effort to suit a martial purpose – just as a musician, carpenter, swimmer or a dancer develop physical interiors and exteriors that show and support their lifetime pursuits^{154, p.107}. Given that enough time (in actual training hours, not 'years') was invested in training one's art, those of keen introspection would be able to feel how the structure of their chosen art gradually takes over their lives, both physically and mentally, in subtle ways. The physical and mental* structures acquired through any art start to seep into one's being from day one, eventually taking root, and growing trunks and branches. For those fortunate enough, it will also begin to bloom at one point or another, providing keys to a better life through the practice of martial arts. It is these 'structure types', which are trained and developed ("built"), and the methods utilized to train them, which are most prominent when differentiating between the various approaches to martial arts. In this chapter of my book, the subject of inquiry shall be the attributes that relate to the structures of the Externalists, and the philosophy that lies behind their corresponding practices.



* There is another, complementary side to the physical structure of a martial art – the "mental structure". It relates to the mental state developed through practicing a certain martial art, and how this mental state in turn influences the way a martial art is practiced and applied. While I have written extensively in this book of the philosophies behind different arts, I have avoided a thorough discussion the subject of mental structure. I found it too difficult to generalize and write about this subject in greater lengths, since in this book I have mainly discussed martial arts as a whole, while the mental structure is something I deem unique to each school, teacher and individual. So while there is a scientific discussion of certain aspects of the Mental Structure (in the first part of the book), I have certainly not focused on this subject in my writings. For those of you interested in reading more about the mental structure in martial arts than is available in my book, I will highly recommend Rory Miller's *Meditations on Violence*¹⁰⁰ and Gavin de Becker's *The Gift of Fear*. To achieve an even deeper understanding of human Personality Psychology, as it relates to martial arts and otherwise, I would recommend starting out with David Keirsey great book "*Please Understand Me II*", and additional works in this field by Prof. Dario Nardi, Lenore Thompson and others.

By looking at Martial Arts via this lens of Structure vs. the rest of the components (as shown in the chart in the previous page), we can observe some things right off the bat. For instance – that some arts lean towards significantly favouring one element. In arts stressing the immediate teaching of self-defense practicality, we see that the instruction is heavily focused on **Tactics**. Such arts, to which variations of Israeli Krav Maga are good examples, care very little for the development of any structure, and do not discuss such things at all in the context of their curriculum. Instead, they rather pile-up easy-to-use 'solutions' for the greatest variety of combative scenarios – relying on pre-trained tactical versatility. Quite the opposite take is by another 'modern' art, Yi Quan – an offshoot of Xing Yi Quan. This art has abandoned the tactical, technique-based attitude altogether, focusing instead on the relentless improvement of **Structure** – a goal on which the majority of one's training time is spent. It is therefore believed by practitioners of this art that a superior structure is more useful to fighting than being technically versed in such and such techniques. These two opposing approaches are in fact symptoms of the broader distinctions between martial arts, which happen to be the subject of this first part of the book, and would be given appropriate discussion later.

There are numerous misunderstandings among martial artists and scientists alike, as to how martial arts work. The facts related to **Strategies**, **Tactics** and **Techniques**, in terms of what they are for and what they do, are relatively well-understood by many; but the function and goal of one's **Structure** in martial arts, and the methods used to develop martial structures, are not. One study¹⁷⁰ from 2012, for instance, aspired to learn more about the punching ability of "Karate Experts", because "Karate experts are able to generate extremely powerful forces with their punches, but how they do this is not fully understood". This research supposedly proved that it is the superior function of the brain of "Karate Experts" which enabled them to punch harder. The truth is exactly the other way around! The body mechanics and attributes of one's structure force the brain to change according to how the structure is supposed to function. It is not therefore that a "superior brain" enables for better structure and techniques – it simply changes and develops to serve them better! The discussion of the martial structure itself in this study has been reduced to the very general and vague description: "better coordination". I wish to ask – better coordination of what? How does really one's structure impact his or her martial arts? These questions, among many others, will find their answers as we go along. Reading this book, I also hope you would come to know better than these scientists with regard to what are some of the components of good punching ability (in various martial arts).

The purpose of the following chapters, contained within the first part of the book, is to give you, the reader, the best possible theoretical understanding of martial arts theory that could be derived from plain reading of text. Through the discussions over the similarities and differences between **Tactics**, **Strategies**, **Techniques**, **Structures** and everything that is in-between, I hope to provide you with tools with which you could measure, assess and evaluate any martial art you encounter. Let us begin now with this thorough exploration of the various approaches to martial arts, by discussing the so called 'External Approach'.



Chapter 1:

The External Approach to Martial Arts

The External approach strives to directly analyze and train those things that manifest their quality and functionality externally, in a visible and/or quantifiable manner, and usually via interaction with objects outside of the body^{185, p.16-18}. Among these are the Skin, Bones (as in bone strength/density/thickness), Muscles, Tendons, Ligaments, Reflexes, Speed, Stamina, Oxygen Consumption capacity, etc.^{1, 17, 62, 65, 67, 95}. Training often is very mechanical and sports-like in nature, and is aimed at increasing the natural capacity and strength of abovementioned. The concept of overall fighting skill in this approach tends to be closely related (yet not entirely dependent on) to the level of physical "fitness" as viewed in sports¹⁷³. Sports-oriented competition is often (though not always) encouraged (as opposed to friendly sparring for non-competitive purposes).

The Externalists forge their structure like one forges a sword – in a very clear and precise process, with a great fire, and constant hammering. A strong base-material is preferred, and the final product is sharp, and designed to be able to either slice, stab or cut through obstacles. It is eventually defined by 'having an edge'.

One of the bigger stereotypes associated with using "External Methods" is that it has something to do with meeting force with force – trying to overcome power directly with more power. This is not related to External Methods per-se, as it has to do with another differentiation (between "hard" and "soft"), which will be discussed later in this book (see **Chapter 5: Clarifications**). The reader has to therefore understand that the martial structure developed through External Methods is not necessarily built for the purpose of dealing with physical confrontations by means of trying to be stronger than the opponent – this is a personal strategy, dependent on the martial artist himself, and the specific situation he has to deal with, within a given moment in time.

I shall now go into great detail and explain what are the more specific, technical characteristics of the External Approach. Contrary to the situation with the Internal Approach, the theory and practice of External Methods do not tend to be controversial, and are well-documented in countless literary works in the English language (good examples are^{88, 141}). One could suggest that many of the methods (yet not the theories) I am about to discuss are even "common knowledge", which average person is should be familiar and associate with "martial arts" in general, without even having practiced them.

There are a number of reasons I still chose to indulge in the task of writing this chapter. First and foremost is that beyond what is "common knowledge", this chapter contains commentary stemming from my own experience and research, and also includes discussion of more complex theories concerning these methods. Second would be that it is a useful starting point for those of you who are beginners in martial arts. A third is that this chapter serves as the theoretical base upon which I built the first part of this book. In later chapters, the information presented here is vital for making comparisons and analysis with other approaches to the practice of martial arts.

Though much of it being "common knowledge", as mentioned, I have found that among all the written works I am familiar with, the best segmenting and listing of methods and concepts related to the External Approach was done by master Bruce Kumar Frantzis. I therefore took the liberty of using some of Frantzis' listings of these methods as the root from which I have grown and developed further discussion of them. Much gratitude to Frantzis, whose work^{1, 14, 21, 79} I would highly recommend for anyone to read.

The Main Components of the External Approach

Externalists can deal with physical threats utilizing a wide variety of fighting strategies and tactics, as any other martial artist. Their structure, however, has the tendency of relying on specific attributes to constitute its frame; namely, **strong muscular contractions and toughened body-parts**. To achieve great proficiency in applying these to one's favour, the Externalists use a great assortment of methods aside from the training of movements and techniques that are native to their fighting style. Among these are the following^{*}:

1. Weightlifting and resistance training of all kinds. Traditionally, such training was done with stones, logs, improvised pulling and pushing mechanisms, stone/iron locks, etc. Today many resort to modern weightlifting equipment such as dumbbells, barbells, kettlebells, resistance machines, resistance bands, and so forth. They all function to increase crude muscle power, and sometimes muscle mass (the two aren't necessarily correlated, that is – bigger muscles aren't necessarily stronger, and vice-versa). Weight resistance can also be used while doing movements that are specific to a martial art. Another way of adding resistance (which the Internalists also sometimes use, yet not for the same kind of result) is wielding extra-heavy weapons (more on that later). Some use fingertip pushups, ripping tough materials and grabbing heavy objects to increase their grip strength.

Being "strong" and able to perform impressive feats of strength, as the result of using such methods as described above, has always been a trademark of Externalists, before the age of modernization & globalization (in which many around the globe began indulging in such activities as part of their personal pastime challenges, and not necessarily as their part of some professional skill requirement or training method for the martial arts).

When training using weights or equipment which is nowadays common in fitness, Bodybuilding and/or Powerlifting gyms, many Externalists are quick to adopt the techniques and up-to-date research material related to the sportsmen who commonly use similar weights and equipment^{88, 141, 144, 173}. This could have both positive and negative effects. This approach is inherently positive, as it relies on modern science, and seeks to constantly modernize and advance martial methods. It can prove negative, though, when the methods and research conclusions being adopted are not fully compatible for direct application to martial arts training. This happens often, because sports-research is generally looking at athletes and sports-performance – which is specific in its goals, and does not attempt to focus on the field of martial arts training. Sadly, the motivation for conducting scientific research in modern times is most commonly fueled by the wish to accumulate wealth. Because martial arts only rarely prove to be a format in which one could make serious money (Ring fighting and fighters are the exception, not the majority among martial

^{*} Also see bibliographical references numbered 1, 7, 18, 29, 30, 110, 116, 141 for more explanations and examples. The listing order, as mentioned, was originally written down by Bruce Frantzis. Further explanations and elaborations were written by me.



Chapter 2:

The Internal Approach to Martial Arts And Its Relationship with the External Approach

When asked about "Nei Gong" (Internal skill), master Luo Dexiu had the following to say ⁴¹: *"He who speaks of it has no clue about it, and he who has it does not speak of it."* I sure hope I know something about what I am writing of, but Luo's quote serves to suggest that the Internal "issue" and its methods are very complex, and not thoroughly understood by most people.

At the time the concept of separating External & Internal schools was first originated, only three martial arts - **Xing Yi Quan**, **Bagua Zhang** ^{*} and **Taiji Quan** ^{**}, were recognized as those in which Internal Methods were the central essence of practice. Later, however, several other martial arts also became synonymous with primarily using Internal Methods. Among these are: some schools of *southern-Chinese Praying Mantis* ⁹⁵, *Liu He Ba fa* (literally: 8 harmonies, 6 methods), *Da Cheng Quan* (also known as "Yi Quan", an offshoot of Xing Yi Quan created by Wang Xiangzhai), *Liu He Xin Yi Quan* (and its variants – all historical predecessors of Xing Yi), and the newly founded *I Liq Quan* (which is promoted by the charismatic Sam Chin).

There are rarely, if ever, "pure" Internal Martial Arts, since almost every "Internalist" uses some form of "External" training to a certain extent (this will be expanded upon later in this chapter). The martial arts listed above, however, are unique in that they near "Internal purity" more than others, and within their practice, include all of the methods considered "Internal" (for this reason they are a rather small classification-group within the world of martial arts).

While the "Internal" name given to this group is historically incidental, this name does serve to describe these arts well. This is due to the fact that the Internal Methods concern, to a great extent, processes which are "internal" – articulations within the body that are more commonly felt, but not seen or heard. As this chapter progresses, I shall discuss many of these in great detail. One may have noticed that all of the arts mentioned so far in this chapter are Chinese, or of Chinese origins. Indeed, I argue that the Internal Approach as we know it today has very distinct roots in traditional Chinese culture and thinking. I will explore this claim in great detail as we go on with this chapter. That being said, a few Internal Methods (yet not complete Internally-oriented styles) have been developed separately to a certain extent in other places over the world, possibly without an influence from China. In his fantastic book ⁸⁹, Allis Amdur suggests that within the

^{*} When I write of "Bagua Zhang" in this book, I am referring to the art of Bagua Zhang which had been handed down by Dong Haichuan, and/or related martial arts, such as Yin-Yang Ba Pan Zhang, which claims common origins to Dong Haichuan's Bagua. There are several other martial arts known as "Bagua Zhang" in China. These styles, however, are rare, and most Westerners are not familiar with them.

^{**} There are many schools of Taiji Quan in existence today, and it is the most popular Internally-oriented art in the world. Among the majority of martial arts historians, it is accepted as fact that all modern variations of Taiji Quan originated from the Taiji Quan of Chen village (Henan province, China). The nearby Zhao Bao village features a very similar lineage of Taiji Quan to that of Chen, and it is unclear which came first. It is also well-established that before Chen Taiji Quan assumed its more modern form, it has been heavily influenced by the arts practiced at the nearby Shaolin temple, on Song Mountain.

traditional martial arts of the old Japanese Samurai schools (Ko-ryu; the "Old Schools"), these methods were once very common (but are nowadays almost extinct). The unique mixture of the semi-Internal-semi-External approaches to martial arts will be dealt with in the next chapter, as I discuss many more such examples.

In the picture: Chen Taiji Quan Master Chen Xiaowang (陳小旺, 1945-), from Chen village (Chen Jiaguo 陳家溝). I wish to thank master Chen for permitting me to use his photograph, and the dear Miss. Betty Dong, who helped me contact him.



Qi (氣 , also "Chi", pronounced "CHEE", or "Ki" in Japanese) is something commonly discussed in relation to the Internal

Methods, and those who practice Chinese martial arts in general ^{1-7, 13, 15, 17, 28, 31, 32, 37, 55-58, 63, 67, 80, 89, 93, 95-96, 106, 111, 116-117, 124, 138, 139, 155-156, 159-160, 162}.

Internalists are often said to "cultivate, accumulate, and use it". Qi in that sense is a sort of energy; the "life energy" that is the basis for all theory in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The latter recognizes "several types of Qi" in its theories, and many therefore argue that Qi is a representation of many different energetic processes in the human body. Unfortunately, it would take a chapter 10 times longer than this one, written by someone with 10 times my experience and knowledge, to try and explain what Qi is, and how it interacts with the practice of martial arts in general according to TCM theory. In modern times, it is also the case that there isn't in existence one unified, commonly acceptable theory (based on western science) of what "Qi" really is (though some have proposed sound theories ¹⁰⁷⁻¹⁰⁹ that are worth considering). As this complicated issue is vastly open to interpretation and is highly controversial, I find it too pretentious to present you with a theory of my own. For these reasons, I shall almost completely refrain from using the word for the purpose of explaining the workings of martial or health methods (with the exception of quoting others who have done so).

Sadly, Qi has also become the *Deus Ex Machina* of martial arts theory – a phenomenon to which I certainly don't wish to contribute. Some martial artists like a lot of 'Qi talk', but I sincerely believe that it is unnecessary in order to make sense of the essence of what we are discussing here. I could have written an entire book that would baffle the reader with sentences like "they send the Qi into their fist to make it stronger", or "one should use the Qi to uproot the opponent and send him flying!". I do not favour such vague statements, and cannot reason how they could serve to promote a better understanding of the martial arts.

The Internal Approach is, on some levels, the exact opposite of the External. Where the latter seeks to separate, the former prefers to work together. While many among the Externalists could not care less about long-term health, it is a key component within the Internalists' thinking. Was the Internalists' approach to be defined by one word, it should undoubtedly have been "Holistic". This is due to **three main reasons** in my opinion.

1. The first reason is that those who historically developed the Internal Methods and principles we know today based them on their intimate knowledge of **Traditional Chinese Medicine** (TCM), which is also holistic in nature⁶⁰. While some Externalists do use the knowledge offered by TCM within their martial arts, in their case it is mostly to cause harm during combat. Alternatively, their connection with TCM might be in the way of applying medical knowledge to treat and prevent training injuries and illness; again, mostly not in the way of direct application within the art. The more Internally-oriented martial arts, on the other hand, are themselves a form of TCM¹⁶². I'll bring forth examples for this phenomenon, and explore this connection in greater depth, as this chapter progresses.

2. The second reason for this holistic viewpoint is that **Daoism** ("Taoism"; also centered around Holistic concepts) had a major influence^{1, 19, 49, 50, 59-61, 67, 75, 90, 93, 106, 111, 117, 157-158, 181, 188} over the development of the Internally-oriented arts, especially Bagua Zhang and Liu He Ba Fa. Daoism itself predates TCM as it is practiced in modern times. The influence of Daoist thinking over these arts is profound, and many of the practices and technicalities related to the Internally-oriented arts are a direct application of Daoist ideas and principles (this will be further demonstrated several times later into this chapter). Many Internalists in China were (and many still are) Daoist monks or scholars, and some historians argue that Bagua Zhang itself and a lot of the Qi Gong and meditation methods contained within it are a heritage from Daoist monasteries^{1, 93}. Taiji Quan is also said by some historians to have been invented by Zhang Sanfeng, who was a Daoist sage, speculated to have lived between the 8th and 13th centuries AD (while other historians consider the Zhang Sanfeng theory to be an unfounded myth³²).

The reader should be aware that Daoism is not a religion in the Western sense^{*}. It can be accepted as more of a philosophy towards life, without any "Gods" (though a few branches are polytheistic and religious, and scholars would therefore often make a distinction between "religious" and "non-religious" Daoism. In the context of martial arts, Daoism is usually non-religious). Moreover, in Asia, it is the case that people are not necessarily confined to the teachings of a single religion or philosophy. A person could choose to be a Buddhist-Confusionist, or a Daoist-Christian, and this would not be thought of as "contradictory"³². This was important to mention so one could understand that although Daoism have had a strong influence over some past and present teachers of the Internally-oriented Arts, this fact does not automatically imply that these people were/are completely, or even in part, Daoist.

The connection of the Internally-oriented arts with Daoism is complementary to the one they have with TCM, as Daoism and TCM are in themselves are closely related^{12, 36, 60, 151}, and have been so for thousands of years. Traditional Chinese Medicine, when practiced correctly, is the direct practical application of Daoism in daily life, no less. Both use the same concepts, terminology, and philosophy, and share a wide variety of methodologies for solving problems and explaining complex situations and systems. We already see evidence for this³⁶ Yellow Emperor's book of Internal Medicine – one of the main pillars of TCM: ***"I've heard that in ancient times, the wise lived***

* In my opinion, one could argue Daoism is basically "anti-religious" in some of its aspects, when put in comparison to our Western, monotheistic view of religion. It has, for example, the deeply embedded notion of "letting go", or intentionally losing control over a too directional thinking processes, while classical Western religions are about giving one means or a sense of control over his life by providing answers to the "big questions". Daoism intentionally refrains from providing concrete, obvious answers, and instead encourages its practitioners to find the answers by means of naturally flowing with the circumstances and the world around him/her, avoiding coercion of action or holding fixated perspectives towards things you experience. Keep in mind though that this comparison of mine is just a side-note, and has nothing to do with actual martial practice.

by the Dao. They supported the Heaven and Earth, had a grasp of the principles of Yin and Yang...". This book is over 2200 years old, and in it is already made crystal-clear that TCM and Daoism are interconnected.

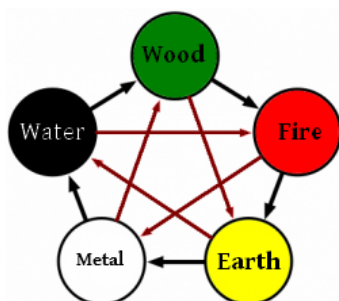
One example (among many) for direct Daoist influence on the Internally-oriented arts can be found in a quote from a poem Zhuang Zi⁹⁰ has told his friend (contained within a story written by Zhuang Zi): *"Heaven made you sound and whole; yet all your song is Hard and White"*. According to Arthur Waley, what Zhuang Zi had written was a criticism of what I would have referred to as "Externalist thinking" in this book. Zhuang Zi essentially tells his friend with this poem: "Look pal, instead of understanding things the way they are, you are over-thinking the issue, and aimlessly trying to determine whether Hardness or Whiteness exist separately from something that is Hard and White". Had an Internalist were to deliver the same message to an Externalist, he would probably have told him: "Look pal, instead of training the body, and thinking of it, in a Holistic manner, you are too concerned with breaking apart its limbs and movement and working on them separately".

Looking at the Daoist issue objectively, one does have to wonder whether the arts first developed and only afterwards adopted Daoism, or were truly originally established with Daoist thinking in mind – a controversial question that might not have a concrete answer for every art and practice, due to lack of reliable historical evidence. Whatever the truth may be, the fact remains that modern existence of this Daoist influence and expression within these arts is evident and clear¹⁵⁷.

The following pictures serve us as a great example for a "Daoist implementation" process, which I shall now explain. The Art of Xing Yi Quan originally had only three main fist techniques (it had more techniques, of course, but these were considered the most important). At some point in the evolutionary development of the art, these were expanded so to include two additional fist techniques. With the art now having five fists, it was changed to match a very popular and rather ancient theory in China – the Five Transitions Theory. This theory first flourished in China a few thousand years ago, in several parallel fields of study. Namely: General Chinese philosophy, Chinese Cosmology, Daoism and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). It served to show the interactions between key forces in everyday life, and the transitions between them – cycles of either "creation" or "destruction". In the transitional chart I have included here, the outer black arrows show the "creative" transitions, and the inner red arrows mark the "destructive" transitions

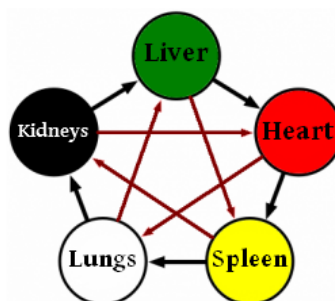
Daoist theory

The relationship and connections between the 5 Elements.



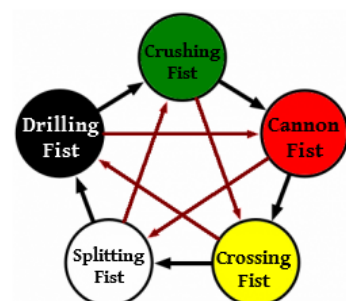
TCM theory

The relationship and connections between the 5 Internal Organs



Xing Yi theory

The relationship and connections between Xing Yi's 5 Fists.



So, for example – in the Daoist five elements theory, **Wood** creates **Fire**, and is destroyed by **Metal**. This is based on common sense observations of natural processes – Fire uses Wood as burning fuel, and Metal instruments such as an Axe are used to chop ("destroy") Wood. Now, let us compare this to Xing Yi's five fists theory (there is a lot of detail as to the exact attributes of every fist, so I will be

simplifying this explanation a bit to make it more comprehensible). Xing Yi's **Crushing Fist** is a straight body-punch. We see in the chart that from the Crushing Fist, the **Cannon Fist** is "created". This is because from the physical movement of hitting with the Crushing Fist, there is a logical and natural flow into the movement of the Cannon Fist, now hitting with the opposite hand, while the hand that previously hit with the Crushing Fist rising up and to the side, to defend one's face. We also see in the chart that the Crushing Fist is "destroyed" by the **Splitting Fist**. This is because the Splitting Fist emphasizes a downward-forward palm-strike, which is useful for blocking a punch delivered to the center of one's body, like the Crushing Fist. This also parallels the 5 element theory of Daoism: The Splitting Fist is the Metal, or the axe – both in analogy and in apparent external shape (it strikes like an axe, hence splitting). The Crushing Fist is associated with Wood, which is destroyed by the Splitting power of the axe.

It all correlates very nicely, and this is not a coincidence – over many generations, people made these variations on the five phases theory to complement each other^{*}, because they reflect the natural way of how things in our world work and behave, and thus function as rather simple means of expressing complex ideas and interactions. One should realize that in this sense, the five elements/organs/fists etc. are not only five given items – they stand to represent a much broader spectrum. As such, a "Splitting Fist", for instance, is not only one fist⁹⁵ – it is a **Category** for all the movements in Xing Yi which include a forward-downward force vector, and have other similar physical properties that movement. In the same manner, the "Liver" of TCM's five organs theory is not just the Liver, but every process that is physically or energetically associated with the functions of the Liver (as described in TCM).

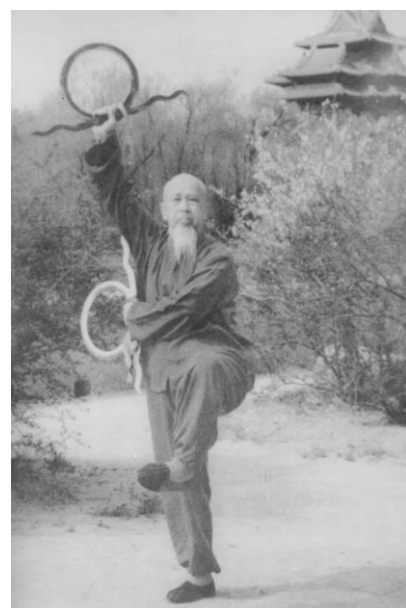
3. The third justification for calling the Internal Approach "Holistic" is drawn by analyzing the matter from a purely physical perspective. The holistic approach of the Internalists means that various parts of the body tend to be trained and used in greater conjunction with each-other. In the previous chapter, the muscles and tendons were discussed in correlation to the way they are trained by Externalists. Using a more holistic approach, the difference with the Internalists would be that instead of separating the training of muscles, tendons, etc. into segmented exercises, they would try to contain their practice within exercises and methods which involve the whole body, or at least most of it. Later on in this chapter, through the investigation of various Internal methods and practices, I will demonstrate this in great detail.

^{*} The art of I Liq Quan, created in its modern form by Sam F. S. Chin, also includes the Five Transitions model in its teachings of movement and application. The implementation of this model in I Liq Quan is similar, though not identical, to what had been done in Xing Yi.

Health, in the context of the Internalists' perspective, is at least as important as Combat^{1, 95, 138, 188}. As the late Erle Montague had put it⁴⁴: *"The founders (of Taiji Quan) had the idea that people should defend themselves not only against external physical attack but also from pathogenic internal attack from disease!"*. I can think of two things which contributed to the historical process of the Internally-oriented arts becoming more health-focused.

Firstly, if you recall what I have described early on in the chapter about the Externally-oriented arts and methods, there was a chart that illustrated the relationship between **Tactics/Strategies/Techniques** and **Structure**, as parallel and complementing aspects of one's martial skill (gong fu). When one asks "how do I fight?", the answer comes in the form of a Tactic, a Strategy, a Technique, or all of these combined. When one wonders how to physically or mentally handle the resistant reality of the fight, it is the Structure that provides the solution – the engine and backbone that would hopefully drive and support the chosen Tactic, Strategy or Technique to success. To the Externalists, health is seen through the lenses of "fitness" – having strong muscles, good stamina, a high Oxygen Consumption capacity, etc. This is because these are the attributes through which Externalists view and train their structure. The healing of the body has nothing to do with the External methods directly, and is at best a minor side-effect of some of them. For the Internalists, it so happens that their view of their structure, as is explained throughout this chapter, has relevance to healing, and maintaining one's health. This relationship with health, depending on which training method of the Internalists we are discussing, is sometimes very much intentional (as with the TCM-connection), and at other times purely coincidental. In any case, many training methods employed by the Internalists promote health and/or self-healing (more on this in the book's appendix). There are Internalists who argue that superior fighting and superior training methods inherently have to do with promoting good health – hinting that in theory, this makes the Internally-oriented arts better for fighting. I completely disagree. Being healthy is about helping you win the ultimate battle – that of subjectively achieving a prolific and happy existence. Alternatively, it will help you avoid not being able to fight. It is a passive benefit by nature. It is most often not a cause for increasing one's ability to fight, but a by-product of some fighting training methods. In any case, like I have written earlier in this book, it is most often the person that makes an art useful for fighting, and not vice-versa.

Secondly, Daoism was, as explained earlier, a major contributor to Internal Methods in a variety of direct and indirect ways. Daoism is principally concerned with physical and mental well-being rather than fighting. That kind of thinking is what balanced the Internally-oriented arts, created and improved by fighters, with a healthy attitude towards things. Daoist influence comes into play again concerning another approach to training. Daoist philosophy asserts that hurting oneself during practice while trying to achieve a certain goal is foolish. Hence, it prematurely eliminates many External methods that are of risk of causing long-term health misfortunes. To the Internalists, the training itself is a sort of health regime, mostly acting as preventive medicine^{156, p.46} by strengthening the body's internal systems and organs (much like in TCM), while also aiding in the cure of various physical illnesses. It is not by coincidence that over the course of the 20th century, millions have adopted toned down versions of



Taiji Quan as a health practice, to help prevent and overcome the difficulties that rise with old age and disease (with hundreds of millions in China alone¹⁴).

In the picture: Late 3rd generation Bagua master Li Ziming (1903-1993), wielding weapons unique to Bagua Zhang – the Wind and Fire Wheels.

The health orientation enables some Internalists to keep advancing their skills well into their 60s and even 70s & 80s, with many being able to practice their art right until the end of their lives. Lots of people in the martial arts community don't give much thought to the health aspect that can be harvested through their art. Many are, of course, into martial arts for their martial value – be that fighting, self-defense, or both. Yet consider the wise words of Bruce Kumar Frantzis, who was talking about Taiji's ability to help one handle the stress in his life¹⁴: "**... Your chances of being mugged are about one in a few million. Your chances of being stressed-out and being absolutely incapacitated in today's modern society are not bad at all**". To this adds Jan Silberstorff²⁸: "**...The greatest enemies of men are, and will remain, illness and death by accident**". Often-times, people are worried about what frightens them most, and forget paying attention to the real dangers of everyday life.

Practitioners of the Internal Methods who study under proper guidance always report⁹⁷ experiences of improved **Proprioception*** and **Interoception***. The individual feel of the practitioner is very personal and subjective, making the issue somewhat controversial, as for the question of what really changes inside one's body. It is undeniable, though, that people tend to become more aware and in control of muscles they were not aware or in control of before, and at advanced stages of training, also begin to sense the workings of internal organs, or the tissues surrounding them. In parallel to this, one's awareness of the body's physical placement in time and space greatly improves over time (compared to one's own abilities). These effects are not unique to the Internal Arts – they can also be achieved, to one degree or another, with good training in Yoga, Meditation, Qi Gong, and other methods^{154 p.93-94}. Notable psychologist Erich Fromm^{**} (1900-1980) has too testified in favour of Taiji Quan in regard to the subject at hand, and wrote⁹¹: "**...the latter (the art of Taiji Quan) is a particularly recommendable exercise (for developing an awareness of one's body and movement), because it combines elements of sensory awareness with a state of concentrated meditation**".

At least part of the improvement in one's proprioception and interoception can be attributed to a certain teaching method which many Internalist teachers use. The idea is that, unlike with other arts, the focus of one's attention remains Internal throughout training^{154 p.93-94}. By that I mean, that one cannot rely on his senses of either sight or sound as cues for correct or incorrect practice. Unlike with many Externalist practices, the sound of a movement does not necessarily indicate it is more correct or powerful, and looking at one's body as it takes shape or holds one is considered distracting, rather than helpful. One has to put his or her mind into the body, and develop strong proprioceptive skills that would allow one to not rely on sight or hearing in training one's body.

* Definition of **Proprioception**^{154, p.81}: "*The ability to sense the position and location, orientation and movement, of the body and its parts*". Definition of **Interoception**^{154, p.89-90}: "The internal sensations of the body, such as those of muscular effort, tingling, warm, cold, heartbeat, etc.; and also possibly also including under this definition a sensation and understanding of consciousness itself."

** It's worth noting that Fromm wrote this somewhere between 1974 and 1976, in a time when relatively few people in the Western world even knew Taiji Quan existed.

Scientifically speaking, there is proof that prolonged stimulation of the skin and surface tissues (as common in Internally-oriented arts, and grappling arts of all types) is a major contributor to an improved proprioception¹³³. The improvement in Proprioception may also be attributed to the training of Yi, which is another term I will thoroughly explore later.

There are Internalist teachers who have speculated^{1, 28, 31, 172 cha. 2, 188 p.16}, or even went as far as to unquestionably determine, that this improved proprioception and interception also provides to support heightening of other senses* (Touch, Vision, Smell, Taste and Hearing), and offers another health benefit – a greatly upgraded ability to monitor one's physical and mental well-being, returning it to the "natural state of things", where you intuitively know how to cure and prevent many forms of self-caused illnesses.

I have my own opinion on this issue, of improved sensory experience in daily life of those other senses I have mentioned. I do believe that it exists and can be achieved by training Internal Methods correctly, for prolonged periods of time. I do not, however, have faith in the notion of Internal Methods making one into some kind of Superman – in regard to the senses, or otherwise. I hold that two processes that occur in parallel contribute to this phenomenon. The first being that, by increased overall well-being and more efficient blood-flow, an individual is likely to experience an improvement with senses of his which became "dimmed" over one's lifetime, for various health-related reasons. The second being that, through any prolonged and correct practice of martial arts, and especially that of Internal Methods, one would achieve better awareness of bodily functions, and generally of what is happening around him/her. Thus, in conjunction with regaining the innate capacity of some senses, the experienced is strengthened by becoming more attentive to these senses. Over the course of this book, I shall sometimes return to this discussion of sensory experiences, and expand upon it. For now, this will do.

The health benefits offered by the Internal Methods apply to all of those who practice Internally-oriented arts, considering one's practice is correct. By "correct", I am implying that it was passed on and instructed in the original, traditional manner in which it was conceived. The reason for making this important distinction is that sadly, there is a natural tendency for a traditional method in any field of expertise to diminish in quality the more it is widely spread. The same principle applies for the restaurant business – when a single good restaurant expands into a chain of restaurants, the food quality usually declines, with changed menus now suited for the masses, and a serious loss of flavour and uniqueness. Following this comparison, the Internally-oriented arts can be said to have been top-quality restaurants that had spread into massive food-chains across the globe (acquiring hundreds of millions of practitioners over the 20th century). Because the food was so good, it still maintained some of its original quality and appeal (health benefits), even when prepared by novice chefs (taught by clueless teachers), who lacked real understanding and expertise in the field. The further you go from the source, the weaker the stream.

Since Taiji Quan has become the most popular of the Internally-oriented arts, with hundreds of millions adopting it into their daily lives, a lot of research had been done over the claimed health benefits of its practice. Reading the last paragraph, one can understand that any form of comprehensive research in the field must've been looking into a majority of people who were teaching or studying watered-down versions of the art. Surprisingly (or not), a gross amount of research data still shows us that Taiji does offer an abundance of health benefits for those who utilize it regularly. This goes to show that, as I claimed, even the "mass-production" versions of this high-quality product maintain some of its original premise. This also hints us as to the benefits that can be harvested from learning real, traditional Internal Methods. I have included a

* A person's sense of **Balance/Equilibrium** will unquestionably improve with serious training put into ANY martial art, compared to a former state of no training in martial arts.

more thorough review of the health benefits discussed so far in this book's appendix (see table of contents).

In the picture: A few dozen people demonstrating a common Yang-style form, at the opening of the first International Taiji Festival at Da Qing Shan, China. A "mass-production" version of Taiji Quan. Part a curse, and in part a blessing.



A well-known criticism of the claims that I have thus far made, in regard to the health-focus in the Internally-oriented arts, is that these supposed benefits did not prevent many famous Internalist teachers from dying before reaching 70-80 years of age, and have seemingly not prevented them from being sickly and/or overweight. Yang Chengfu is one such teacher. While being the originator of the Yang style's modern 108 movement-form (arguably the most popular Taiji movement-form in the world today) and a skillful artist, he was a far cry from perfect health; he died obese and in poor health, age 53. Yet another famous teacher of the Internally-oriented arts, Wang Shujin, died at 77 years of age, but was also obese, and suffered from diabetes. Hong Yixiang, another famous Internalist teacher, died age 68, and was also - you guessed it - obese.

Practicing the Internally-oriented arts is not a magical pill or cure. Other factors will always play a



bigger role in one's health than any physical activity. These factors are, more often than, one's genetics, diet and sleep. As with any exercise or health-promoting method, the martial arts in general are limited in their ability to help, and their limits are defined by these factors. We could be cynical and say that these men I've mentioned did not benefit much from their practice. We could also look at it the other way around, and suggest that these individuals would have probably died much sooner, had they not practiced the Internally-oriented arts. I personally lean towards the less-cynical interpretation. The fact that these men have functioned as highly skilled and capable martial artists, working full-time as teachers, despite their obesity and illnesses, speaks volumes of what their training did for them. It had allowed them, as sickly individuals, to live longer, and lead lives which were physically much more strenuous than those of most people in Western society.



The bottom line is that martial arts, as tools for promoting one's personal health, will only take one as far as his or her genetic makeup will allow, and are limited in their capacity to help by other lifestyle choices and accumulated habits. These practices shouldn't therefore be thought of as THE solution, but something to use as part of a whole – a part of a complete healthy lifestyle.

In the pictures: Master Zhou Jingxuan of Tianjin province, China, teaching Nitzan Oren proper body mechanics. Pay attention to their "school attire" – a notable western influence on Chinese traditions.

The Main Components of the Internal Approach

All this considered, here are the methods and characteristics commonly shared by Internalists in training and combat, and for promoting health. In contrast to the Externalists' scenario, the training methods explored in the following pages are always an integral part of an Internally-oriented system (unless mentioned otherwise), and must all be trained at some level to gain skill (gong fu) that may be called "Internal".

1. The use of Intention: To the Internalists, the body is an empty vessel, an external shell or form ("Xing" in Mandarin Chinese). To have a functional meaning, the empty vessel must contain something called "**Yi**" (Intention 意). Yi is **not** some kind of cosmic energy floating in the universe around us, and gathered with fancy movements. **It is a physical manifestation of the thought of doing an action.** Alternatively, borrowing from a description of Ideokinesis*, we may refer to the Yi as: "**An image or a thought as a facilitator of movement**". I shall now elucidate these baffling sentences:

There is a point between thinking of doing something, and actually doing it. Say a heavy object is falling down from above me, and I want to catch it. My mind has already decided to do so. Right before I catch that object, my body is aligned in the best way it knows to catch the falling object. I unconsciously use my Intention to fill out that empty shell that is my body, to support it in catching the falling object. Was I to stand there with my hands up in the air without anything falling, the feeling would be different. Yet, when I have the **Intention** of doing a physical action (in this case - catching something that is about to fall on my head), I am much more likely to succeed in doing it, and my body reacts in a different manner. Such is the concept of Intention, or Yi [which is also sometimes referred to as the "**mind-muscle link (connection)**"^{15, 98} by Western martial artists and bodybuilders, who also use the same concept, albeit in a different manner¹⁷⁷].

The Internalist wishes that eventually, whenever doing any martial movements, either in training or fighting, his body would have the automatic intention to support his or her **structure** for the desired action. The Intention creates the correct initial firing of nerves, muscle-sensory organs, muscle fibers, tendons and fasciae^{**}; it keeps our body slightly alert to the possibility that a certain action (like catching a falling object) is about to occur. Yi is thus used to create a constant "ready" state of mind and body when in a physical confrontation (similarly to the mental concept of **Zanshin** in Japanese traditional martial arts). Yet among Internalists, this physical "readiness" is gentle, sometimes unseen altogether, and is characterized by alert relaxation rather than overt expectancy. It is like the Venus Fly Trap calmly awaiting a fly, rather than a tennis player anxiously waiting for the other player to serve the ball; more in the lines of a semi-meditated violinist keeping his gentle touch on his instrument, waiting for the conductor's slightest move, than an agitated policeman getting ready to jump protestors.

Having previously brought about an example from daily life which is undoubtedly subconscious and almost untrained (catching something falling from above without thinking about how to hold one's body), how does one train this sort of ability for use in the martial arts in a conscious manner? In the following ways, that is:

A. Standing in Zhan Zhuang (Pole Postures): The practice of Zhan Zhuang hides vast internal sophistication within a simple-looking external shape⁸⁰. Because of this, it is often not

* As defined by Lulu Sweigard.

** Further into this chapter, I will explain what Fasciae are, and explore their role in martial arts.

practiced enough, or neglected altogether, even by Internalists. These are "static-looking" postures held for long durations of time - from a few minutes and up to two hours. These postures are sometimes "generic", in the sense that they have connections to many other movements in the system, and often do not specifically mimic the shape of a single move or application. The shape of the posture has to be functional for the martial art one is training in. Had someone wished to practice a Zhan Zhuang posture suitable for the sport of American Football, for example, he might have held a stance that would look similar to pushing an imaginary opponent in mid-running, say during a tackle. Internalists use postures that are related to the structure and movements they tend to utilize in combat. This connection between Zhan Zhuang and combat applicability is not always obvious to the naked eye of the common observer, yet is nonetheless existent among serious Internalists.



In the picture: My teacher Nitzan, demonstrating a basic Zhan Zhuang posture, nowadays common in many Internally-oriented schools, called *Hun Yuan* ("Smooth Roundness" 浑圆). It is a non-combative posture, which can be used to generally develop one's Internally-oriented structure and Yi (that may in themselves be used in fighting), or for health-maintenance.

When first beginning to practice Zhan Zhuang, the practitioner learns how to loosen his muscles through the pain of standing still, and using "core muscles" and the fasciae to support his structure instead, with minimal tension (I will discuss the fasciae and what they are in great detail as this chapter progresses). Over the course of the first few months, one may tremble and shake, as the muscles over-react to the pressure of holding a fixed stance for a long time. This will cease once basic overall physical relaxation has

been established. Later, it might feel like there is some numbness in the limbs, and/or like a faint energy flow, sometimes warm and/or tingling^{156, p.19}. Those are just the senses messing with the brain, nothing more, yet they indicate the buildup of better Intention and loosening of the muscles, which allows for better blood flow. At this stage, the practice is still almost purely static (no posture is truly static¹⁰¹, and the body trembles and moves on a small scale all the time, even if you remain in place and no longer feel like you are shaking). One will traditionally persist in this 'static' stage until he or she had reached a point when they can stand very comfortably for many minutes on end (the number of minutes invested in practice will depend on the training goals of the practitioner). Another important distinction between this stage and the ones that shall follow it is that in this stage, one strives to use the least amount of muscular action necessary to maintain oneself statically in place; which in turn means that at this stage, Zhan Zhuang are still not a "whole-body exercise".

After that stage is clear, through expert guidance, one will start using imageries of external actions to pump intention into his structure^{95, 96} - the point at which the "Yi kicks in". This is not

mere guided imagery or motor-imagery^{*}, but a solid kinesthetic experience. It strives to become more "tangible" than just using imagination as an aiding tool, as done in Ideokinesis. The Intention can be *felt*, because it creates a slight tension in the sensors-receptors which sit within our muscles, tendons and fasciae^{**}, signaling the muscle is ready to act in the movement vectors focused on. In the beginning, one will only try to "feel" the imageries, but not "manipulate" them. Afterwards, the practitioner will learn how to very gently contract muscles in varied vectors, as if he or she were supporting an outside force coming from many directions, or forces pushing on their limbs from the inside. This works upon and improves one's ability to utilize muscular stretch-reflexes^{***} with the entire body at once^{156, p.103}, and prevent antagonist muscles from interfering with each-other's actions. Unlike with large-scale utilizations of the stretch-reflex in exercises such as rope-jumping and bench-pressing, the muscular contractions exercised with Zhan Zhuang are very small, and one seeks to make them smaller over time⁹⁵, eventually virtually invisible to the naked eye. Over the course of months and years, more and more imageries are added and refined, until the whole body responds and supports itself like one single-charged spring-like unit (on this "springiness" I shall dwell heavily later down this chapter, when discussing the concept of "Tensegrity"). At this stage and throughout those that follow, the practice appears to be static, but is highly dynamic and full of movement on the inside. It is like with a skilled circus

* Guided-imagery and motor-imagery are in themselves valid methods which are commonly used in sports and rehabilitative medicine, and also by various martial artists when not actively training. They are, however, not the same as using the Yi. While using the thought to imagine physical actions can greatly influence the brain, and even create actual learning and improve one's skills to a degree, it remains in the realm of the mind, and doesn't cross over much into the rest of body – at least not to the same extent that training the Yi does.

** These sensors and receptors are^{133, 148}: The *Golgi tendon organs*, which respond to muscular contractions, the *Pacini endings*, which measure pressure changes and vibrations and provide proprioceptive feedback, the *Ruffini endings*, that inform the central nervous system of shear forces in soft tissues, and the *Interstitial nerve-endings*, that can report on all of these, and pain as well (also see¹⁴² for similar references).

It has been suggested in research¹⁴⁹ that the *Golgi tendon organs* are extremely sensitive to muscular contractions, which in turn cause them to trigger muscular relaxation. The Pacini receptors in the fascia are, as explained, important for our responsiveness and sense of Proprioception. **I hypothesize, following those conclusions, that we can assume that part of the mechanism of for employing small and rapid muscular contractions in the practice of Zhan Zhuang, is for training these receptors to become more sensitive to pressures, and in turn increase sensitivity to the opponent.** The order of action by which this mechanism might be applied in real life can be understood via the following examples: The opponent pushes against my limb >>> I begin to stiffen, but because my tendon-organs are sensitive, they enable me to relax the muscles without the onset of significant muscular contraction >>> This in turn enables me to be more flowing and responsive, instead of being stiff and becoming stuck in place.

*** Yu Yongnian have written^{156, p.69} the following: "By maintaining the muscle at a specific length, by usage of an isometric exercise, the muscles will develop a fast twitch response. This means, first, that the nerves and muscles develop the memory to accelerate instantly to the contraction point of the isometric exercise, and secondly, the fast twitch muscle-fibers are conditioned to maximize the speed of the muscle-contraction". In other words – he argued, among other things, that the postures held with Zhan Zhuang practice teach the body how to accelerate itself very quickly into these posture when needed, through the process of the muscles becoming adapt at contracting at specific angles. This logic, in my opinion, can also be applied to the static postures held by Externalists.

performer balancing while standing on a rope – at times, he doesn't seem to be moving much, if at all, but a lot is going on within his body as he intuitively uses Yi to maintain the balance (I borrowed this analogy from Caylor Adkins⁸⁷).

The imageries used to train the Yi are most commonly, as explained, of forces pushing, pulling, tearing, converging, expanding, condensing, etc. on various parts of the body, from all sorts of angles. Other imageries might be of performing actual movements while remaining in place, as in Ideokinesis. Both methods are used to train the structure in conjunction with the Yi. As the Yi provides a stimulus for the muscle-receptors^{**} to act upon with minute dynamic stretching within the body, one wishes to have the body react as it were trying to initiate an appropriate response, with all the parts interconnected. The imagery of the fingers trying to push outwards would also affect the heels. The pushing inwards of the elbow will affect the knee; etc. This is the logic by which one uses the Yi to train the whole-body unity of the Internalists' structure, as applied to Zhan Zhuang and other methods that shall be discussed further into this chapter. When training the Yi, no one part of the body is working solo.

While the muscular contractions now make Zhan Zhuang into a whole-body exercise, the purpose is not training the muscles to become bigger, stronger or more endurance-tolerant, but building a unified structure, which is both relaxed and alert. Therefore, right from the beginning stages, excessive tension is discouraged and gotten rid of. The difference from earlier stages is that the practice now becomes active, after previously having been mostly passive, and involves the use of Yi and more of the body's muscles and nervous system's functions.

The training of Yi can reach higher levels. As control over one's muscles becomes still more refined, various types of imageries can be used to enhance the level of relaxation one's structure is capable of. Wherein in the first stage, relaxation was acquired passively, later on in one's training, the Yi could be used to take this aspect a step further, via active manipulation of the will. Other forms of Yi usage are related to advanced manipulations of the body from within, affecting tissues and joints in ways uncommon to ordinary people. The tendons, too, are exercised in special ways, by using the Yi to stretch them at key points, while maintaining relative muscular relaxation.

Within some lineages, in yet more advanced levels of Zhan Zhuang practice, combined methods of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and self-hypnosis are used to refine the mindset of the practitioner for combat situations, sharpening one's audacity and mental preparedness for physical conflict. Alternatively, some would meditate while training their Zhan Zhuang. Such techniques probably did not originate from martial arts, but were incorporated into them from religious and philosophical traditions, such as those of Buddhism, Daoism and Hinduism.

Following these stages, and parallel to the refinement of the abovementioned bodily-skills, the practice contains the potential to transcend the flesh, and become almost completely mental. This goes beyond what most people achieve in their training. Most people don't even know how to train the Yi. The latter individuals, as well as those who do train the Yi consciously, are chiefly focused on training physical aspect of their bodies – changing the way their muscular and nervous systems work. By physical training, one could gradually alter the way the mind works. This higher level of Yi training I write of has the nature of trying to directly work on the mind (as in regular meditation), while training physical aspects in parallel. It could be likened to the mental effort of trying to meditate while slowly riding a bicycle on mountainous terrain. One would have to have become exceptionally accustomed to his practice on the bicycle to be able to meditate with pronounced success while riding them and also working on the improvement of his or her riding skills. That is why I consider these techniques to be higher level skills (compared to other training methods utilizing Zhan Zhuang).

The highest level of training one's Yi in the Internally-oriented arts, has been referred to in the Xing Yi Quan classics as: "A fist without a fist, intention without intention – within the absence of Intention, lays the true **Intention**". My teacher Nitzan explained to me in the past that there might be several interpretations for that sentence.

The first interpretation is that one should be capable of issuing a technique without any intention on his behalf, as a response to an external stimulus. Then, when the technique is delivered without any intention or conscious thought, this could be deemed the "true Intention".

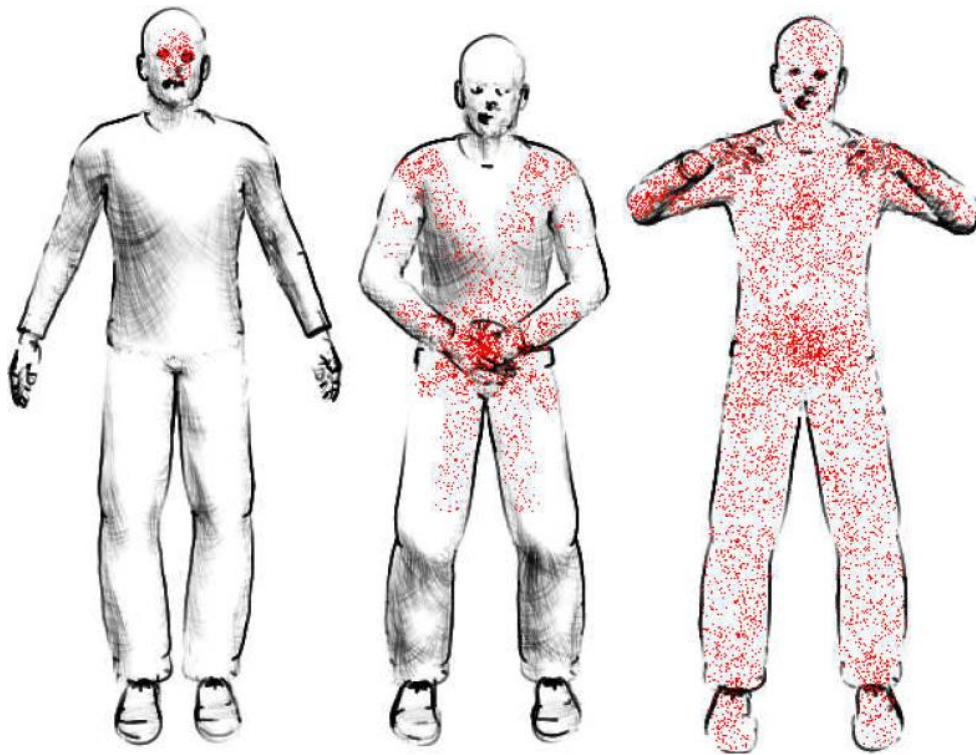
The second take on it, is that this sentence describes a state in which the practitioner can release power at any angle, without even changing the external shape or position of his or her body. Without movement, there is no desire or need, no expectation or wish of self-gain by the Ego; only a modest feeling of satisfaction and personal fulfillment.

A third way of thinking of that sentence is that it illustrates the state in which the practitioner's movements are completely "taken over" and "led" by the Yi, and he or she feel as their body simply "moves on its own", without any conscious effort on their part.

Not all types of Zhan Zhuang are directly related to combat applicability. Some, while still having a connection to martial training, may specifically emphasize mental-physical relaxation or health promotion. One example is, of course, the Hun Yuan posture as seen in the picture I have included before. Combative Zhan Zhuang may also be practiced with these goals (of attaining better health and relaxation) in mind. When trained in this relaxation/health oriented fashion, the Yi might not be as intense, and stances will be held in higher positions, to ease the load on one's legs. There are even Zhan Zhuang that border in their function, between Yi training tools and advanced methods of stretching (Wuji Zhuang and Zi Wu Zhuang are good examples for such stances from the Xing Yi Quan I was taught). Nonetheless, all Zhan Zhuang, regardless of function, are used to train the Yi and instill correct structural alignment.

Beginning in the 1950s, the term "**Qi Gong**" (literally: Qi Work) became commonplace for describing Internal Methods which were solely focused on **Healing** and **Health-promotion**. Today, many confuse Zhan Zhuang with Qi Gong, and believe them to be the same. This is not the case. Here therefore is a chart created by my teacher Nitzan, which includes a useful comparison between these two terms:

<u>Qi Gong</u>	<u>Zhan Zhuang</u>
Regulation of breathing: slow, long and uniform	Breathing naturally
Regulation of the body: loosening the muscles.	"Relaxed, but not flaccid. Tense, though not stiff". Tension without Tension .
Inner quiet and calm, contained within dynamic external movements.	Internal movement (using the Yi), with an apparently "static" external frame.
Usually maintaining the focus of the Yi in the Dan Tian area.	Guiding the Yi towards the limbs as well.
Using the theory and practice of the Large and Small Heavenly Orbits, from Traditional Chinese Medicine.	The practice of the Large and Small Heavenly Orbits is not traditionally contained within Zhan Zhuang.
Because one attempts to "guide the Qi along the meridians", there is a slight risk of becoming ill from over-practice or practicing incorrectly.	One does not attempt to "guide the Qi", and there are no risks involved in the practice of Zhan Zhuang for healthy individuals.



In the pictures: Drawings made by my teacher Nitzan, in order to try and further explain the concept of Yi. The one on the left illustrates a person who does not commonly use the Yi – that is, most people around the world. For such a person, awareness of his own Yi is very limited. The person on the left is an Internalist adept, practicing the Hun Yuan variation of Zhan Zhuang. This person uses the Yi to engage and be aware of his whole body. The middle figure is the same Internalist adept shown on the right, after finishing his Zhan Zhuang practice. He places his palm above the Dan Tian area, and focuses his intention into that area, feeling the heat, energy and flow generated while he was practicing earlier being diverted right into his Dan Tian. Of the Dan Tian and its qualities I shall explain later.

The Internalists' martial Zhan Zhuang's are not the same as the static stances held by Externalists. The latter are used to build muscle stamina and stability in holding a specific stance, and the former for other purposes as described above and further down this chapter. Also, while in Zhan Zhuang, one aims to loosen the muscles and use a minimum of muscle tension as key for progress in them and in one's art in general. There aren't many Externalists who abide by this thinking. Late master **Feng Zhiqiang**, of Xin Yi Hun Yuan Taiji Quan, had spoken about it from his perspective in simple terms⁵⁷: "...I learnt and practiced Standing Post exercises of Shaolin schools. The main difference between them and the methods of Neijia schools is that Neijia emphasizes relaxation to greater degree. For this I think there is certain reason in dividing martial arts into External and Internal Families...". Master Lu Shengli remarked⁶⁷ that: "In most martial arts, the goal is to increase power. In Taiji Quan you should constantly be asking yourself how to reduce your force and still win".

Furthermore, observing External stance-holding practices reveal that they primarily use the few specific muscles that support their structure. Squatting in a low stance with the hands held in air, for example, would normally primarily engage the Quadriceps (leg-muscles) and Anterior Deltoids (shoulder-muscles). Many other muscles will work as well to contribute and stabilize the stance, but these two muscle groups will be explicitly much more dominant (and also the first to fatigue). The Internalists' Zhan Zhuang, on the other hand, are a whole-body exercise (this will be addressed thoroughly later on in this chapter). Once intention is added to the initial static practice, the entire body begins to fluctuate and vibrate in accordance to rapid-consecutive changes in tiny muscular movements. What people think of as static is actually very much alive and vibrant in the

Internalists' case. On the small movement-scale that is associated with Zhan Zhuang, the movements are also incredibly fast. These movements are often contained within the range of less than 1cm from one point to another, and are to be measured in milliseconds. One might call it "**Internal Plyometrics**" (borrowing a term coined by Steve Morris in one of his articles⁸⁴, which he used for a similar training concept).

There exists some criticism as to the nature of the tiny movements trained with Zhan Zhuang. People who dislike this practice have argued that a fight cannot be won by standing in one place, let alone moving in such a minimalistic fashion. This is based on misunderstanding of the role Zhan Zhuang play in the training regime of Internalists. They serve to develop proper whole-body unity, relaxation, and sensitivity – attributes of the Internalists' structure. They do not (physically) simulate a fighting scenario, but constitute the structure that will be used in fighting. They do contribute to another skill which is directly related to combat – the capacity to efficiently initiate a swift attack from a (near) static state.

A common weakness among martial artists is that they "telegraph" their movements. It is very hard to initiate a powerful attack from a static-state without showing it beforehand. Mentally, one feels he needs to "get ready", and exposes his intentions. Physically, one usually needs to gain momentum with some large movement^{174 p.40}, to create the power-generation potential. The type of movements trained "within" Zhan Zhuang are inherently adapted to solve this problem. They mimic the first milliseconds of movement when one initiates an attack or defense, and specifically focus on them. While not being actual "techniques", they create the structural body-mechanics which support them. One can then flow into a new movement without signaling the other party that he or she are about to do so.



In the picture: Practitioners of Bagua Zhang circle-walking at China's famous Temple of Heaven [master **Yang Linsheng** (1949-) and his gongfu brother, master **Hao Huanshi**]. The most basic of Bagua's drills is walking in a circle, with a fixed or changing posture – a sort of Zhan Zhuang while walking. The upper body is holding a Zhan-Zhuang-like posture (with identical training goals), while the lower body is busy practicing the art's characteristic stepping, in a Shi-Li-like fashion (the practice of Shi Li shall be described shortly). Bagua adepts put a lot of thought into the concept of change and continuous, uncut movement. Both are trained through circle-walking. This picture was kindly donated by master Yang. Check out his official website for more information about his lineages and history at: <http://www.askt.it/>

The practice of Zhan Zhuang predates modern martial arts, and was polished over and over for thousands of years in China, before reaching its current sophistication. One of the earliest records of it was probably in the Yellow Emperor's Book of Internal Medicine³⁶: "*I've heard that in ancient times, the wise lived by the Dao. They supported the Heaven and Earth, had a grasp of the principles of Yin and Yang, breathed the essence of the air, stood still and gazed upon their spirit, and their muscles were united as one.*" Ellis Amdur argues³⁵ that the principles laid by Zhan Zhuang occur naturally, and are discovered in non-martial-arts environments and scenarios as well: "*...Consider an Inuit hunter, required to stand motionless beside a seal-hole for hours, because the slightest movement would scare the seal away. He will learn to stand with efficient relaxation, ready to move instantly despite hours of immobility in the cold air...*".

It is unclear when exactly Zhan Zhuang were adopted as an integral part of martial arts training. Holding martial postures statically for minutes on end was probably common even in ancient times, but this cannot be claimed of the more sophisticated Zhan Zhuang practices I have written of. Xing Yi Quan is the art most notable for its use of Zhan Zhuang (together with Yi Quan, its historical off-shoot, created by Wang Xiangzhai). The use of Zhan Zhuang in Xing Yi only dates back as far as the middle 19th century, to the time of its founder, Li Luoneng. Other arts like Bagua Zhang and Taiji Quan have adopted this practice even later in history. Bagua, as a martial art, can only be traced back to the time of its supposed founder, Dong Haichuan, who lived roughly in parallel to Li Luoneng, the founder of modern Xing Yi Quan. The use of Zhan Zhuang in Bagua could probably only be traced back to Dong's students, as we can only vaguely tell how Dong practiced the art himself, because each of his students came up with a different version of Bagua, based on his own skillset and understanding. With regard to Taiji Quan, implementation of Zhan Zhuang was made much later. Reference for Zhan Zhuang cannot be found in any classical Taiji Quan texts, or seen in training pictures or video footage or masters from most of the 20th century. Together with Zhao Bao village Taiji Quan, Chen style Taiji is considered the most ancient of Taiji styles, and most other Taiji styles today claim to have historically originated from it. Chen style was developed in Chen village in Henan province, China. In the interview I conducted with master Chen Zhonghua (found in **Part III** of this book), who is a Chen style teacher, master Chen has suggested that Zhan Zhuang practice had only reached Chen village in the 1980s.

Other arts were further influenced by the practice of Zhan Zhuang as found in Xing Yi and Bagua, and adopted similar methods in the late 20th century to early 21st century. The Hun Yuan posture and its variants have especially become very common in various martial arts – probably because they are relatively the easiest Zhan Zhuang methods to practice, and the most suitable for those interested in practicing for health preservation. As for other arts that include some form of Zhan Zhuang training and postures which are uniquely their own (like Bajiquan and Jingang Bashi) – I did not manage to find where their methods had originated from.

B. Trying to "feel" or "test" the power/resistance (called Mō Jìn 摸劲 or Shi Li 試力 in Mandarin Chinese): Referred to as Zhan Zhuang in motion (行桩 Xing Zhuang – 'Moving Standing'); doing general motions related to the movements in the style over and over again, slowly, and trying to use intention to feel the resistance that might be applied by an adversary, so the body can learn how to support itself against that kind of resistance. This type of practice had probably existed within martial arts long before Zhan Zhuang were adopted.

As explained before, the motions done for power feeling and Zhan Zhuang postures might not have direct martial applications. They are primarily used to develop gong fu. Another byproduct of doing them is heightened sensitivity to touch (*Ting Jin* in Mandarin Chinese – "Listening Power"), with the Yi learning to adjust automatically to varying pressures. This poses an advantage for the Internalist, as it allows one to develop his/her sensitivity to touch to a great extent without

relying on a live partner to work with. This is not to suggest that one shouldn't train with other people – on the contrary. Human touch is very important so one can literally grasp the correct feel he will afterwards train by himself using his Yi, and remain in-touch with the reality of a living, opposing opponent. Many do not have the privilege of having another person to train with on a regular basis, or are limited to training with others during lessons, at best. Correct use of Yi can compensate for this handicap, and may even prove to be superior in the sense that it can be practiced extremely slowly (to refine one's skill), unlike when people cross hands, in which case slow is rarely the way they go about doing things (as ego responds faster than logic).



In the picture: Liu He Ba Fa practitioner Yun Yinsen demonstrates moving while feeling resistance.

Shi Li could be compared to the practice of "shadow boxing" in Western Boxing, in the sense that both are used to "feel the opponent" without any actual opponent present. Not all Internalists would use Shi Li in the same manner as Shadow Boxing. Shi Li could be performed either with repetition of the same movement over and over, or randomly floating from one form of Shi Li movement to another. Many Internalists argue that trying to imagine an opponent is counter-productive as it sets fixed response patterns, while using the Yi without imagining an opponent gives one a more general "feel", which is not fixated on certain movements or techniques. An Externalist might not have any trouble with giving-in to "fixated response patterns"; on the contrary – sometimes, this is what is meant to be achieved in his

training. Externalists who engage in sports competition often train for a match against a specific opponent, and augment their training to help them develop the techniques and strategies suitable to defeat that particular opponent. Therefore, such fighters have an interest in setting fixated response patterns that will take advantage of their adversary's weaknesses. These are carried over to shaow-boxing practice, including active imagination of struggling with that opponent. This is in sharp contrast to someone who is training for either self-defense or non-sportive combat. In these situations, violence occurs without preparation, and so it is more important to "be ready for everything", and not become as fixated as a competitive fighting athlete.

Another strong difference that I had already mentioned is that Shi Li, like Zhan Zhuang, is primarily used to develop the structure, the Yi, and the movement principles. While Shadow Boxing too is helpful in developing the Externalist's structure, it is not its goal of that training method. This is also reflected in how these two methods are practiced – with Shi Li usually practiced at a slow pace to gain foundations, and Shadow Boxing mostly at high speeds, to simulate real combat.

The order of training among many Internalists is as follows: At first, the correct feeling of Yi is taught by practicing Zhan Zhuang (Though many teachers have been known to skip this stage in their curriculum, or only teach it to students at later stages. Some simply do not teach Zhan Zhuang at all). The practitioner becomes increasingly aware of advanced physical alignments, using the Yi to manipulate one's structure from the inside. Later, Shi Li practice helps one develop it further⁸⁰,⁹⁷, and maintain the right feeling and body alignment while moving. These methods are then reinforced by learning how to correctly engage in physical contact – not necessarily in the way of fighting-applications, but by learning correct movement principles. At last, the skill naturally expresses itself within the entire spectrum of movements available within the art. This trait is

unique to the Internalists. Because of this, Zhan Zhuang and Shi Li are what I have termed earlier in the book as **Structure Essentials**: the core training methods of the arts which utilize them, which are the most important.

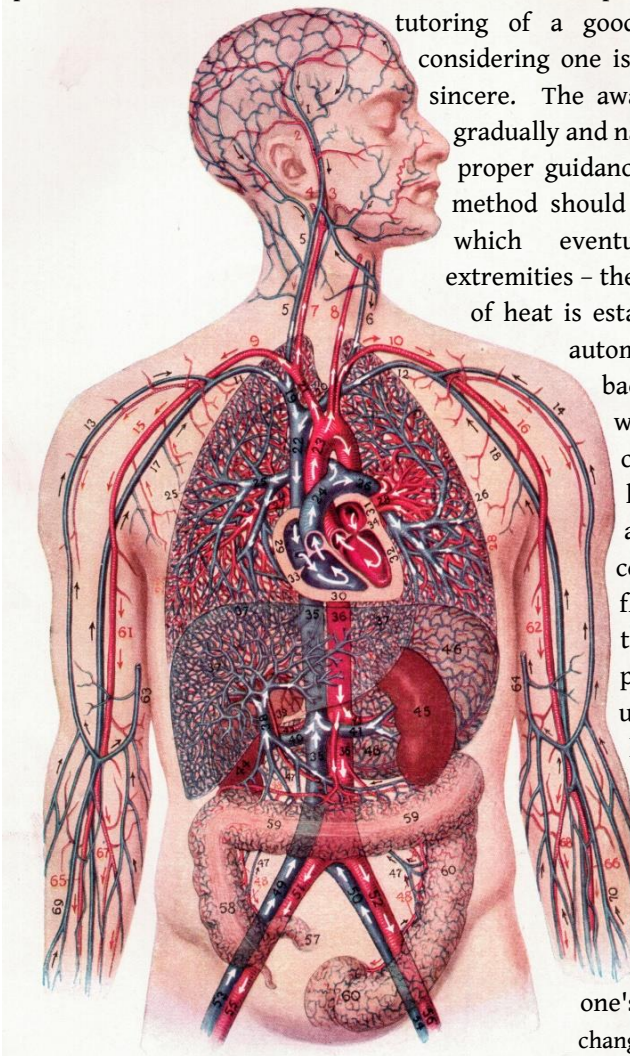
It is sometimes said among Internalists that Zhan Zhuang are used to "develop the power", and Shi Li to learn to "move the power". In this sense, the "power" is the overwhelming nature of the Yi, which encompasses the entire body. The aim of the Internalist is to reach a state wherein every movement practiced contains Yi automatically, even without thinking about it^{55, 56} – a return to a subconscious state of mind, wherein the Yi is omnipresent. Like I have written before, this allows for the development of zero reaction time to touch. There are no more gaps between thought and action – things already happen as you think of them, or even before conscious thought have settled. This mirrors Taiji Quan's classic writings: *"If the opponent does not move, then I do not move. At the opponent's slightest move, I move first"*. It is a part of what Caylor Adkins has referred⁸⁷ to as "having the critical edge in combat".

As the Yi is ready to "fire" in any direction, one's movement is never too committed. A punch thrown already has the "intention" of re-directing itself into a sideways blow, and a kick can instantly turn into a stomp. No movement is bound entirely for one ultimate path. Non Internally-oriented arts sometimes make use of the opposite strategy. A Muay Thai round-house kick, for example, often causes the entire bodyweight of the kicker to move into the strike uncontrollably, to cause maximal damage to the opponent. When such a strike misses, the fighter is forced to make a 360 degree turn because of the momentum he himself created. This is never put to practice among Internalists. A Muay Thai fighter, being a sportsman, is not concerned with the opponent attacking him from the back as he turns, in a non-sportive manner. The Internally-oriented arts were originally developed by people who were not sportsmen, and were therefore concerned with urban or battlefield combat, in which losing control over a movement for a fraction of a second or turning your back to the opponent could cost one his or her life.

In principle, any movement can be practiced very slowly and with a lot of Yi and be used as Shi Li training; However, Internalists tend to focus on the general movement patterns that are most relevant for developing the style's distinct body-method. In Taiji Quan and Liu He Ba Fa, the long practice forms (which are usually, though not always, practiced at slow speeds) are used as Shi Li training^{2, 28, 55}, while in Bagua, this is emphasized when walking the circle¹ or performing linear forms. A few Taiji Quan lineages (such as master Wu Tunan's lineage) combine the practices of Shi Li and Zhan Zhuang – one executes the long training form, and stops in every posture for a short period of time, holding that posture as Zhan Zhuang. Chen Taiji Quan lineages in particular feature a type of Shi Li exercise called "Silk-Reeling", which will be discussed later in this chapter. The terms "Mō Jìn" and "Shi Li" actually come from schools of Xing Yi and Da Cheng Quan (respectively). In these schools, Shi Li is a separate practice, which is specifically designed to develop correct Yi.

One might ask: how is it that some Internally-oriented schools refrain from training Zhan Zhuang, yet still maintain the "Internally-oriented" classification, and succeed in developing "Internal Skills"? The answer lies in the nature of Shi Li training. As suggested before, Shi Li is actually "Zhan Zhuang done with large motions". In that sense, Shi Li training can compensate for lack of Zhan Zhuang for the most part. Zhan Zhuang are basically a shortcut for achieving some of the skills developed with Shi Li. They have the potential to save a practitioner years of hard work of refining his/her skills, but one could still manage to advance these skills without them.

Unlike other forms of "energy work" pushed by new-age charlatans, Yi is therefore a biological by-product of the sensors in one's muscles, and can be physically felt within a few months under the



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CIRCULATION OF THE BLOOD

tutoring of a good teacher, and sometimes even sooner considering one is talented, and his practice is diligent and sincere. The awareness to Yi and control of it are to be gradually and naturally understood through practice under proper guidance. The advent of this remarkable training method should be the feeling of warmth in one's limbs which eventually, month-by-month, reaches the extremities – the tips of the fingers. After a concrete feeling of heat is established in the extremities, and Yi can be

automatically "activated", it gradually travels back into one's center of mass, until the whole body feels heated. This warm, calm, comforting sensation stems from first loosening up the muscles and joints, allowing better for blood flow, and then consciously learning to govern this blood flow by stimulating the muscle-sensors, as the practitioner is trying to feel resistance pushing on him from varied directions, and using other advanced methods of moving his internal workings. A phenomenon that should be observed by all Internalists is a change in their palm's colour (in practice). A pale person for example, would see a change from white to dark red or dark purple, as a result of blood buildup in practice when control over one's Yi gradually becomes stronger (colour changes depend on one's natural skin colour, and so different individuals will experience different color transformations). The abovementioned

phenomenon are more commonly noticed during the winter, when the cold weather contrasts our body's naturally-generated heat. Considering one is well-dressed during wintertime, good internal practice will result in the body keeping very warm, even without moving quickly or with large motions. The use of Yi can also heat the body without a substantial increase in one's heart rate.

In the picture: An illustration of blood-circulation in the human body, through the Arteries (red) and Veins (blue). It was taken from "*The Home and School Reference Work, Volume II*" by H. M. Dixon. The book was published in 1917 by The Home and School Education Society. Many thanks to Sue Clark for uploading it to her flickr.com account. Check out her profile at: <http://www.flickr.com/people/perpetualplum/>

Besides the feeling of "warmth", other types of physical sensations that stem from training the Yi will vary between different individuals. I personally feel as there are magnets connected to many parts of my body, with the resistance between these "invisible magnets" leading my movements to a greater extent and precision as my skill progresses. Bagua master **Ma Chuanxu** has described⁵⁸ the process in this manner: "*Once Neigong develops, it is like electricity in hands...The Intent becomes important. Intent drives Qi and Qi drives Strength (Yi Dai Qi, Qi Dai Li)...*". When "turning on" the Intention with the whole body after being "intentionless" and relaxed, it might feel like the body is a large, thick gardening hose being filled quickly with water. The attempt at multi-directional

sensory experience with the Yi is often compared to "swimming in the air", for the Internalist materializes sensations that are akin to performing his movements while inside a swimming pool.

I hypothesize that the differences in how people describe their sensations of Yi have to do with the preconceptions practitioners put into their practice. I feel "magnets" because I liked to play with magnets as a child, and have strong kinesthetical memory of them. Another person, who may have not been exposed to magnets like I did, might actually feel something very close to what I am feeling, but will choose an entirely different way of describing it. For this reason, my teacher Nitzan and other teachers have always been cautious not to tell their students what they were "ought to feel". Another important reason for this same decision is that sensations should only be the outcome of training the Yi, not the aim. "Chasing" after the physical sensations that the Yi creates may cause one to feel good, but will not manifest the correct structure for the art.

As a higher level of skill develops, the Yi may seemingly take over the physical body from time to time, especially in solo practice. The motions physically feel like they are being done by themselves – as there is an invisible force pulling on the body in the correct way. The body feels like a leaf carried by nimble warm winds, which seem to direct it in very specific vectors and angles. It is important to emphasize that "the sensation of no-effort in action is present not at no-work but at correctly co-ordinated work"¹⁴⁰; meaning that it is not by limping relaxation that effortlessness is achieved, but by correct and alert usage of the Yi, that one has grown accustomed to. Mentally, it seems that the consciousness becomes a mere sideways observer, while simultaneously being very much aware and alert to everything that is happening. A sort of naturally self-imposed semi-trance state. This phenomenon has been described by a few Taiji exponents whose books and articles I have read, but I have also felt it myself in practice to a lesser extent. I believe that mentally (yet not physically), this state is identical to what a veteran car driver experiences when he drives long distances in familiar roads. The driving of the vehicle is shifted into an "auto-pilot" mode, and the thinking brain can either focus on other things (like beautiful girls on road-signs) or just float mindlessly (this I have also felt through experience in driving, so I can make the comparison). Because attention is then freed from constant monitoring of one's movement, most of it can be directed elsewhere – say more towards what the opponent is doing.

A testimony to the physical manifestation of the Yi can be strongly felt by any Internalist who has succeeded in initiating its use (this should, as explained, occur early on in one's training). Once incorporated into practice, it changes the way the body reacts to training. It draws the energy out of you in a strange way. I have had experience practicing many Externally-oriented methods: those of Weight Training, Gymnastics, Western Boxing, Okinawan Karate and Pigua Zhang. What all of these have in common is that after strenuous practice, you are tired in the sense that your muscles are fatigued, and your body has less strength. After a prolonged training session with Internal Methods, however, the feeling is different. Regardless of the apparent physical difficulty, it is your mind, not your muscles, which gets to you. In those days when training was particularly smooth and deep, one could end a training session in an Internally-oriented art not because of muscular fatigue, but because he feels the burden of the mind "weighing in" on him. It feels like he has been reading for several hours, and now his mind yearns for some rest. The great mental effort by the brain to maintain the physical and mental omnipresence of the Yi, in both the mind and muscles, can prove challenging during the first few years, when this process is still forced, rather than natural. It is quite literally a mental workout no less than a physical one.

This is the result of what scientists have long called "Deliberate Practice"¹⁷⁹ – a kind of practice which is full of attention and introspection, unlike simply 'going through the motions' mindlessly. The importance of Deliberate Practice cannot be underestimated, as it has been scientifically proven to be a key factor in the development of long-term high-end skill levels (in any sort of practice, not just martial arts).

In his book²⁸, Chen Taiji master **Jan Silberstorff** makes a joke upon his own experiences, telling the reader how he participated and won 20 Taiji form competitions, where he went on to put a show of magnificent flowing movements, which were actually lacking true depth and skill. While master Jan admittedly now realizes he did not know what he was doing at the time, since he had won, he figures the judges did not know much either. It was only later, under the guidance of his teacher, Master Chen Xiaowang, that he filled his "empty forms" with "content". This so called "content" being the use of real Intention, and the specialized body-mechanics of the Internalists, that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Taiji Master Dr. **Yang Jwing-Ming** also uttered⁵² his disappointment of the common scenario of people failing to grasp the deeper notions of Internal practices, such as training the Yi: *"...They (people who've practiced for many years) don't understand the deep aspect of the martial arts. All those things that they see are the forms. Like for example, take taijiquan. The taijiquan they see so far is forms. What is the essence behind the forms? What is the internal side of taiji? Very few people know..."*. Taiji master Chen Zhonghua have similarly remarked⁸⁰: *"Most people practice with limited capabilities of self-observation. Their training may result in development of muscles, ligaments and other types of normal power. Yet these activities for stretching the joints, with merely mechanical movement and rotations, will not give the learner any feedback which would be useful for development of skills of Taiji quan. Such practice will not cultivate the unique requirements for Gong (skill) in Taiji practice"*.

The concept of Intention is often misunderstood in the west because of a cultural-lingual barrier. When western martial arts teachers talk about "having the correct intentions behind your technique", what they usually mean is one should commit themselves mentally to applying their techniques to the maximum, without fear of consequences at that particular moment. The Chinese, however, make a distinction between one "intention" to another. A person with the mental intention described earlier would be considered to have Sha Qi (杀气, Killing Qi) – a fierce mental intention to kill or hurt – to go right through the opponent. This is different from the concept of Yi, which constitutes the physical nervous-muscular manifestation of what the mind thinks, rather than just what you psychologically aspire to do.

One might be surprised as to how far this misunderstanding can go. I have personally witnessed western Xing Yi Quan teachers, and read material written by such teachers, who have fallen victim to this fallacy. When translating the "Yi" in "Xing Yi" to English, they appropriately called it "Intention". Unfortunately, since they did not receive complete training, they perceived this "intention" to be the so called "mental commitment to fighting", while the original name of the art meant something else entirely. Spreading this mistake far and wide, I fear that it had become the predominant interpretation of Yi in the West.

Another misunderstanding has to do with the confusion of many teachers who can feel and teach the use of Yi, but mistakenly refer to it as Qi (Chi / Ki). Even within the theory of traditional Chinese Medicine, these two are not the same. The Yi is not Qi⁹⁵, and Qi is not what one should try to manipulate directly with Internal Methods. Failing to understand this can be hazardous. I know that certain teachers order their students to use imagery like in Yi training, to try and guide Qi through the body's meridians. Without getting into a physiological explanation of what this may cause and how, you ought to know that this sort of practice can be dangerous to one's health. One should not try to consciously manipulate normal processes and functions within the body without extensive knowledge of medical theories. The methods contained in the Internally-oriented arts are usually meant to bring about health-benefits as a side-effect of correct practice, and not to initiate profound changes in the body by directly changing the way it works (unlike other, more esoteric practices from the Orient). Such methods for bodily-control and change, when they do exist

in the curriculum of an Internally-oriented art, are only taught to a selected few who possess the knowledge of how to reverse and correct possible bad outcomes resulting from their practice.

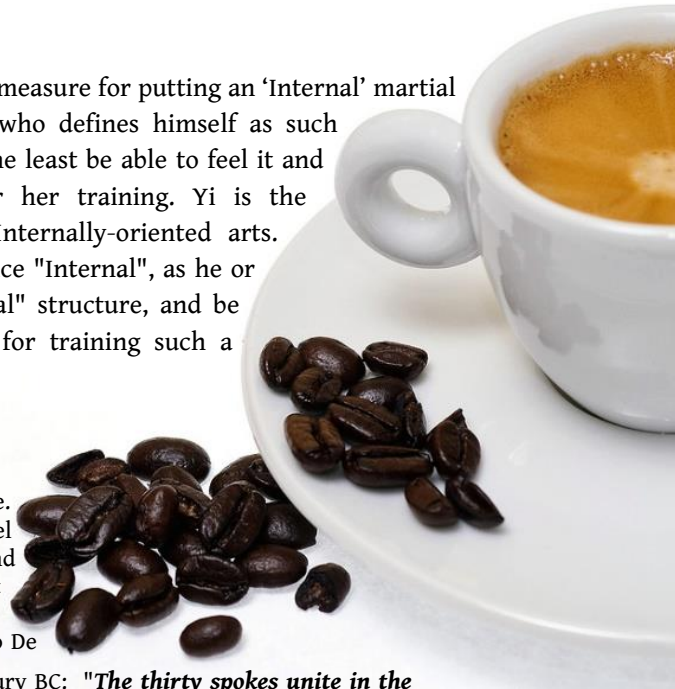
People also often have a hard time understanding the difference between Intent (Yi) and Structure (Xing). This confusion may be especially evident following my explanation of Zhan Zhuang and Shi Li, which are methods that were said to develop these two attributes together. My teacher Nitzan once explained the difference in a way I personally found to be satisfying. He said: "You may think of Yi (Intent) as something related to the field of **Physiology** (as it is the thought-process as manifested in the internal minute-workings of our body), while the Xing (Structure) has more to do with **bio-mechanics**" (as developing the Structure is, like Biomechanics, "the study of the structure and function of biological systems by means of the methods of mechanics"⁷³, to produce martial or health related results).

Yi should be, in my opinion, the first measure for putting an 'Internal' martial arts teacher to the test. A person who defines himself as such should be aware of the term, or at the least be able to feel it and understand how it impacts his or her training. Yi is the cornerstone of all theory in the Internally-oriented arts. Without it, one cannot call his practice "Internal", as he or she will not possess a truly "internal" structure, and be lacking of a key element required for training such a structure.

In the picture: A good cup of coffee. Isn't it just an empty useless vessel without the coffee? The philosophy behind these methods of training isn't new – it was already contained within the main canon of the Daoist philosophy – the Dao De

Jing⁴², which dates back to the 6th century BC: "***The thirty spokes unite in the one nave; but it is on the empty space (for the axle), that the use of the wheel depends. Clay is fashioned into vessels; but it is on their empty hollowness that their use depends. The door and windows are cut out (from the walls) to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space (within), that its use depends...***".

This appetizing photograph is under Creative Commons (CC) license. It was taken on the 19th of April, 2009, by Flickr user **shuttermonkey**. Visit his profile page at: <http://www.flickr.com/people/shuttermonkey/>



3. Tensional Integrity: Supporting the "powerball mechanics" is, as explained, the Internalists' structure. The type of structure developed through the methods I address in this chapter is technically known as a "**Tensegrity Structure**". This type of structure (whether in martial arts, engineering, sculpture or other fields of study) thrives on the balance between **Tension** and **Compression**¹³⁴. Tensegrities tend to be stronger and more flexible than other structures of the same size¹¹¹. In tensegrities related to the human body, the elements of **Compression** are the bones (which are being constantly compressed by gravity and other forces), and the elements of **Tension** are the muscles and ligaments (like the fasciae), which pull and push on the bones¹⁰¹. One such tensegrity structure we are familiar with is our spine^{134, 135}. It is very flexible and agile, capable of dealing with tremendous pressures by acting as a whole, diverting and dividing the load between its vertebrae bones (compression) and ligaments & surrounding muscles (tension); able to compress and decompress with its rubbery inter-vertebrae discs. (Without the benefits derived from being a Tensegrity, "the spine would have collapsed from the weight of the head alone"⁸³). The Internalists wish to mimic this capacity, and increase its potential – both with the spine itself, but more importantly, with the whole body acting together.

To understand how the concept of Tensegrity applies to Internal Approach, we first need to examine another term (don't worry – we shall shortly return to discussion of the Tensegrity structure, and all shall be made clear).

In Taiji Quan theory, the Yi (or "intention") that creates the type of structural attributes which may be compared to the Tensegrity, is referred to as **Péng** (pronounced: PANG, as in "tongue" or "sung"). By correctly training the Yi and structure, the entire body becomes like a large inflated rubber ball floating in a pool. The ball holds itself effortlessly. Pushing on such a ball is difficult, because it is slippery and easily slides-off from incoming force. When pushing on the ball and then releasing it, it will push back with the force it has absorbed. The more one pushes, the harder it is to push further into the ball, and the more force it will bounce back. This is Péng – a constant absorbing/expanding force contained within the body with proper Yi. Jan Diepersloot has defined⁶³ Péng as: "*The Chinese term for the feeling of human sphericity*".

A "human ball" (Internalist) can rotate itself at will, thus creating a "human powerball". A real powerball is hard and stiff, but an Internalist who possesses Péng has both the rotational qualities of the powerball, as well as the absorbing/expanding nature of an inflated rubber ball. Péng by itself is passive – it will only return the energy pushed into it, like the inflated rubber ball. A powerball is aggressive, as it always "seeks" to out-manuever and win over its wielder (a task it never fails to do because this is how it is built to function). A combination of both is thus needed to overcome an adversary in combat, if one wishes to use the mechanics of the Internal Approach.

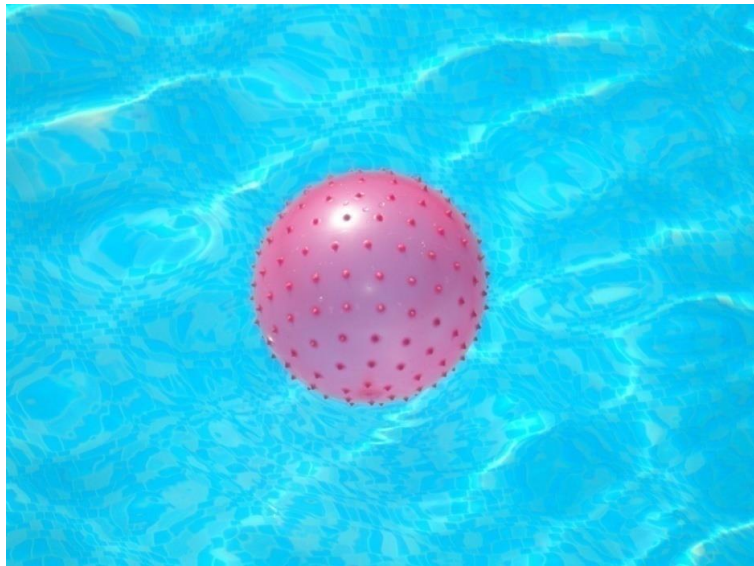
Example for using Péng in active offense: I once saw Master Steve Rowe of Great Britain using an original way to describe how the Péng force is to be applied offensively. He calls this principle "the Wedge". One should imagine his limbs as a Wedge, which on contact with the opponent, causes an expansion (Péng) that pushes aside the opponent's limbs, as one's own advance towards the opponent's body. A Wedge is indeed a word that can prove friendlier towards English speakers than "Péng".

Example for using Péng in passive defense: Just as the rubber ball cannot be pressed into its center past a certain point, the Internalist wouldn't like the opponent to be able to press his limbs close his center of mass. When our arms or legs are forced together and/or become attached to our torso, we become entrapped, as these are the weakest points from which our muscles can generate power (the arms or legs may still touch together sometimes, if this touching is vital for performing a certain technique or movement. Nonetheless, this should always be the product of the

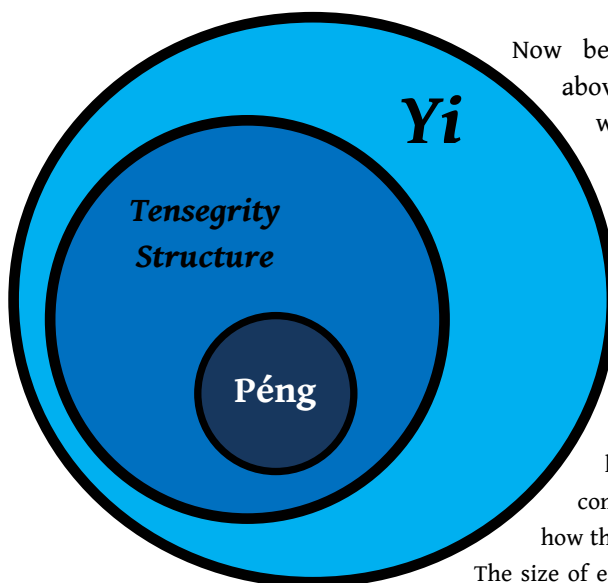
Internalist's own will, and not a by-product of a forced movement made by the opponent). Think of a person who has fallen in captivity – there is a good reason people are always tied-up in the same fashion, no matter the culture or context – that is, with the limbs touching themselves and the body.

The opposite scenario is also undesired. When our limbs are fully extended, they are also weak. Anyone who has ever tried wrestling with anyone else intuitively bends his legs, because when one's legs are extended and locked, it is very easy to move him or her around. Similarly, when we stand and try pushing on something heavy, we automatically bend our arms, since extended arms lack stability, and the capacity to transfer power from our legs properly on the horizontal plane.

Wishing to avoid these ailments, Internalists use the Yi in training to feel tensions and compressions from the center of the body outwards (mimicking expanding against resistance), and absorbing pressures from the outside towards the center of the body (mimicking control over compression). While doing this, they refrain from letting the body expand or contract too much. This creates a **Péng force** which has defined limits – it will neither go so far as to break one's structure, nor too close to cause the structure to collapse – just like the rubber ball's natural qualities. When coming into physical contact with another person, Péng is only effective when holding the limbs between about 10 and 170 degrees in relation to themselves, the body, or the ground. Beyond these extremities, it might be too hard to impossible to maintain the structure and its "Péngness" ¹⁷², chapter 3.



In the picture: The kind of ball I personally had in mind... This photograph is under Creative Commons License; it was taken on July 25th, 2009, by Flickr user "cosciansky". More of his photographs can be seen at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/31133811@N07/>.



Now beginning to make the link between the abovementioned mechanics and the tensegrity, we could say that "A tensegrity object can expand or contract, or turn and move, in relationship to focus acting upon it, without becoming slack or pulled-apart" ⁹⁷. Also adding that "...Tensegrity provides the ability to yield increasingly without ultimately breaking or coming asunder" ¹³².

In the picture: An illustration which exemplifies how the Tensegrity Structure is supposed to be a component created by one's correct use of Yi, and how the Péng is an attribute of the Tensegrity Structure. The size of each circle is irrelevant in this case, and does not

reflect the percentage each element is of the whole.

Examining Dr. Stephen Levin's following description⁸¹ of the tensegrity's qualities, we can now further observe how it correlates with the expression of Péng in the Internalists' structure (as you read these quotes, try imagining the reactions of the rubber ball and the powerball): *"Let us assume human, whole body modeling, as tensegrity structures. Changing muscle tone would alter the body posture, from recumbent to standing. Once the tone is set, no further muscle activity is necessary to maintain that posture, as the (tensegrity structure) is stable. For instance, during quiet standing, no additional muscle contraction would be necessary and the EMG would not record any significant activity. Muscles act in unison, rather than as antagonists. ...The load on one (part of the structure) is distributed and shared by other structurally integrated (parts) just like the sharing of tension loads in a wire wheel. The structures do not have to be round but can stack in a column or helix and take on any shape, with the whole structure mechanically functioning as one..... the whole structure contracts or expands and becomes denser and stronger or less dense and weaker, non-linearly. If it were a fluid-filled pump, it would push the fluid out more forcefully as it emptied because the internal pressure rises as the...(structure)...compresses. The non-linearity also occurs when the load is released and allows for a soft landing, shock absorber effect"*.

In the picture: The light-ball seen in the mesmerizing photograph below is a Geodesic Dome, located at Vancouver's Science World, Canada. It is ball-shaped, and also a Tensegrity structure. This photograph is under Creative Commons License; it was taken on July 10th, 2009, by a true artist whose name is Darren Kirby. Check out his other well-shot photographs at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/badcomputer/>.



In the same article, Levin makes a comparison between two types of wheels, to further make his point clear. He first writes of the wooden wagon-wheel, like the ones once used for horse carriages. As this type of wheel turns, each of its spokes takes the pressure in turn as it becomes perpendicular to the ground. This calls for thick, strong spokes. The bicycle wheel, on the other hand, behaves differently. Instead of its spokes taking the pressure on one at a time, the entire wheel is united as one, and constantly shares the load between all of its parts. The bicycle wheel is therefore a type of a Tensegrity structure, which also somewhat resembles the Internalists' structure (though it is inherently less flexible). The wheel (Internalist) does not need very strong or thick spokes (muscles/bones) to support itself, since it is connected as a whole.



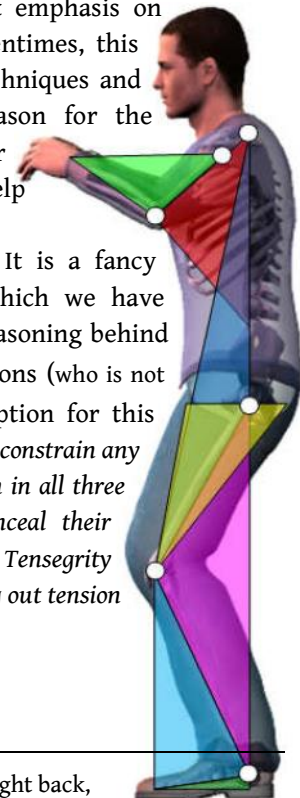
green blossom was giving way to the summer's yellow hue.

Doctor Levin makes a few additional statements⁸⁶ which can help us "connect the dots" between the Internalists' structure and the Tensegrity concept: *"The...tensegrity spring is different. ...In the resting state, there is always some residual tension or 'tone' in the system so it is never completely relaxed* (Jonathan: This is the omnipresence of the Yi and its manifestation in the muscle and fasciae sensors-receptors!). *The (tensegrity-structure) spring gets stiffer and stronger as you load it (with more resistance). You can see that as you add more weight, a great amount of energy can be stored with very little change of shape of the (tensegrity's) spring* (Jonathan: just like with the Internalist's structure)".

In the picture: A Dandelion – another Tensegrity structure. I stumbled upon and photographed this specimen next to the walls of Jerusalem, about the time spring's

Thus far I have compared the 'behaviour' of the tensegrity structure to that of the Internalists; but what about the actual geometrical qualities? As it turns out, this is also a good point for comparison. When training in Internally-oriented arts, there is great emphasis on keeping at certain angles with and between the limbs and body. Oftentimes, this could seem illogical. Other martial artists can and do apply similar techniques and movements without adhering to such 'angular discipline'. The reason for the Internalists' keeping of certain angles which might not be as common or important in others' practice during training, is that these angles help create the tensegrity structure.

Now observe the following picture, created by my teacher Nitzan*. It is a fancy geometrical elaboration on the Hun Yuan Zhan Zhuang posture, which we have discussed earlier in this chapter. It features some of the geometrical reasoning behind the way this posture is held. I find the following quote¹³⁴ by T.E. Flemons (who is not related to my teacher) to be a very good (and surely unintended) description for this picture: *"(The Tensegrity) is about triangles. The only way to fully stabilize and constrain any structure is by triangulating surfaces or cavities in compression and/or tension in all three dimensions. This fact may not be obvious at first as many artifacts conceal their triangulation within their form such as the square walls and roofs of buildings. Tensegrity structures on the other hand show the forces acting upon them by differentiating out tension and compression vectors into separate components"*.



* Several important requirements for the posture, such as an erect spine and straight back, were not possible to accurately model with the software Nitzan had used to render this picture.

The reader should take note that a rubber ball as described earlier, is not by itself a tensegrity. It merely possesses some of the tensegrity's attributes, as explained. As Dr. Levin kindly elaborated for me in an email correspondence of ours: *"An inflated object (like a ball or a car tire) gets shorter and fatter when loaded with tension. In tensegrities, the whole system shrinks. A tensegrity gets shorter and thinner, (and denser and stronger), and as the tensegrity sphere would shrink symmetrically, the pressure inside would increase. This property is characteristic of all biologic tissues"*. Therefore, the Internalist can be said to be physically mimicking a tensegrity structure, which happens to have some properties which are also found in floating rubber balls, such as Péng.

There are nonetheless two notable differences between the Internalists' structure and Tensegrities, which I think are important to point out. **The first** is that a Tensegrity may be rigid, while the Internalist tries to avoid being so. **The second** is the Tensegrity may be fragile, for in some Tensegrities, destabilizing a single part of the structure could cause a collapse of the whole thing. An Internalist can intentionally collapse some of his structure (as in purposely yielding too much with the hand, for instance) to avoid a scenario in which the opponent gains control over the entire structure by manipulating a small part of it. Essentially, the Internalist has a choice when to hold his or her structure as a Tensegrity, and when to change it into something else.

Unsurprisingly, we again see how these attributes of the Tensegrity/Péng – the physical attributes which the Internalists seek to acquire through practice, are reflective of a known Daoist proverb: *"...To receive much, yet not to increase; to receive little, but not to diminish"*. Within the annals of Daoism, this proverb goes a long way, setting an example for all walks of life.

Also found in Daoism is the concept of finding and merging with the Dao – the natural way of the world; the way in which things occur by themselves, without any interruption; the underlying

flow and order that have driven the universe since and before creation. It has been discovered that tensegrity structures occur naturally in the world; that they constitute the way endless things are made, from the structure of the Pufferfish, to Bodily Cells, Raspberry Fruits and even the structures of viruses and supernovas^{83, 111-112, 134}.

Therefore, one could argue that adopting the Tensegrity structure with one's entire body can be thought of as an application of this idea in Daoist philosophy, of attempting to re-merge with the Dao. Paradoxically though, according to Daoist literature like the Dao De Jing, you are one with the Dao as you are, and cannot force yourself to become one with it. With that in mind, one could only aspire to be one with the Dao when the tensegrity becomes one's natural way of being – when the Internal structure is one's natural structure, without ever thinking about it. Only a relatively small number of martial artists reach this level of mastery within a given generation.



In the picture: The wonderful artwork presented in this amazing photograph is the creation of sculptor Kenneth Snelson (1927-). It is a Tensegrity structure, located just outside of the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington DC, USA. Looking fragile and being lightweight (standing eighteen meters tall, it took "mere" 15

people to manually erect it), it still possesses great strength and durability because of its Tensegrity qualities. This photograph is under Creative Commons License; it was taken on January 22nd, 2006, by gifted photographer Bien Stephenson. Check out his other well-shot photographs at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/benstephenson/>. I would also recommend the reader to search the Internet for videos related to this artwork, as these are fascinating.

Over the years, many have written of the Internalists' structure as a "Metal Spring" ¹⁵⁹. I do not reject this definition. I do find it somewhat lacking. A metal spring is a rather simplistic device. The human body, especially when employed for complex tasks such as martial arts, is far more complex and sophisticated. As should be evident to you by now, the Tensegrity contains within its broader definition the "springiness" that is meant to be encapsulated in the Internalists' structure. The Tensegrity-structure analogy is thus not meant to compete with the spring-metaphor; rather, it is the latter's natural evolutionary successor in the realm of martial arts theory.

5L. Slow as a Snail: The specialized body mechanics the Internalist wishes to use to his advantage cannot be obtained by training fast most of the time. Fast should be the outcome, not the main method used in training, and even in some forms of sparring, slow training can prove beneficial¹⁷⁶. The kind of control the Internalist wish to attain can only be achieved by moving very slowly during long phases of training, a habit mostly associated with Taiji, but is also a common practice within other Internally-oriented arts and even in the Russian Systema¹⁷⁶. The reason for this logic is simple – the Internalist is required to try and fuse many physical and mental elements, and make them work as a whole. No one is skilled enough to maintain such unity from the beginning, and as one's skill progresses over time, so do the physical and mental demands for better external and internal coordination & integration. Hence, only through moving very slowly, at least for great portions of one's training, can the Internalist gather the concentration and attention span needed to coordinate the many fine points of Internal movements, and be able to notice his own flaws while moving^{111, 124}. There are many martial artists who've realized the benefits of slow training, but only the Internalists seem to have this as a basic prerequisite, no matter the teacher or lineage. Slow training is encouraged among the Internalists throughout one's martial life, regardless of age or experience^{1, 13, 28, 31, 37, 111, 124, 146}. It is seen as a way for endless self-refinement, suitable for everyone^{*}.

In my modest opinion, slow-training also serves as a superior way to develop one's balance, since the slower you train, the more control you'll have to develop over your movements at any given angle. I can testify from experience that grasping the correct "feel" and internal mechanics of Yi and its usage is only achievable via a tedious process of prolonged slow training. It is a bitter truth that is hard to swallow, and one of the primary reasons why traditional Internally-oriented teachers are having a hard time "selling" their methods to wider crowds; it is understandable that people with an inclination to study fighting or self-defense would expect fast movements, and the slow-movement requirement inserts doubt into people's hearts and minds, preventing most from giving traditional Internally-oriented arts a chance to begin with.

An important function of slow training is creating **controlled movement pathways**. When observing motions of martial artists who do not invest in slow training at all, one weakness frequently stands out - they are too committed to their own powerful movements. They often cannot stop a technique once it was initiated, or find that they cannot change their movement in the middle of performing a technique. This weakness can eventually be overcome through years of rigorous training, but slow training can serve to address the problem better, and ironically, much quicker than trying to be fast. When moving rapidly, one is mostly aware of only two points in time and space - the beginning and the end of his movements. What happens in-between these two points is obscure. Slow training thus effectively helps one refine the muscular stability, visual perception and sensory coordination required to achieve a clear and controlled "pathway" of motion between the beginning and ending points of a given movement.

^{*} While less common in sports, there are some clubs and coaches who also promote slow-training methods for the same purposes. One such example is the Spartak Tennis Club in Moscow, which has produced many world-class tennis players. Young prodigies who train at this club are required to engage in training without a tennis ball and in slow motion, at the same time. Such training is used to correct their movement patterns and pathways, and ensure the assimilation of 'clean' techniques. One could argue that, because the players engage an imaginary ball, they are therefore using their Yi to feel how their bodies would have reacted, had there really been a ball for them to slam^{178, p.82}.

Among such sports institutions, there seems to be a paradigm shift towards accepting the benefits of the slow over the fast, in some circumstances. As Football coach Tom Martinez had nicely put it: "*It's not how fast you can do it. It's how slow you can do it correctly*"^{178, p.85} – a quote that could have easily been attributed to an Internalist.

Related to those movement pathways are what I'd call "**opportunity pathways**" or "flow pathways". These are the connector points between movements, which smooth one's flow and rhythm in both training and fighting. What I am referring to are those minute moments of transition between one movement to another. Training slowly enough, over time one could find that he or she could use one movement to "charge" the body like a charged spring, causing it to be attuned to "explode" into the following movement. This changes the mechanics of how one flows between movements, and contributes greatly to the force that one could potentially put into various techniques. Part of the wisdom of the slow and long Taiji Quan forms is self-teaching the practitioner to find these opportunity-and-flow pathways. Many of these forms were created in a very logical manner, with the transitions between movements and their order meant to help one discover the pathways on his own, through perseverance in continuous practice.

Physically, part of the trick is identifying the stretch-reflexes of various muscles, and how these affect each-other. A stretch reflex can help create explosive movements with various muscle-groups. The pathways I talk of have a lot to do with one's ability to use an initial movement to cause an appropriate stretch-reflex response, which would benefit the sequential movement. In addition, the internal spiraling of the Fascia I have previously discussed is also important. This spiraling helps the fascial-chains transfer power-potentials from one to another and throughout the chain. Identifying the opportunity pathways requires teaching oneself to sense how this manipulation of power transfers between the spiraled fascial chains can become more effective. Often, this is a matter of personal feel that cannot be directly taught by a teacher – only intuitive learned through experience with correct movement.

From another perspective, which is purely a combative one, my friend Neil Ripski has written the following of the controlled movement pathways: *"Perceived speed is how fast the opponent see you moving. This has to do with the fact that the human eye picks up staccato movements much MUCH easier than smooth flowing ones. An opponent who is standing still, punching as fast as he can, will look less dangerous and slower than one who is using coordinated hand and foot moves, and punching with less real speed. The human brain can only process about 10 bits of information per second, and so a standing still opponent punching is only getting your brain to process one thing, those punches. A moving opponent who is moving smoothly and striking while in motion with any limb from any direction appear to be a lot faster than he is actually moving. Perceived speed is VERY important... If you have real "smoothment" (my word) you will have much more effective techniques when you fight..."*.

What I have called "efficient use of opportunity and flow pathways" has been explored in another context within an article by **Dr. Stephen Levin**¹¹³. In that article, wise Dr. Levin was discussing the energy conservation mechanism of large muscles, which span across more than one joint (multi-joint-muscles like our thigh muscles, as opposed to smaller single-joint-muscles).

With some activities, we all intuitively know how to activate this mechanism. The example given by Levin was that of riding a bicycle. When riding a bicycle, we can often paddle for quite a while without exerting the leg muscles too much. We all know the feeling – we exert ourselves for a few moments to gain momentum, and afterwards paddling becomes easy, and feels almost as it is done by itself, as we take advantage of the continuum of our constantly rotating legs. In case we want to remain at a constant pace, we use the minimal amount of force needed to keeping the bicycle going where we want: every time a leg comes up, we join the momentum of the rotation and the pull of gravity, and only slightly contribute to the push downwards. We bring the leg muscles up to a certain muscular tone with these first few paddle strokes, and afterwards maintain that muscular tone with minimal effort. Describing this mechanism, Levin has written that: *"If the body takes advantage of the multi-joint-muscles.....rhythmic patterned movements such as walking, running, swimming, etc., could be accomplished with minimal muscular contractions, with the multi-joint-muscles in a 'steady state' of tone, and the one joint muscles in the body pumping the swing"*. Meaning – we would

use the smaller muscles to give a little nudge to the big muscles, to keep them going, instead of exerting the bigger ones over and over again.

I argue that mechanism of the big muscles as described by Dr. Levin is also a part of what I have nicknamed the "flow and opportunity pathways". It reveals some of the wisdom of the slow and long movement-forms and practices. The latter enables the Internalist to find the point at which muscular tone can be kept to a minimum, while still keeping the body at a constant, effortless flow.

The case for slow-training can also be made from another scientific point of view. In the field of Physiology, there exists a principle called the "**Weber-Fechner Law**" ⁴⁰. It came from a series of experiments in the mid-19th century, in which blindfolded subjects were given two identical weights to hold in each hand. The researchers gradually added more weight to only one hand, and the goal was to determine the point at which the weight difference between the hands became clearly noticeable to the blindfolded test subjects.

Naturally, each test subject showed different levels of sensitivity to weight. Some were very sensitive to even a small addition of weight, and some took a while to tell there was a difference. However, it was discovered that the amount of weight needed to create a sensation of weight-difference for the same individual, was in direct (logarithmic) correlation with the physical stress applied. **Meaning** - were one test-subject able to differentiate a 100 gram weight from another 100 gram weight when about 10 grams were added to one of these weights, he/she could also differentiate a 1kg (1000 gram) weight from another 1kg weight, when about 100 grams were added... and so forth (100g initial weight to 10g additional weight, is the same ratio as 1000g to 100g). The ratio of weight difference that was needed to be created so one feels a difference remained the same. The higher the stress on the individual, the more weight was (correlatively) needed to be added so stress-difference could be felt. **In other words:** if the test subject held two weights of the same weight, an X amount of weight was needed to be added to one of the hands so he could feel a difference. If the test subject was later given two identical weights which were heavier than the previous two, a larger amount of weight was now needed to be added so a difference could be felt between the two hands, and the ratio between the weight of the two identical weights and the weight that was needed to be added to feel the difference remained the same.



While Weber-Fechner law has some known flaws and inaccuracies, it can teach us an important lesson in regard to training. The more stress we put on our bodies (be it by way of moving faster, opposing strong forces as in working with weights, or applying/resisting strong movements against someone), a higher resistance will be needed to make us pay attention to smaller changes happening around us, and inside our bodies¹⁴⁰. And looking at it the other way around – the slower and softer I move, the

more sensitive I can potentially be to myself and my environment (relative to my own skill and potential), because less stress is needed to be applied for me to feel & notice differences. **Moving slower, I can develop the proper sensitivity to sensations I might otherwise miss.**

In the picture: I assumed the reader would appreciate a nice picture of a slug more than a mathematics graph, since most people care more for pretty wildlife pictures than mathematics. My condolences to those of you that would've preferred the latter – your geekness surpasses that of the author of this book.

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Experienced bodybuilders also tend to intuitively understand the logic behind the Weber-Fechner law. A bodybuilder aims at making his muscles larger. To do this, he has to stimulate his muscles in the best way possible. As any bodybuilder knows, one cannot focus on the quality of his contracting muscle when using too heavy weights regularly (relative to his own strength), or moving too quickly. Because of this, bodybuilders abide by the Weber-Fechner law, when they wish to train in a way in which they apply a high degree of focus on and into their muscular contractions (technically, using the Yi to do so). They will often use moderate weights (compared to their strength), and refrain from movements which are too explosive, so to make sure they have control over the strong contraction they wish to initiate with specific muscles. In the bodybuilding community, working with too heavy weights as one's primary method of training, and/or lacking the ability to focus on one's muscular contractions, are considered amateurish, and sure way to stall progress in the sport at some point. Both bodybuilders and Internalist follow the same idea in order to "feel" their muscles⁹⁸ and control them properly. They just apply it in two different ways.

Many people, including myself in the distant past, had the following thought – if I imagine, say, pushing something heavy when training the Yi (just an example) – than why not actually push something, rather than push through the air and "try to feel it"? The Weber-Fechner law provides us with part of the answer for that question. When I train the Yi, I try training my sensitivity and structure. I have, in the previous paragraphs, established the notion that greater resistance allows for less sensitivity. The reduction of sensitivity when pushing on a real-life object changes sensitivity on two levels. Firstly, my sensitivity to outside pressures is reduced. Secondly, my internal sensitivity – the sensitivity to my structure and my proprioception, is also reduced. Therefore, using various objects or accessories* to **develop** one's Yi and Structure is incorrect. However, once one has developed his or her Yi and Structure to a good enough degree, such training aids can be used to **enhance** them. Training aids are nonetheless useful for occasional demonstrations by the teacher, aimed at giving the student a better idea of the nature and feel on a movement he or she are required to train with the Yi and the body alone.

Adding to the already well-founded scientific basis I have so far described for training slowly, is yet again a connection to our bodies' fasciae. Like I have mentioned before, we know of the Fasciae that they behave like a Non-Newtonian Fluid^{128, 130}; which in turn means – albeit being a solid objects and not fluids, the fasciae react in a "liquid fashion", except for when they are stressed with rapid movement. Then, they would act like stiff solids. What can we learn to this? To be honest, research is still lacking to draw strong conclusions. I do nonetheless believe that the following mechanism is at work here: The slow-movement training methods enable one to learn how to "wave" the fasciae, as they are more pliable when moving slowly and gently. Keeping a relaxed body, one can learn how to use the fasciae to create more power-potentials within the body, as discussed and explained earlier in this chapter. Then, one becomes more skilled at using this mechanism even when moving more rapidly, only tensing the fasciae at the moment of applying a technique, to make the body more stable. Without training slowly, one would lack the feeling and understanding of how fasciae can work more like a liquid, and less like a solid.

The stereotypical slow-movement training methods of Taiji Quan (and other arts) had been criticized (and even ridiculed) in the past by many western doctors and "health experts", who pointed out that health-wise, this type of training does not settle with the so-called "intensity" that was expected from "sports". It "did not seem to pose any cardiovascular challenge", so to speak.

* Such as: Weapons, small weights, rubber bands, weighted balls, inflated rubber balls, heavy bags, human dummies, etc. All could be useful for the practice of Internally-oriented methods, if utilized correctly and at the right time for the individual practitioner.

I do admit to some truth behind this criticism, which is more of a misunderstanding, actually. When training slowly, an Internalist does not seek to create a "cardiovascular challenge", but rather help the heart by taking stress off it. As the muscles are adequately relaxed, and the Yi properly guides the blood-flow, the heart rate is only moderately elevated while in the "slow training mode". A unique situation is therefore created, in which the body is both very active and at the same time is nourishing itself, and is not expending too much energy in the process. Blood-flow is increased, but at the same time, more blood is kept and replenished within our treasured internal organs (rather than muscles becoming over-stressed, and take in more flow at the expense of the internal organs). The nervous-system is very active and flourishing, and does not burn itself out like in excessive Aerobic training or high-end Anaerobic training (such as heavy deadlifting and squatting). I have read and seen holistic sports-kinesiology expert **Paul Chek** referring to this kind of exercise as "**working-in**", as opposed to "**working-out**" – a nice way to put it indeed.

Recalling what I have previously wrote of when I discussed Yi: When properly training in this fashion in the Internally-oriented arts, one may notice that the mind grows as tired as the physical body – a feeling akin to the mental fatigue present after one has indulged in thoughtful reading for a while. Having to concentrate deeply to achieve perfection through slow movement with one's physical form and mental constitution in execution, it is a great workout for the brain.

The strategy of slow training is important for yet another reason. A devote martial artist will not want to miss a training session. However, if a martial art does not include a slow or relaxed training component, this can pose a dilemma when the martial artist is either sick or not in his prime. He is forced to choose to either miss training, or take the risk of stressing the body further, with the high-impact training style one is used to. I know from experience that martial artists who do not normally invest in slow training will usually not even come to think of the option (of simply training slowly) when in that type of situation. In contrast, an Internalist can better address his/her momentarily bodily needs. Internally-oriented arts include within them all level of physical exertion, with each exercise also having the benefit of being a whole-body mechanism which always serves to improve all other aspects of the art. Accordingly, an Internalist has a much broader choice spectrum. In days in which my blood flow feels "stuck", I open up my practice with a type of joint and fasciae loosening Zhan Zhuang. Whereupon I feel much energized, I may include a lot of explosive power-issuing within my movement. When ill, I can resort to a very slow training session, focusing on my Yi to move the blood around better, warming the body and helping it fight the disease. It is not a choice of either going all the way or staying in bed – I can do much better than that, and in fact, help my body heal itself in the process.

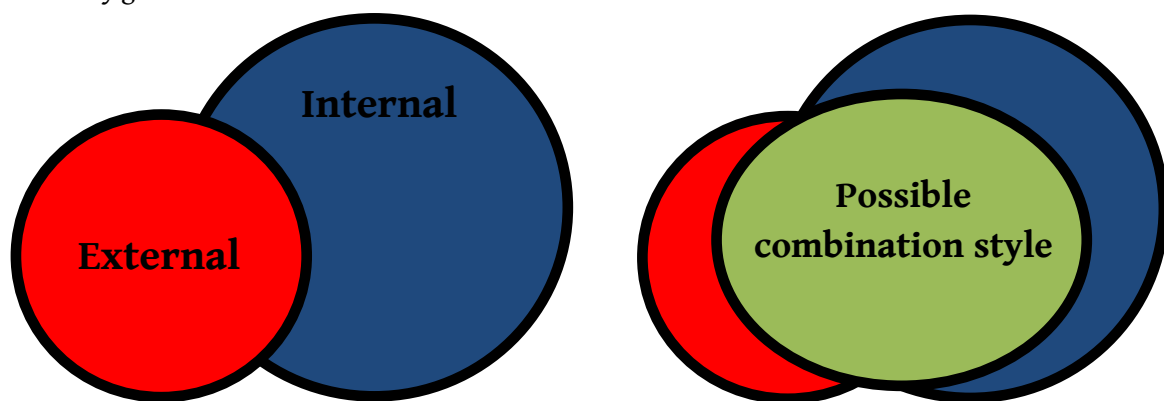
Here thus lie in plain sight some of the great "secret" health components of the Internal Approach to martial arts – things which are obvious, but too often poorly understood. While truly not providing what the doctor would call "a cardio-vascular challenge", this type of activity poses other health benefits which should not be ignored. It is a way of practice in the spirit of Augustus – making haste slowly.

Chapter 3:

When External and Internal Combine

With some arts and martial artists being more Externally or Internally oriented, there are those who fall in-between – arts and individuals who strive to combine, more or less evenly, the benefits of both approaches to the study of Self-Defense, Combat and/or Health. Such combination often results in unique and interesting forms of gong fu. Among the arts often associated with combining the two philosophies are: many lineages of **Wing Chun**, various styles of **southern-Chinese White Crane**^{1, 62, 95} (Bai He Quan), **Wu Zu Quan** (Five Ancestors Fist), some branches of **southern-Chinese Praying Mantis**⁹⁵, some branches of **northern-Chinese Praying Mantis**⁹⁹, **Baji Quan**, **Shaolin Jingang Bashi**, **Pak Mei Pai**¹¹⁶, **Tongbei Quan**^{38, 67}, Traditional **Drunken Fist**^{*}, **Wen Sheng Quan**, **Dze Ran Men** (Ziranmen^{95, 96}) and few others. The aforementioned arts differ from Externally-oriented or Internally-oriented arts by sharing many attributes from both approaches, making them harder to distinctly classify (it is worth noting that Wen Sheng Quan and Ziranmen are rare styles, which possibly suite the classification of Internally-oriented arts). Depending on the teacher or lineage, the arts listed above may lean more or less towards the Externally-oriented or Internally-oriented definitions.

Among those who combine, it is not the case for everyone that Internal Methods are utilized from the very beginning, as an integral part of one's training regime. Within the more Externally-oriented traditional arts of China and Okinawa, it is common to see that at higher levels, some form of Internal training methods and/or "Qi Gong's" are adopted and adapted to complement one's practice^{30, 67}. It is often the case that when the level of great masters of Externally-oriented arts (such as some 6-10th dan Karatekas) is easily differentiated from that of others practicing the same art, this is the result of putting time and effort into fusing Internal concepts with their already great abilities.



* Drunken Fist is a given name for quite a few forms and styles, which are noted for having body movements that superficially mimic those of drunkards. The vast majority of these are 20th century created styles of modern sports Wushu, commissioned and endorsed by the Chinese government. The traditional practice I am referring to is a rare, fighting-oriented variation.

I hypothesize of a certain correlation that might exist: it seems that more the **sports-like** the attitude of the externalist, the faster his martial arts "career" will end, and the less likely we are to see him apply any sort of "Internal" training. The more **traditional** the Externalist, however, the more it will be likely that as some point in time he will incorporate some level of "Internal" practice to benefit himself and his study. This assumption is grounded in two fundamental truths. **The first fundamental truth** being that in sports, one strives to reach the "peak" of his physical prowess in the shortest time-span possible. Professional sports are grueling, and very demanding of the body. They reduce a once fine-built healthy individual to an injured shadow of his former self rather quickly. Many athletes even end up in a worse physical condition than they were in before they started training. The sportsman therefore races against his own doomsday clock, trying to achieve the best he can while he is still young and capable. Martial artists who follow this example do not find the Internal Methods suitable for their goals. Establishing great fighting or self-defense skills with Internal Methods may take much longer than with External Methods. While this is not always the case, nowadays this is the reality with most teachers and lineages. Thus, it is reasonable for such Externalist to prefer the shorter route.

The second fundamental truth is that as people grow older, their capacity for relying on External Methods of training greatly diminishes. Even seasoned Externalists with decades of training can rarely continue practicing External Methods as vigorously as before as they get older. Muscle mass, bone density, speed and the likes of them are reduced, and cannot be relied upon. To complement those difficulties, many turn to Internal Methods to supplement their existing training. These can be harnessed and developed well-into old age, and to a certain degree even by people who had not been physically active before in their lives.



In the picture: Jingang (to the right; Also called "Vajrapani"), Buddha's Guardian, protecting the Buddha. Luoyang, Henan province, China. This photograph is under Creative Commons License; it was taken on July 19th, 2008, by **Chez Cășver**. Other photographs of his may be viewed at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/rosemania/>

Often times, it is the case that the distinction between External and Internal is not as clear. This happens when a certain method contains both External and Internal elements. Let us consider for instance the concept of muscular relaxation. I have argued that Internalists would emphasize this to a greater degree, and also possess special methods for directly training this quality. It is sometimes the case, though, that muscular relaxation is not a matter of either this or that. What happens in some Combination Styles is that certain muscles groups may be very relaxed, while

others will be held tight. I've been shown, for instance, that in certain branches of **Drunken Fist**, the forearm muscles will be held firm, while the shoulder will keep loose and pliable. In other cases, one may notice when a practitioner is without a shirt, that the Dan Tian area is soft, while other muscles are kept under greater tension. These attributes are not always a result of practitioners being unable to achieve proper softness. Such things are more often done intentionally, to facilitate the type of structure an art strives to use in fighting.

One could go on with personal research and write several books on each martial art I've so far mentioned, but this is not the purpose of my work. In the same manner, I believe it to be futile to try analyzing how each and every art mentioned in this chapter or some other art falls under the 'combination style' category I have specified. Instead, I will make an example of two different arts – Aikido and Wing Chun, to show how the classification theory presented in previous chapters may be applied. I have written these comparisons in detail so they would serve as examples for the reader on how to utilize the information I have been presenting before you in this book. After viewing these comparisons, one could take the entire classification-theory I have carefully constructed, and apply its logic unto any martial art he or she has sufficient knowledge of. Do realize – The methodology and theory are of the greatest importance here, not the content per-se.

Case studies for Combination Styles

Wing Chun (AKA Wing Tsun, Ving Tsun, Yong Chun) is a style often hailed for being relatively easier to learn than others, and practical for self-defense. There are several branches of Wing Chun, which can all be traced to the same source – a woman (either Ng Mui, Yim Wing Chun, or both) who created a fighting system which was less reliant on physical force, and enabled weaker individuals to defend themselves from bigger, stronger aggressors (this is, at least, the historical legend that most Wing Chun styles agree upon). Not all Wing Chun schools are equal, or use the exact same methods. Many have a similar external appearance, which resembles the lineages that are most familiar to westerners – the Hong Kong schools originating from late master Yip Man. Others (like the Vietnamese branch of the art) may sometimes not be recognizable in their external shape as what most people in the West would come to think of as 'Wing Chun'. The schools also differ in their implementation of Internal Methods and principles. Some schools are very much Externally-oriented. Others justifiably belong to the category presented in this chapter, as I shall explain momentarily. There are even a few branches remaining which are close to the Internally-oriented definition. Regardless of this being true or not, a lot of Wing Chun teachers would anyhow refer to their art as "Internal".



In the picture: Master Yip Chun (1924-), son of late master Yip Man (1893-1972), practicing the Chi Sau drill with a student. Yip was about 84 years old at the time this picture was taken, and was still teaching regularly. Closer inspection would reveal that the two are not actually looking at each other! Wing Chun practitioners rely heavily on their ability to sense an opponent's every move through touch alone, which allows them to fight (to some degree) with limited eyesight (a trait they share with Internalists). Yip Chun's father, Yip Man, was Bruce Lee's teacher for three years, when the latter was in his teens. It was later this knowledge that Lee built upon to become a famous martial artist worldwide.

This photograph is under Creative Commons License; it was taken on March 5th, 2009, by photographer and video-designer Edwin Lee. His official website is located at: <http://www.whoisedwinlee.com/>

Elaborating on the theoretical basis presented in previous chapters, I will now indulge in sorting out how various elements of Wing Chun add up to its status as a "combination style". In my analysis, I will be generalizing a bit, and focusing more on the analysis of Hong Kong (Yip Man) derived schools of this art. Nonetheless, I believe the final result to truthfully represent many other Wing Chun lineages in general (though certainly not all or most of them). Do keep in mind however, that just as I have mentioned before, there are also (many) branches of the art which are more Externally-oriented, and a few which might even be called Internally-oriented (such as Fut Sao Wing Chun).

-Part II-

Contemplations on Controlled Violence

"My training is not for money, competition or even my master. It's the one time that I can feel something that is real. Money is an illusion, Beauty is temporary, and Love is immeasurable. Effort is something that I can grasp a hold of." – Robert J. Arnold



Background

I began writing this book with the goal of only covering the materials presented in the first part of it. Through the years though, I began to accumulate thoughts, ideas and memories relating to the martial arts which I felt were worthy enough to put in writing, but which were also too private and subjective to include within the scope of my more objective study of martial theory. For this purpose, I created the second part of this book. In it are contained my individual musings and tales on the world of martial arts. Rather than focusing on theory, they relate more to subjects like Philosophy and Psychology. I consider this part of the book as a 'bridge' between the highly theoretical first part, which is at times overly scientific, and the fascinating allegorical and personal feel of the third part, which is strongly individualistic, and even emotionally-charged at times. This second part is also the Yin to the first part's Yang. It is my hope that these chapters, all of whom meant to convey a message, would inspire the readers (especially the younger ones among them) to reach beyond the obvious in martial arts, and seek the greater benefits that these arts can offer and contribute to our daily lives.

Ending Where It Began

Before I came to know my teacher Nitzan, I spent a few months looking for a teacher. I went to observe many colorful individuals who taught different martial arts, until I finally settled with the teacher whose personality and art felt "just right".

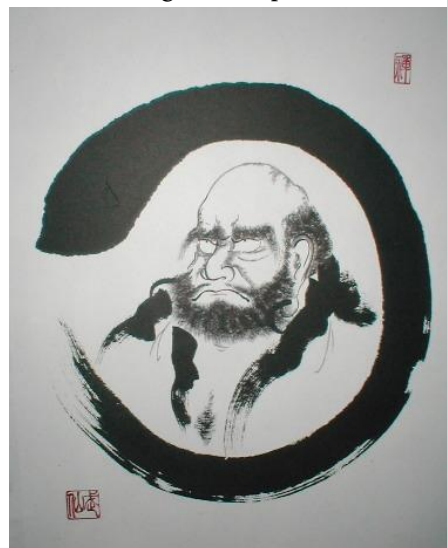
I recall an advice a martial artist I knew told me at the time I was looking for a teacher. He said: *"Heed my words – whoever you choose, make sure his martial art contains as many kata (movement forms) and techniques as possible!"*. Being young, and less knowledgeable of martial arts and life, I let this man's words echo in my mind for quite some time. I wondered – did the amount of katas and techniques actually accounted for the "quality" of a martial art? A few months later, the answer was crystal clear – of course not! How could I possibly even consider such a thing? On all walks of life, quantity never makes up for quality. Having too many techniques and katas to practice seemed, in fact, rather counter-productive. Unless one was very gifted in memory, naturally very talented, and had a very large amount of time to spend training (some people do have all these attributes), there was no logic in practicing a million things. Moreover, the martial arts are not something that is grasped by learning every single thing one could learn. They are about gaining an intuitive understanding of physical and mental states that are related to fighting. This is what sets these arts apart from some classical academic fields of study, like Law or History. You do not understand martial arts by technically learning every martial move, technique and training method that can be squeezed into your brain. You focus on a certain body of knowledge which, after many years, brings about change in the way you perceive reality itself. What was once difficult becomes natural. The formerly hard to grasp, intuitive.

All Gong Fu begins and ends in Singularity. A person is born without bias or understanding. His entire set of responses to what surround him is intuitive. As people grow older, their world-view becomes distorted because of their interaction with society. They learn too much at a time, and cannot smoothly piece their reality together – their understanding requires a lot of mental effort. Like magic, however, as wise individuals are nearing the end of their lives, they slowly begin to understand. Through experience accumulated over the years, things click and connect. Obscure issues are brightening. The world makes more sense as they grow older. Finally, they return to a primal state. Through their experiences over a lifetime, their reasoning and responses become ones again intuitive. Their circle is drawn and completed. The same process can be seen in the martial arts.

I once told Nitzan of a Bagua adept who had counted his Bagua Zhang lineage to have a total of 8864 techniques and variations. Nitzan smiled, and said: ***“Do you know how many techniques I’ve counted in our Xing Yi?... Only one.”***

In the picture: The Indian monk Boddhidharma. He is usually credited for bringing Zen Buddhism to China from India. According to tradition, he was the one who brought the first forms of advanced physical exercise to the Shaolin Temple at Song Mountain, and is therefore seen as the great grandfather of all Shaolin-derived martial arts.

Boddhidharma's image is contained within the Japanese symbol Ensō (literally: Circle). An Ensō is strived to be drawn in a state of emptiness of mind (Mushin), with a single brush-stroke. It symbolizes the subjective expression of the moment at which it was drawn.



In Retrospective

By Nitzan Oren

“Sometimes you will never know the value of something, until it becomes a memory” – Dr. Seuss



On one of those freezing-cold mornings of a casual Tianjin winter, I woke up to the sound of a phone call. On the line was my teacher, Zhou: "Get dressed and arrive as quickly as possible at Xigu park; Li Guoliang is arriving for a visit!!". Grandmaster Li was the first indoor student of Lu Zhongren, the originator of "Lu Structure theory" (a training system devised from Lu's life-long experience with Xing Yi Quan and Yin-Yang Ba Pan Zhang). Li became Lu's personal student although the age difference between them was only 12 years. Years later grandmaster Li accepted my teacher Zhou as his personal student, and taught him both Xing Yi Quan and Lu's structure theory.

I dressed hastily, skipped breakfast, and ran straight to the train station. An opportunity to meet a teacher of that caliber was too rare to miss. The long wait and the slow ride to the park had increased my tension as I anxiously expected meeting teacher Li. The calls from my teacher while on the bus did not help much either: "What's going on? Where are you??".

I entered the park, and at a remote distant corner I saw my teacher. Master Zhou waved at me and pulled me towards a friendly "grandpa" of a short stature. "Meet your gongfu grand-teacher – Li Guoliang". Li was sparse with words, and after a short introduction got right to the point: "Show me your Zhan Zhuang". I chose the offensive "Nine Defenses" stance, and started practicing. He circled around me, inspecting my stance, and fixing various angles in my posture. After half an hour he asked me to stop. "Not bad, not bad... Now show me how you release cùn fā jìn (寸发劲)" (explosive short-force). I had a few years of Xing Yi practice behind me by then, and was no stranger to this type of force. This time though, Li wasn't so pleased. "Not fast enough". I asked him to demonstrate on me how to release such a force. He then put his forearm on my solar plexus area, and delivered a "light" blow with a short, sudden



movement. I felt as all the air from my lungs was blown out, and it took me a while to recover. It was incredible; Nice to find out there was still much to be aspired for, and be reminded that the climb up the mountain is far from being finished.

After the ordeal, Li gave me a few emphases on movement and the way in which power should be issued. "There is a sort of circular grinding movement in the hip", he said, and demonstrated. He could see that I did not understand what he had meant, so he asked me to put my palm on his hip. At the time, I did not know how to define the movement I felt; Something moved in there. I told him: "OK, I can see and feel the movement, but how should I go about practicing in order to be capable of executing it?". "Practice", Li answered, and smiled.

The next week I have tried practicing the same slippery circular movement, but all of my efforts were in vain. At our daily practice session, I told shifu Zhou about the frustration I felt for failing



to do that movement. Zhou giggled. He then told me of one of the times when he had learned a movement, but could not exactly copy his teacher, of which case his teacher commented: "You will understand the movement after I am dead". "What does it mean?", I asked. What a horrible answer, I thought to myself. Zhou explained: "An imitation of an External movement is a limited way to teach it. There are movements which cannot be learned just by copying them. As long as we learn under the guidance of a teacher, we try to copy his movement – to watch him do it and imitate him. The meaning behind that proverb is that after our teacher is no longer with us, and we try to recall that same image of our teacher demonstrating, we are actually recreating a feeling. That feeling is the missing element, which enables our body to move

as we wish it to". After he finished explaining, shifu Zhou asked me to try and recreate that lesson at the park. I began reconstructing within my imagination that moment when grandmaster Li demonstrated the movement for me, and found myself executing a similar movement.

It was only months later that I managed to put into words the insight I gained from grandmaster Li's lesson. I understood that trying to imitate a movement by watching the performer directs our intention outwards. On the other hand, when we imitate a movement by recreating it with our memories, while trying to "feel" that movement as it had occurred in our past, we direct our intention inwards, towards the center of our body. Because the center of the body is the source of movement in Xing Yi, when intention is kept at the center of the body, we gain more control over the origin of the movement. The change begins by transitioning from looking outwards, to looking inwards; and it all happens thanks to our view of things in retrospective.

The Art in Martial Arts (Part I)

There are many forms of publicly acknowledged arts in this world, such as painting, sculpting, music, theatre, poetry, etc. There are also those who claim their lifestyle or hobby to be a form of art, although it is evident that the mainstream will not deem theirs as acceptable as others.

Whether something is an art or not may be dependent on the person who is engaging in it. Professional sports are one example we can observe. These are activities where the main motivation is winning. This by itself is not an art. An athlete, however, may pursue his sport of choice in an artistic manner. Such is the case with great basketball players, whom in their symbolic movement patterns when reaching for the basket express themselves artistically in motion, also influencing the emotions of the audience. Bodybuilders can look upon their sport as a mere beauty contest, which happens to involve lifting weights as preparation. For many of them nonetheless, Bodybuilding is a lifestyle and an art-form. One might often hear or read about bodybuilders referring to their profession as "sculpting in their own flesh"; achieving total control over the development of their muscles' size and shape, they use resistance training, diet, and other methods to sculpt their inner-selves into their external appearance, and then expose their masterpieces for the world to see.

Traditional Martial Arts are a different animal. Instead of encouraging one to push-forth his Ego by curving its image externally, they celebrate the fall of that Ego, and promote the creation of an improved human being. It has been my observation that in sports, personality changes are often a by-product of training. Traits such as determination, fellowship, courage, patience and others may result from hard, prolonged training. In Traditional Martial Arts, one is not simply altered by practice – one constantly changes his life and personality, in a conscious endeavor, so he or she could become better martial artists. Changing oneself for the better is not merely an outcome, but a necessity posed by training in order to improve your skills physically – to attain more of one's inborn capacity and talent.

How does such a thing come about? Simply enough, the process is rather technical, even quite physical in the beginning. (Traditional) Martial Arts are a lifelong process where one has to constantly question himself. This starts on the physical level, but is inherently rooted in our minds. I will therefore give a glimpse as to the theoretical thinking process that may accompany a martial artist.

Nothing confronts us better with ourselves than being forced to be on our own, concentrating on a single task. Such is, for instance, the practice of Zhan Zhuang. When ordered by yourself or your teacher to stand in a fixed position for a long period of time, you initially make some effort to focus on your physical body, trying to align and engage all the technicalities that are part of the stance. Soon enough though, your mind drifts to faraway places, for it takes many years of practice to truly achieve lasting focus & concentration. As you carelessly allow yourself to contain thoughts and emotions, they immediately manifest in your physical being. You were angry at the woman who left you, which has now resulted in your breath being stuck in your chest. You find the kids that mock you on the sidewalk annoying and wish to hit them, causing your shoulders to become tense, stopping your blood from reaching the fingers and warming your palm. You are too bothered and anxious because of your tasks at work, which shifts your attention from dealing with the pain in your legs, to thinking about your boss. You recall a loved one who had passed away, causing your facial muscles to express your sadness, preventing them from relaxing.

"Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes." - Carl G. Jung

All of those things which inhibit flaws in your posture are flaws in your own personality. Had you forgiven the woman who left you, cleared your heart and moved on, you could have breathed more easily, relaxing your chest and dropping your breath to the Dan Tian area. Were you more understanding towards the children who were mocking you when you were training at the park (with them doing what children tend to do), you could have loosened your shoulders, and allow for better blood-flow. Had you taken the difficulties in your professional life more lightly, you could have shifted your focus from your boss to your aching legs, and have enough concentration to loosen them up and avoid the pain. Finally making peace with the reality of your loved one having passed away would have expressed itself on your face, which could now be calm & tranquil, not revealing of your thoughts and intentions.

The only way to overcome your physical handicaps is therefore digging into the very essence of your psyche, and dealing with everything that is unpleasant. Only coming in-terms with your true being can drive improvement on the physical front (Diepersloot calls it¹⁵⁵: "*breaking up psychosomatic blockages*"). In the martial arts a man can be naturally skilled to a great extent, but all possess the same limit to their natural capacity – the ability to deal with themselves. Given that one is healthy and capable, the main limiting factor for skill development will always remain the mind. For this reason, the sages of martial arts of old have realized this one truth ages ago – the art in martial arts is not found in physical confrontation – it is the art of cultivating oneself. Thus, real masters of the martial arts do not express *themselves* in motion, but rather their *achievement* of conquering that which they once were.

"When you see the Single Whip posture of an old Taiji master, what is inside of that movement? All of his life is inside..." – Master He Jinghan⁹⁶

12th of October, 2011.

Chen Zhonghua

Everything Has a Boiling Point

Jonathan: Master Chen, please tell the readers a bit about yourself.

Chen: I started martial arts when I was a kid; started Chen style (Taiji Quan) later, when I was 18 years old. I went to Shandong University. That's where I met grandmaster Hong (Hong Junsheng). I've been doing Chen style ever since. The year was 1979. I then immigrated to Canada in 1985. From then on, 85-91, I stayed in Canada, didn't go back to China. When I first came here (to Canada) I didn't have the money (to go back). In these seven years I was by myself. I started teaching, but I did not meet any other masters, or masters from other schools. In 91 I went (back) to China. From 91-94 I went there every year and studied with Hong.

Jonathan: Besides Hong, who were your other teachers? What made each of them unique to you? What were the most important lessons you learned from each of them?



In the picture: Master Chen Zhonghua.

Chen: I have two teachers. One is Hong Junsheng (1907-1996), of Chen style. He was Chen Fa'ke's (陳發科, 1887-1957) disciple. He lived and taught in Jinan, from the time I met him in 1979. The other teacher is Feng Zhiqiang (冯志强, 1928-2012), also a disciple of Chen Fa'ke. He used to live and teach in Beijing. I met Hong in 1979, and Feng in 1998, and became a disciple of both.

Hong taught me the rules (of Taiji Quan), which means the regulations, the restrictions; particularly in terms of training. So through the teachings of Hong I learned how to do everything we need to do in Taiji without deviating. So through training from 1979 all the way through 1998, I only followed strictly the Taiji rules that Hong laid out for me. When I got to Feng Zhiqiang in 1998, it was the same lineage, but we did things in a slightly different way. The biggest contrast was that Feng taught me how to break out of the rules... So his form is quite relaxed, and has less restriction. The overall guiding principle was: don't restrict yourself. If you restrict yourself, your body is not relaxed, and your energy and your Qi will not flow.

So I think I benefited from these two seemingly contrasting methods of training. But because I trained them at two different times... Personally, I don't think he (anyone) can do the two things at the same time, because they are contradictive to each-other. The restrictions Hong gave me laid a very solid foundation in my body; so my body moves and behaves in ways that are not the same as other people. And once that has been laid, when you are told "you can be free", as in when I went to my second master, Feng... That's... Using an analogy from life, that's very much like the Matrix (master Chen is talking about the movie "The Matrix" from 1999, probably meaning it is like those living within the "Matrix" abide by the laws of that world). Meaning that you have to obey the laws, behave in a certain way.. you're not a wild creature, you're not a wild animal (in the sense of being free and untamed). In organized society, you are not free to kill. Not free to break the laws. Not free of restriction. And this is the main lesson that I have learned in my pursuit of Taiji: that Taiji is totally free, and yet the meaning of Taiji, the meaning of freedom, comes from foundations – where the restrictions are.



In the picture: Chen Zhonghua's grand-teacher, Chen Fa'ke (陳發科) – one of the most famous 20th century martial arts teachers in China.

Jonathan: I remember reading of your teacher, master Hong, that he lived a completely "Daoist lifestyle". That he had no possessions to call his own, was poor throughout his life, and devoted all of his time to the practice and teaching of Taiji. How did Hong manage to survive such a harsh lifestyle? Do you believe people can still manage to live like that in modern society?

Chen: Well, it's a very good question. I'll answer your question in a roundabout way... It doesn't matter in what type of society – old society, modern society – the problem is that we have a tendency... we are not able to do certain things that we are required to do. And our excuse is that "the times have changed" – that in this society "we cannot do this, we cannot do that". Those are all excuses.

Today we can say that society has changed since Hong's time, but in his time nobody lived like that (either). As far as I know, in his entire life, he was the only person (who lived like that). Hong lived a "Daoist life", but he was not a Daoist, I want to be clear about that. He lived in a "Daoist environment", since in China (much of the) language, culture.. Daoism is imprinted in the culture everywhere. It's like in the West most people are very much exposed to Christian culture and

thinking, but not every person goes to a Christian church. Hong's life, and everybody else's life in China is/was heavily influenced by Daoism. He was not a Daoist per-se. I am not a Daoist. During my lifetime since I was born, in 1961, I have always seen Hong live like that. Going back to the life "he chose"... He was not allowed to work. During his time, millions of people were treated like him (Chen is mainly talking about the eras of the "**Great Leap Forward**" and "**Cultural revolution**" in China, 1958-1976, when countless millions have been oppressed by the communist party. Hong died in 1996). There were many, many classifications of "bad people" (by the communist party)... If you have "liberal thinking", you're branded "a leftist", and if you're right-winged, you are not allowed...(unclear). So millions and millions of people were branded, and were not allowed to work. So Hong couldn't work, and there was no allocation. At that time everyone else were given a place to work (by the government), at least get a salary. In today's terms, he lived like a refugee. There was no social insurance number, and you can't really open an account in a bank. People "wrote you down". That is why he didn't possess anything. He lived under a plank, a piece of wood he put against a building, along it. This was his shelter, he lived inside.

He lived like that at that time. We can live like that today. Society is actually better than what society was before, because society is richer, there are lots of people giving out handouts, there are lots of things you can do. In China you could only pick garbage in small cans or bottles, and try recycling those things. So (compared to before) living a Daoist life is very easy. But people choose not to. It's not because the condition and the environment are not there anymore.



In the picture: The young Chen with master Hong, 1991.

Jonathan: In continuation of the last question – Do you think master Hong's "lifestyle of choice" has to do with the level he managed to attain in Taiji Quan? And if so, does that mean that people who are serious about the practice of Taiji Quan should also seriously research and explore this kind of lifestyle, or the practice of Daoism?

Chen: Yes, the answer is positive. But again, with a little bit of modification (to the question). You actually already said "this kind of lifestyle". It doesn't necessarily have to be similar... for you to gain something, **you have**

to follow the right path. It won't work if you do something totally different. Now you have to analyze what was the content of his lifestyle. What did he do that contributed greatly to Taiji? What is essential, without going into more detail, is that his lifestyle contributed to his method in that there was nothing in life that bothered him anymore. It basically took away all the burden. So today's people are burdened with all these very "*important*" things, that we think *must be done* (!), and these are "*essentials*", but in reality they are not. Once you rid yourself of these things you have more time to practice. The more time you have to practice, the more that type of people you get around you, and you're actually setting up a life *around Taiji* instead of... Like our modern life, is "a life around the job and family", and eventually the definition of *family* also changes; because now you are separating your *job* from your *family*, and from your personal pursuit; and these (become) three conflicting groups of people (and activities) everybody has to live with, and they compete with each-other. So Hong's life... Once job was (being) "out of money", and once personal possessions were not part of his life, and everyone "in the family" was (just) himself, there was just one thing left, and that's the pursuit of Taiji. You make a minimum of living, just enough, no

money involved. People come and bring some food to you. That's all. Then, after your stomach is full, you do more Taiji.

Jonathan: I see, this is very interesting. You are suggesting that he could "go on the righter path", that he could have been more "one with the Dao" so to speak, by combining those things that could've troubled him in life, and be free of all those things that trouble people nowadays.

Chen: Yes, yes. It matters how much time you spend on something. There is a very important concept in Chinese language and culture is that **everything has a boiling point**; or you could say: *a tipping point*. If you spend enough time pursuing something, there is a point in which everything, all the little pieces of information will come together – you're enlightened; and you go over a threshold, and that's the point. Once you go over threshold you are not learning Taiji – you are Taiji. That's one thing I have been trying to teach and instill, in students, that it's not that you spend a few weeks and work really hard. It's that once it becomes part of you, it is you, and that's how you reach perfection – you have to be *it*.

4th of September, 2012.

Neil Ripski

Drunken Body, Sober Mind



(continued from parts of the interview found in the full book)

Jonathan: How would you compare this learning experience to the experiences you had with other teachers?

Neil: It was more in-depth. He would teach and correct me every day. It was a better experience because he was really willing to spend time with me. We were working on techniques, forms and such, of course, but we also spent a lot of time discussing the Mindset, Intent, the use of Structure, various ideas about Qi Gong, and things like that. It helped me make more sense of things. This was the biggest difference. When I studied with other people, they really (only) put (out) the information if you asked them questions. Ma Qing Lung taught me how to ask good questions. His approach changed a lot of things for me.

For example – later when I studied Xing Yi, which was the most recent thing I was studying, we were very quickly able to discuss things like Intent (Yi), and the more “shamanic” sides of Xing Yi Quan, because I knew what I was looking for. There are many animals in Xing Yi. But there is a difference between animal-imitation styles, and those styles which adopt the ‘shamanic’ or ‘spiritual’ essence of the animal... though not in the religious sense. It was that depth that my former teacher gave me, to be able to ask those questions and look into things, that I thank him most for.

Jonathan: Do you know where the Drunken system came from, or how old it is?

Neil: I can only tell you what I was told. The Ma family legened is exactly the same as any other family style legened near the Song mountain Shaolin temple. That everyone had a family style, but theirs was secret, the best, etc. The Ma family lived about a day’s walk from the temple, and they would house monk that were on the road. The Drunken system was one of the first they got from these monks. That is all legened so it should be taken with a grain of salt, but if that’s true then the family system is supposed to be close to 500 years old*. It was originated around the time of the burning of the Shaolin temple in the mid-1600s. This event is probably how at least one monk ended up at the Ma family home for a very long time. He taught them a great deal of gongfu, and that is how Ma family martial arts started. Then over the years they learned whatever they could from various travelers. How sure am I about this story? I don’t know. I don’t trust any of the legends! [Smiles and laughs].

Jonathan: Do tell the readers more about your drunken fist system, as I am sure most of them are not familiar with it.

Neil: The main thing about the Ma Drunken Style is its Structure. It is an External style, which becomes Internal as quickly as possible. So you start with External techniques and routines, and then you start to understand the cultural and theoretical context of what you’re doing, and achieve that understanding as quickly as you can. Now, these things predominantly are about... such as understanding the definition of things like ‘Qi’ and ‘Jin’ in a fine mechanical way. I am teaching the folk model that was used in the Ma family, in an almost medical way, so people would be able to make sense of all the concepts and methods.

The word ‘Qi’ is a good example. It is often misinterpreted everywhere by everybody, except for a handful of individuals... You know, people come into martial arts with this almost magical idea of what Qi is. But if you look at the etymology of the character, an easy way to look at it from a

* That is an extreme old age for a Chinese martial art. Very few Chinese martial arts in existence today can trace their roots back to over 300 years, in the sense that that back in time there had been an art from which the modern form descended directly.

medical perspective is that it states the relationship between things. This as when you're practicing Standing Post (Zhan Zhuang), and study the relationship between different parts of the body - shoulder and hips, knees and elbows, etc. This is how structure gets created.

Now, in the Ma family there were a lot of doctors, so a lot of folk medicine was taking place, and they would frequently use that terminology in their martial arts. My teacher was very good at explaining to me what these terms meant in layman language. An example would be a saying from our system: "Hollow body, wine belly". This comes from the folk medicine conception of the body as a hollow vessel, and the Dan Tian sloshing around the wine throughout the body. If you look at that from a non-magical, biomechanical point of view, it starts to be... "Well, the Dan Tian has to move first, and there is a whipping cascade that follows.....".

So like I said, in the Drunken system we begin with very External movements. 'Sloshing' is one of the first things we try to instill into people's posture following that initial stage. We do 'Standing Pole Like the Monkey', which is the typical standing post posture, with the back straight and things like that. Then we do a specific Drunken posture, called 'The Bear Back' (Neil would explain more about that posture within a few paragraphs). It is a little bit rounder, less vertical if you will. Aligning the vertebrae in a different way. Coupling this with Sloshing, you're starting to get this sort of rapid, soft and whipping kind of power.

Jonathan: Are you referring to 'Sloshing' as the ability of the Dan Tian to send waves of power throughout the body?

Neil: Sure. It is also about adding weight. As you know, there are different types of 'Jin'. There are two main types of them in Drunken Boxing - one is 'Heavy Power', which is what that sloshing gives you, and the other is Floating Power. The latter is what we use to pop people out of their center, send them upwards into the air. So we try to get into the sloshing as quickly as possible. We look at the Drunken as a theoretical idea, manifested in that shape. So if the idea is Heavy, Sloshing and Unorthodox, then Drunken starts to make sense. Because you will be training yourself to stand in ways that appear weak, and move in ways that don't really make sense in orthodox martial arts. One of the things I am always reminding people of is that no one is ever gonna believe you're drunk. No one! No. But the whole posture and shape of drunken boxing is designed to have a psychological effect on the opponent. He should look at you and go: "Oh, that doesn't look like it works". And have they heard about Drunken before? It has a terrible reputation! That's perfect!... Drunken boxing is all about appearing weak and unstable; and training your thoughts that you would only appear in that way. This is the main concept: the mind must be sober, while the body is drunk.

When I see a lot of Drunken players in tournaments, for whom that's not the case. Their mind is as drunk as their body. They don't have any power or fighting ability, they just look cool. That would work in a tournament, but you're gonna die if someone crosses hands with you. So you always have to keep in mind, that you're playing a trick on them, not on yourself. It takes a lot to understand (this concept), and you have to go a lot from Yin to Yang, back and forth, until you find the center point. Everybody wants to look cool and play around, but when you pressure them they realize: "hey, I'm a little too drunk here, I got to sober up some". Then it starts to work. So you have to be patient, go back and forth. They got to train until they find that center point, where they are still moving around 'sloppy' and sloshing, but it is actually working. I think one of the problems is that everybody worries too much about their appearance when they get drunken. But what they really have to worry about is their effectiveness. You know - pretty martial arts are not good, and good martial arts aren't pretty.



Jonathan: Well, it seems that Drunken retains its beauty even when it works.

Neil: Haha, well, it is pretty cool. But not overly fanciful, that's for sure.

This is a sample chapter file, containing 72 whole pages (full chapters and chapter fragments) from the book ***Research of Martial Arts***, by Shifu Jonathan Bluestein. The full book contains no less than 418 pages, and 220,000 words!

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