

## The Theoretical Foundations of Taiji Quan

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*Taiji*, as the martial art of *taiji quan* is commonly known, has experienced a period of growth in popularity recently. Whereas relatively few people have any direct experience of *taiji*, many people in most parts of the world have heard of *taiji*. In the West, where anything goes and everything associated with traditional Eastern knowledge and practices has been packaged and labeled and conveniently shelved under the ironic banner of ‘New Age’ Solutions (to timeless problems!), *taiji* is practically synonymous with relaxation, meditation and slow fluid movements. It is considered to be a remedy for that most modern of modern diseases: stress.

While the practice of *taiji quan* does involve relaxation and, depending upon the style, slow fluid movements; while some degree of meditation may be involved in an individual’s particular practice as well, and it certainly can help to alleviate stress, *taiji* is far more than relaxation, meditation and slow fluid movements. Indeed it is as vast—in its implications and connections to every aspect of life—as the romanized Chinese characters *tai* together with *ji* suggest.<sup>1</sup> For *Taiji* is, in philosophical terms, the ‘Ultimate Supreme,’ the origin of all that is, the One from which everything proceeds.

And yet to say this, as true as it is, only mystifies the subject even further. There is much in Chinese thought and practice which seems, at a first and superficial contact, bewilderingly abstract and abstruse. The Chinese language alone, unique among languages in that it is based not upon an alphabet but upon ideograms,<sup>2</sup> is an intimidating obstacle. But it can be overcome. For *taiji*—and by *taiji* I mean everything that may be connected

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<sup>1</sup> *Tài* means ‘highest,’ ‘greatest,’ ‘most remote’ and *jí* means ‘the utmost point,’ ‘extreme,’ ‘pole.’ Catherine Despeux (*Taiji Quan, arte marcial técnica de larga vida*) translates the original meaning of *ji* as the “master beam of a house,” hence there is a sense in the word not only of the highest and most remote, but of that which sustains all the rest.

with, related to and implied by the practice and knowledge of the martial art of *taiji quan*—though apparently complex, is ultimately simple and straight forward, and highly accessible. It's like a mountain with a slope that's neither flat nor steep: anyone can climb it, at their own pace, but the only way to get to the top is to actually go up there.

So what then, is it? What do we mean by *taiji*?

One of the best definitions of *taiji quan* that I have seen describes it as “the spirit of Chinese metaphysics, meditation, and medicine in the body of a martial art.”<sup>3</sup> This definition is not only succinct, but it also indicates the intimate relationship between a science of bare-handed fighting (*quan* means ‘fist,’ and is often translated as ‘boxing’) and three of the most highly respected branches of what we might rightly conceive of as the ancient tree of Chinese wisdom.

My only objection to this otherwise excellent definition is its unintentional reflection of one of the most difficult hurdles Westerner's face when dealing with Chinese culture generally: the fact that we non-Chinese invariably bring to bear upon Chinese studies cultural and intellectual prejudices which are so deeply rooted and ingrained within us as to make even a sinologist of H.G. Creel's experience and knowledge lament that “however much we may intellectually reject the concept of absolutes, many of us still feel a strong emotional pull toward such abstract ideas as ‘truth.’”<sup>4</sup>

As with the Platonic ideal of a single absolute Truth, or perfect heavenly molds or models for everything that is, so too—and intricately related to this way of comprehending the world—with the dualistic distinction between body and mind: there is no such thing. Or rather, such a distinction is a mere tool of analysis. And as a tool of analysis such a distinction may be helpful at times. But when the means are mistaken for the end, we tend

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<sup>2</sup> The other ideogramatic languages, all of them in the East, derive from Chinese.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Wile, *T'ai-chi Touchstones: Yang Family Secret Transmissions*.

<sup>4</sup> Herrlee G. Creel, from ‘The Great Clod’ in *What is Taoism?*

to fall into those intellectual traps which lead us to confuse the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself.

*Taiji quan* is above all the experience of actually practicing, or doing, *taiji*, and indeed, the only way to know what *taiji* is, is to do it. But in an article about *taiji* we will have to point at the moon. The important thing is to realize that this is what we are doing. *Taiji quan* is a martial art which does embody Chinese metaphysics, medicine and meditation, and therefore it is useful to discuss each one of these separately. But although we may isolate topics in order to elaborate upon them, we must remember that the whole of *taiji* is always much more than the sum of its parts.

Since we have to begin somewhere, Wiles' definition can provide a starting point. If we imagine a ring of concentric circles which build upon each other successively to form a cone, then we can see how the martial art of *taiji quan* derives from, and depends upon, the underlying layers of meditation and medicine, while Chinese metaphysics form the broad solid base.

Philosophy in China is comparable to religion in the West: whether we consider ourselves Christian or not, our entire culture is saturated with and constructed upon a fundamentally Platonic and Judeo-Christian way of looking at things. In the United States the work ethic and peculiar sense of morality which determine the American identity (and often confound Europeans who are otherwise like-minded) are consequences of a uniquely Puritan heritage. But wherever we live, and whether or not we consider ourselves to be atheist or agnostic or believers in any other God or metaphysic, so long as we were born in

any part of the world where Christianity has historically held sway, both our intellectual and our emotional formation are essentially Christian.<sup>5</sup>

Likewise in China where, rather than religion, “philosophy has been every educated person’s concern.”<sup>6</sup> But not only the educated: all Chinese, regardless of education and social status, share a worldview shaped and fundamentally determined by Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, since that worldview permeates the entire culture. In fact, the formal study of philosophy was never a profession in China.<sup>7</sup> Instead, everyone was expected to ‘study’ philosophy—just as everyone was expected to go to church in the Christian West, or pray facing Mecca five times a day in the Moslem world. This sort of study was considered necessary in order to enable a man to *realize himself* as a man, and it was distinguished from that sort of study or knowledge which allowed a man to become ‘some particular kind of man:’ a stone mason or carpenter, an accountant, mathematician or spy.

Regardless of occupation, the Chinese people share a philosophical nature which is largely based upon three principle systems of thought. Of these, both Daoism and Buddhism have their religious counterparts: just as there is the ‘Buddhist learning’ or philosophy (*Fo xue*), there is also the Buddhist religion (*Fo jiao*); and just as there is the ‘Daoist school’ or philosophy (*Dao jia*), so too there is the Daoist religion (*Dao jiao*). In the case of the latter, “their teachings are not only different, they are even contradictory.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The same basic argument holds true for Moslems and is perhaps even more obvious: in most Moslem countries, particularly those subject to the rule of Sharia, everything is colored by the teachings of the Koran.

<sup>6</sup> Fung Yu-lan, in his *Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, makes this point but he is not the only one to do so. It is worth noting that the Chinese ‘classics’ are the teachings of Sages, rather than the Word of God.

<sup>7</sup> “In traditional China philosophy never became a separate discipline of study...philosophy has been basically understood as wisdom. Among the Confucian Classics, the book that corresponds to philosophy is The Book of Changes...divination performed the function of philosophy in early Chinese society because divination was a search for decisions for action, which is the very purpose of Chinese philosophy as the Chinese have understood it.” Wing-tsit Chan, in *The Chinese Mind*.

<sup>8</sup> Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*. H.G. Creel (*What is Taoism?*) confirms this view: the differences between what he calls ‘Hsien [*Xian*—‘celestial being, immortal’] Taoism’

But it was always as philosophies that both Daoism and Buddhism did so much to shape the character of the Chinese people.

As far as Confucianism is concerned, it is, according to Fung Yu-lan, “no more a religion than...Platonism or Aristotelianism.” While the ‘Four Books’—*The Great Learning; The Doctrine of the Mean; The Analects; The Book of Mencius*—can be considered the ‘Bible’ of the Chinese people, there is no story of creation in them, “and no mention of a heaven and a hell.” Confucianism is more accurately defined as a system of ethics. And with regard to its influence upon society, Yu Weichao makes the vital distinction: “Where social thinking consists mainly of religious doctrines, all aspects of social culture will be permeated by religious overtones; where Confucian ethics and morality form the content of social thought, secularity will predominate.”<sup>9</sup>

The point is that it has been the three great *philosophical* systems which have so marked the Chinese character and established the uniquely Chinese way of looking at things.

But even though the teachings of Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism do provide the philosophical foundations of Chinese society generally, both the practice and the theory of *taiji quan* derive more specifically from key concepts which are considerably older than any of these schools.

When dealing with any branch of Chinese knowledge it is well to remember that the Chinese language, and hence the Chinese mind, is highly poetic. There is no aspect of Chinese life that is not vividly colored with traditional stories and beliefs, fantastic tales and the impossible deeds of heroes, villains and miraculous animals. What we call history

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and philosophic Taoism are striking, he says, “yet both doctrines are called Taoism and the distinction between them is sometimes made poorly if at all.”

<sup>9</sup> Yu Weichao, ‘Five Thousand Years of Chinese Culture,’ in *China, 5000 Years: Innovation and Transformation in the Arts*.

is no exception.<sup>10</sup> Being poetically inclined, the Chinese were always at least as concerned with form as with content, and often valued the image or symbol more than the actual thing these were meant to represent. When searching for the origins and antiquity of these key concepts, therefore, we have to refer to the legendary emperors of Chinese pre-history who are credited with having established them.

It was the first of these, Fuxi, who, during his long life (from 2953 to 2838 B.C.), created—among many other things<sup>11</sup>—the eight trigrams (*ba gua*) upon which the Book of Changes is based. Independent of who actually created the *Yijing*,<sup>12</sup> its antiquity and importance are undeniable. It is the most purely metaphysical of the five Confucian ‘classics’ (*wujing*), and this despite the fact that “no definite philosophical conclusion can be drawn from it.”<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, it was a book as highly appreciated among Daoists as

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<sup>10</sup> Arthur Waley (*The Way and its Power*) provides an instructive example of this blending of legend and history proper. According to him, “each Chinese tribe had at its outset its own ancestral cult and ancestral mythology. The establishment of successive hegemonies brought about a constant merging of ancestral cults.” Each tribes’ great kings could only co-exist in a “vague past” until the idea of Empire arose; “after that the Great Sage Kings of the different tribes had to be removed even further back in history to avoid their having been subjects of the Imperial peoples: Thus the chronology was built up backwards and has no relation whatsoever with an actual time sequence.”

<sup>11</sup> According to Dorothy Perkins (*Encyclopedia of China*) Fuxi “is credited with teaching the arts of civilization to the Chinese people, including hunting and fishing, cooking, the domestication of animals, music, the writing system, sericulture (the cultivation of silkworms) and the weaving of threads from silkworm cocoons into textiles.” This gives an idea of how magnificent he was, but if we bear in mind that “he had the body of a serpent, and the first dragon appeared to him in 2962 B.C.,” we will realize that we are definitely dealing here with the poetic imagination of the Chinese people. As the practice and understanding of *taiji quan* involves precisely a certain poetry of the imagination, I personally believe that these legends and myths should neither be ridiculed nor deprecated as mere superstition: we are dealing with symbols, and symbols are vital to the healthy functioning of the psyche.

<sup>12</sup> Although a work of this type cannot be dated accurately, Irene Eber (in her introduction to Richard Wilhelm’s *Lectures on the I Ching*) notes that the “Chinese tradition probably does not err in attributing multiple authorship to the work. However, the form in which it exists today... cannot be dated earlier than the Western Chou dynasty (1122-770 B.C.)” But since the *Yijing* was originally a book of oracles some of the ideas inherent in the system of divination might speculatively be related to the oldest pieces of Chinese writing, those of the Shang (16<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.) period oracle bones. The world view of the Shang was no doubt very different from that of the Qin (221-206 B.C.) and Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) Dynasty commentators, but the basic ideas of change and changlessness might very well spin out through all the long centuries of Chinese reflection like a thread of silk.

<sup>13</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*.

among Confucians, and today it continues to enjoy great popularity among lay people as well.

Although originally a book of oracles based upon a simple binary system of divination, the *Yijing* grew over several centuries<sup>14</sup> with the commentaries of many thinkers into one of the fundamental texts of Chinese philosophy. Its central idea is that of a well-ordered and dynamic universe governed by constant and eternal change. This change both produces and is caused by the twin cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang* which are understood to animate and determine the nature of all phenomena. Closely associated with the doctrine of *yin* and *yang* is the theory of the Five Agents or—as they are perhaps better known in a more dubious translation of *wuxing*—the Five Elements. The constant interplay of *yin* and *yang* and the continual transformation of one ‘element’ into another provide a descriptive paradigm of everything in the universe that happens, and all that is.

The word *taiji* was originally representative of a philosophical concept found in the *Yijing*. It was only very late in the evolution of the martial arts that this philosophical term became attached to what many consider to be the most subtle and graceful of all the martial arts. In philosophical terms *Taiji* is, as mentioned above, the ‘Ultimate Supreme:’ “the entrance into the phenomenon, the One...that something from which, as in the West as well, everything else is assumed to proceed.”<sup>15</sup> Richard Wilhelm reminds us, however, that unlike in the West, in Chinese thought “as soon as the One is established, its opposite is also created.” For the purposes of understanding both the foundations of all indigenous Chinese philosophy, as well as the practice and theory of *taiji quan*, it is this continual interplay of opposites which must be born in mind.

Chinese philosophy provides the fundamental theory upon which the practice of *taiji quan* is based. This theory provides the widest sense in which we might understand

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<sup>14</sup> Wing-tsit Chan reckons that it was produced over a period as long as three hundred years, “from the fifth or sixth century B.C. to the third or fourth century B.C.”

what is meant by the practice of *taiji quan* not only because Chinese metaphysics underlie and support both Chinese medicine and meditation, but also because Chinese metaphysics, although always highly intuitive, are by far the most purely intellectual of the three branches of the tree of Chinese wisdom.

Chinese medical beliefs are essentially based upon the same principles which govern Chinese philosophical thinking,<sup>16</sup> and particularly the interplay of *yin* and *yang* and the whole set of correspondences related to the Five Agents. The Chinese regard what they call ‘disrupted harmonies’ as the indicators of disease and illness, and these ‘disrupted harmonies’ are described in terms of imbalances or blockages of the *qi* which is supposed to flow unimpeded throughout the entire meridional system<sup>17</sup> of a healthy person’s body. These imbalances are described in terms of *yin* and *yang*, and treatment always takes into consideration the relevant correspondences between the Five Agents and their associated organs, orifices, tissues, fluids, harmful and positive emotions, *qi* effects, time of day, seasons, planets, etc.

The Chinese medical tradition derives from folk remedies based upon herbal knowledge, similar to that which prevailed in the West until the Renaissance, and the “therapeutics of China’s physician-literati who served the Imperial Court.”<sup>18</sup> As with the

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Wilhelm, *Lectures on the I Ching*.

<sup>16</sup> As T.J. Kaptchuk explains (in *The Web That Has No Weaver*), “the essential ideas about Chinese medicine are not...even strictly the province of the physician. Most of them are views about health and disease that are shared by the ordinary members of Chinese society,” being based, as they are, upon the Chinese metaphysic, which is a product of “the deep cultural orientation and root intuitions of a unique civilization,” representing “a world view that is prior to argument and proof...another point of departure for approaching the phenomenal world.”

<sup>17</sup> There are essentially twelve ‘major’ meridians and eight ‘extra’ meridians. Each of the former corresponds to one of the six Yang organs or one of the five Yin organs; in addition, there is a meridian which corresponds to the pericardium, which is conceived of as a sixth Yin organ. Two of the eight ‘extra’ meridians have been considered major meridians since Hua Shou included them in his ‘Elaborations on the fourteen meridians’ in 1341. These are the Governing Vessel (*Du mai*) and the Conception Vessel (*Ren mai*), both of which, operating together, are of particular interest to the practice of *qigong*.

<sup>18</sup> T.J. Kaptchuk, *The Web That Has No Weaver*.

theoretical writings of *taiji*, it is a combination of received oral instruction combined with personal experience and clinical observation based upon a particular type of understanding of the world (the Chinese *weltanschauung*) and of man's role and place in that world (the Chinese cosmology), as well as the traditional respect afforded in Chinese society to the man of letters, the scholar and his exalted art of calligraphy.

The origins of this medical knowledge naturally disappear in the mists of prehistory. The 'Bible' of Chinese medicine, the one book that provides the body of knowledge upon which the whole of Chinese traditional medicine is based, was supposedly written by the first of the legendary Five Emperors, Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor.<sup>19</sup> Regardless of who actually composed the *Huangdi Neijing*, it continues to be "the source of all Chinese medical theory, the Chinese equivalent of the Hippocratic corpus."<sup>20</sup>

The antiquity of the philosophical and medical texts is relevant in so far as both the philosophical ideas and the medical knowledge which they reflect permeate Chinese civilization generally and have contributed to the development and refinement of that civilization. *Taiji quan*, being an expression of that civilization, partakes in that refinement and is a product of it. Indeed, the theory of *taiji quan* is based "entirely upon philosophic principles; yet it realizes those principles in a way that satisfies the standards of science."<sup>21</sup> Although these scientific standards may not be identical to those used in the West, it is not a question of Western scientific method being 'better' or even more rigorous than Chinese

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<sup>19</sup> This is obviously impossible. Huangdi supposedly reigned from 2697 to 2597 B.C., but according to Kaptchuk, the *Huang-di Nei-jing* or Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor was "compiled by unknown authors between 300 and 100 B.C.E."

<sup>20</sup> T.J. Kaptchuk, *The Web That Has No Weaver*.

<sup>21</sup> Cheng Man-ch'ing, *Cheng Tzu's 13 Treatises on T'ai Chi Ch'uan*. Similar statements appear throughout the 'classics.' Attributed to Yang Chengfu himself (in Douglas Wile's *T'ai-chi Touchstones: Yang Family Secret Transmissions*) are the following examples: "Although there are innumerable schools within the Chinese martial arts, they are all based on philosophical principles;" and, *Taiji quan's* "technique, physiology and mechanics all involve considerable philosophical principles."

scientific thinking, but rather of the two styles of scientific thought being completely different.<sup>22</sup>

With regard to the highly specialized science of medicine, these differences can be seen in the radically different ways that Western and Chinese medical practitioners approach, and treat, their patients. “The Western physician starts with a symptom, then searches for the underlying mechanism—a precise *cause* for a specific *disease*,” hence this physician’s logic is entirely analytical. He is looking for a “precise diagnosis” which can “frame an exact, *quantifiable* description” of some part of a whole organism which he can isolate from the rest of the organism and treat separately. In contrast to the Western approach, the Chinese doctor considers “the complete physiological and psychological individual.” He takes into account all information he regards as relevant, collects it and weaves it together until it forms a ‘pattern of disharmony.’ This ‘pattern of disharmony’ indicates a situation of ‘imbalance’ in the patient’s body. The Chinese physician seeks to correct that imbalance. Unlike the Western approach, “Oriental diagnostic technique does not turn up a specific disease entity or precise cause, but renders an almost poetic, yet workable, description of the whole person.”<sup>23</sup>

What matters far more than the way the doctor sees and understands the patient is how effective that doctor’s treatment is. Considerable research and debate has been carried out both within China and abroad concerning the efficacy of traditional Chinese medicine.

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<sup>22</sup> As C.G. Jung puts it (in his ‘Commentary’ on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*), “Science is the tool of the Western mind and with it more doors can be opened than with bare hands. It is part and parcel of our knowledge and obscures our insight only when it holds that the understanding given by it is the only kind there is.” Eastern wisdom, adds Jung, “is based on the practical insights of highly evolved Chinese minds, which we have not the slightest justification for undervaluing.” With regard to the narrower and more highly specialized sense of the ‘science’ of medicine, Kaptchuk explains that the “actual logical structure underlying the methodology, the habitual mental operations that guide the physician’s clinical insight and critical judgement, differs radically in the two traditions.” But “the Chinese system is not *less* logical than the Western, just less *analytical*”—my emphasis.

<sup>23</sup> T.J. Kaptchuk, *The Web That Has No Weaver*.

Apparently there are no conclusive results.<sup>24</sup> But Kaptchuk says that his own clinical experience and research “points to a rough tendency to use Western medicine in acute and emergency situations and Chinese medicine in chronic situations.”<sup>25</sup>

The important thing for students of *qigong* and *taiji quan* to bear in mind is that the health benefits usually ascribed to these practices are real—and verifiable via one’s own experience—provided the student trains correctly. What I mean by ‘correctly’ is that training and practice which is based upon the principles of *taiji quan* (correct structure, breathing, rooting, connection, *yin-yang* movement, sinking and releasing), which principles in turn derive from both Chinese metaphysics and Chinese medicine.

Finally, it is worth noting that Chinese medicine (and indeed, *qigong* practice) is based upon a couple of thousand years of clinical observation. And it is indicative of the Chinese appreciation of good health that doctors were traditionally paid not for curing illness, but for preventing it: they were rewarded so long as their patients were healthy, not when their patients came to them suffering from some complaint!

Building upon both Chinese metaphysics and Chinese medicine we have Chinese meditation. Throughout the long history of the Chinese there have been many examples of the way in which Chinese civilization has always absorbed and modified foreign invaders, be they Mongols or Buddhism. With regard to meditation—the meaning of the Sanskrit word *dhyāna*, or *chan* in Chinese and *zen* in Japanese—Wing-tsit Chan notes that it

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<sup>24</sup> See Chapter Five in Kenneth S. Cohen’s *The Way of Qigong* (‘Does it really Work? The Experimental Evidence’), for some of the most significant recent findings, as well as the summarized information in Appendix D, ‘Benefits of Internal Qigong: Experimental Evidence.’ Kaptchuk also provides a relevant appendix E, ‘The Scientific Encounter with East Asian Medicine: Efficacy and Adverse Effects.’

<sup>25</sup> Kaptchuk elaborates: “From my own experience, Western medicine is often more effective when it has a definite and clear idea of the disease etiology (e.g., bacterial infections). When a precise etiology evades Western medicine (e.g., in cases of lower back pain), Chinese medicine seems more effective. Also, it seems that Chinese medicine is preferable for functional disorders, benign self-limiting problems, psychosomatic complaints, psychological stress, and intractable and

“changed its character in China almost from the very inception of Buddhism.” Buddhism, when it arrived in China in the first century A.D., was originally “mixed up with the Yellow Emperor-Lao Tzu cult,” a Daoist religious sect which shared similar ideas with the Indian import. Among practitioners of the sect, however, meditation “was not understood in the Indian sense of concentration but in the Taoist sense of conserving vital energy, breathing, reducing desire, preserving nature, and so forth.”

Independent of the peculiarities of Chinese meditation, we cross an important threshold of understanding with such a practice and begin to deal with that uniquely human division between the conscious and the unconscious elements of the psyche. Whereas Chinese metaphysics and Chinese medicine depend upon an essentially rational dialogue with the universe, Chinese meditation concerns a discourse which goes beyond reason. And while Chinese meditation can be considered scientific in the same sense in which Chinese medicine is scientific,<sup>26</sup> we also transcend that science with meditation, piercing through or transgressing the threshold which separates the conscious from the unconscious. With the practice of meditation we can enter and access the realm of the unconscious itself and reap the health and sanity benefits of doing so.

This access to the unconscious is an entering of that dimension of the human personality which is, according to thinkers like Jung, the larger and older and by far the deeper of the two elements composing the whole of the psyche.<sup>27</sup> At the same time,

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catastrophic conditions that resist resolution with biomedicine. Chinese medicine is also valuable in helping people adapt and cope with incurable conditions and serious emotional conflict.”

<sup>26</sup> According to Jung, “there is no scientific justification for [the assumption that the field of meditation and its effects are ‘wholly illusory’], for the substantiality of these things is not a scientific problem since in any case it would lie beyond the range of human perception and judgement, and therefore beyond any proof. The psychologist is not concerned with the substance of these complexes, but with the psychic experience. Without doubt they are psychic contents which can be experienced, and have an indisputable autonomy.” Despite these assertions, there is a respectable body of research which does indicate at least some of the *measurable* effects of meditation. See Chapter Five in Kenneth S. Cohen’s *The Way of Qigong*, ‘Does it really Work? The Experimental Evidence.’

<sup>27</sup> “Without a doubt,” says Jung, “consciousness originally arises out of the unconscious. This is something we forget too often, and therefore we are always attempting to represent the unconscious

therefore, that we enter a greater realm of being, we do so via a practice which is narrower than either the study of philosophy or medicine in that it is a far more esoteric practice and learning than either of these.

The practice of *taiji quan* may not necessarily involve the practice of *qigong*, and specifically meditative or passive *qigong*, but on the other hand it is incomplete without it. Although there are some schools and teachers who feel that everything one needs to know and practice is within the form, I believe that one must complement the form work with both passive and active *qigong*, as well as *tui shou* ('push hands'). In this way it is possible to actively cultivate centeredness in order to be able to 'be tranquil and move in stillness,' even when attacked.

At the apex of the rich tradition of Chinese metaphysical, curative and contemplative arts stands the martial art of *taiji quan*, one of China's greatest cultural exports. Based upon each of the three preceding layers of knowledge and understanding, the practice of *taiji quan* involves and yet transcends each one of them. It is more specific than any of them, orientated as it is to the very concrete end of not only emotionally but physically protecting oneself; and yet *taiji quan* would not be the supreme and ultimate martial art without the underlying wisdom and techniques of Chinese philosophy, medicine and meditation.

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as a derivative, or an effect of the conscious (as, for example, in the Freudian repression theory).” Later he refers to “the tremendous experiment of becoming conscious, which nature has laid upon mankind, and which unites the most diverse cultures in a common task.”