

董英傑太極拳經驗談

Dong Ying Jie speaks of Tai Chi bases on Experience

(一) 太極拳係內家拳。力出於骨。勁蓄於筋。不求皮堅肉厚。而求氣沉骨堅。故無張筋錯骨之苦。無跳躍奮力之勞。順其自然。求先天之本能。為返本歸原之功夫。

1. *Tai Chi Quan* (太極拳 - Tai Chi boxing) is an internal martial art in which strength comes from the bones and is stored in the ligaments and tendons. It does not seek strong muscles and tough skin, but seeks instead to sink energy into and strengthen the bones. Consequently there is no pain from over-stretching the ligaments and tendons, nor any agony of dislocated bones. There is also no hard labor in jumping and bouncing. It follows the natural way and seeks to cultivate one's innate ability. Tai Chi is the *Kung Fu* (功夫- Chinese Martial Arts) of returning to the origin.

(二) 練太極拳有三到。神到，意到，形到。如身法正確。神意俱到。則進步甚速。每日有不同之感覺。學者宜細心體味之。

2. *Tai Chi Quan* practice strives to cultivate *Shen* (神- spirit), *Yi* (意- intent) and *Xing* (形 - Form). If one's posture is accurate, and is combined with the right spirit and intent, improvement will be significant. In practicing this way, one's spirit, intent and shape will change daily, so one ought to pay careful attention to these changes.

(三) 如身法不合。神意不到。如火煮空鑊。到老無成。有十年太極拳不如三年外家拳之譏。故第一須勤。第二須悟。功夫如何。視智慧如何。但勤能補拙。須自勉之。

3. If one's posture is not coordinated, *Shen* and *Yi* will not be present; it is like cooking with an empty pot and nothing will be achieved upon reaching old age. There is a saying that ten years of *Tai Chi Quan* practice is not as good as three years of practicing external martial arts. So the most important point is to practice diligently, and the second is to comprehend. The *Kung Fu* level of the practitioner is dependent on their own wisdom; practice with diligence to overcome awkwardness and dullness.

(四) 練習時呼吸。要自然呼吸。勿勉強行深呼吸。功夫純熟。自然呼吸調勻。否則有害無利。

4. Breathe naturally when practicing. Do not force yourself to breathe deeply. When your *Kung Fu* practice has matured, your breath will naturally become even and smooth, otherwise forced breathing will be detrimental.

(五) 太極十三勢。本為導引功夫。導引者。導引氣血也。故功夫純熟。氣血調勻。百病消除。千萬不可自作聰明。如舌頂上顎。氣沉丹田之類。功夫到後。自然氣沉丹田而行百脈。此乃自然之理。不可以人力強求。

5. The thirteen *Tai Chi* postures are *Dao Yin* (導引- guide or channel Qi) exercises, which lead and channel the *Qi* and blood. When one's *Kung Fu* has matured all illnesses will be gone due to good circulation of *Qi* and blood. Don't try to be a know-it-all and have the tongue touch the upper palate or sink *Qi* to *Dan Tian* (丹田- elixir field). When your *Kung Fu* has reached a mature level, *Qi* will naturally sink to *Dan Tian* and move through all meridians. This is the law of nature and cannot be attained artificially.

(六) 鬆肩垂肘。乃言力不可聚於肩背。要將力移至臂部肘前一節。此乃意會而不能言傳者。學者要細心體味。不可泥而行之。不得滯重力沉。致難於輕靈。

6. *Song Jian Chui Zhou* (鬆肩垂肘- relax shoulders and drop elbows), means do not tense your shoulders and have energy stagnate in the shoulders and upper back. Move your strength to the forearms. This principle is easy to feel and hard to describe in words. Practitioners need to experience it mindfully. Do not move against this principle and use force, and then not be agile and unable to move nimbly.

(七) 提頂吊襠。提頂要天柱頭容正直。吊襠則氣由尾閭向上提也。收勁時胸要稍稍含虛。發勁時要天柱微直。切不可含胸駝背。

7. Lift your head and sink your groin area. Keep your head and neck section upright while lifting the energy, and tuck in your coccyx while sinking the *Qi*. Relax and empty your chest slightly while gathering *Jing* (勁-internal strength). Keep your spine slightly straight while issuing *Jing*, and be sure not to hunch your back.

(八) 練拳一次至少三趟。第一趟開展筋脉。第二趟矯正姿勢。第三趟再加意形。純熟之後。一出手便有意形。則進步更速。

8. In every practice session, it is better to practice at least three times. The first time is to loosen your muscles and joints, the second time is to correct the posture, and then add *Yi* (意-intent) and *Xing* (形-Form/body expression) to the third practice. Rapid improvement is achieved if *Yi* and *Xing* are manifested in every move.

(九) 知覺懂勁。要多推手。自得粘連黏隨之妙。如無對手。勤練架子。及時時以兩臂摸勁。假象敵人進攻。我以何法制之。日久亦能懂勁。

9. In order to be aware and understand *Jing*, one needs to practice push hands frequently. This is the way to learn the subtlety of *Zhan* (粘-adhere), *Lian* (連-connect), *Nian* (黏-stick) and *Sui* (隨-follow) energies. If a practice partner is not available, practice the form diligently and always use two arms to search for *Jing*. Imagine what to use to control an imaginary opponent, and this way of practicing will also help to understand *Jing*.

(十) 推手時要細心揣摩。不可將對手推出以口笑樂。務要使我之重心。對方不能

捉摸。對方之重心。時時在我手中。

10. Pay close attention to your energy while practicing push hands, do not be happy with pushing your partner around. We must not allow our center to be fathomed by our partner, but always be in control of the center of our partner.

(十一) 太極拳行住坐臥。皆可行功。其法以心行氣而求知覺。譬如無意之間。取一杯茶。用力持之。如何感覺。不用力持之如何感覺。行路之時。舉步之輕重。立定之時。屈腿而立。直腿而立。一足着力。雙足着力。均可體驗之。

11. Practice *Tai Chi Quan* in daily activities such as walking, sitting and lying down. Use your heart to move *Qi* and seek sensitivity. For example, when picking up a cup of tea, pay attention to what it feels like to use force to hold it and what it feels like to hold it without force. While walking, feel the difference between stepping heavily and stepping lightly. While standing, feel the difference between bent knees and straightened knees, or the difference between standing with weight on one foot or weight on both feet.

(十二) 初步練拳時。覺身驅痠痛。此乃換力。不必驚恐。亦不可灰心。半月之後，即覺腰腿輕快。神滿氣足。

12. In the early stages of practice, practitioners may feel soreness. This is due to changing *Li* (力-force); do not become overly concerned and discouraged. After practicing for a while, your waist and legs will become agile and light, your spirit will become high, and your *Qi* will become full.

(十三) 架子練熟。推手入門。乃講功勁。太極拳有粘動勁。跟隨勁。輕靈勁。沉勁。內勁。提勁。搓勁。揉勁。貼勁。扶勁。摸勁。按勁。入骨勁。摔動勁。掛勁。搖動勁。發勁。寸勁。脆勁。抖勁。去勁。冷不防勁。分寸勁。蓄勁。放箭勁。等勁。等等以上諸勁。僅述大概。領略各種勁。在知覺運動中求之。一人求之較難。二人求之較易。因人是活物。發勁之外。尚有靈感作用。務在人身上求之。如無對象。在空氣中求之。如打沙包轉鋼球。俱無用也。

13. After becoming familiar with the form, begin push hands practice to understand energy. *Tai Chi Quan* energies found through push hands include: *Zhan Dong* (sticky & moving) *Jing*, *Gen Sui* (following) *Jing*, *Qing Ling* (nimbleness) *Jing*, *Cheng* (sinking) *Jing*, *Nei* (internal) *Jing*, *Ti* (lifting) *Jing*, *Chuo* (rubbing) *Jing*, *Rou* (kneading) *Jing*, *Tie* (gluing) *Jing*, *Fu* (supporting) *Jing*, *Mo* (touching) *Jing*, *An* (pressing) *Jing*, *Ru Gu* (bone penetrating) *Jing*, *Shui Dong* (wrestling) *Jing*, *Gua* (hanging) *Jing*, *Yao Dong* (shaking) *Jing*, *Fa* (issuing) *Jing*, *Chun*(inch) *Jing*, *Zui* (crisp) *Jing*, *Dou* (shivering) *Jing*, *Qu* (removing) *Jing*, *Leng Bu Fan* (sudden) *Jing*, *Feng Chun* (control) *Jing*, *Xu* (storing) *Jing* and *Fan Jian* (shooting arrow) *Jing*. These are general description of all kinds of *Jing*. Seek these *Jing* during practice with feeling and awareness. It is hard to understand issuing *Jing* and sensitivity by practicing on your own, and easier to get it with a practice partner because people move. If a practice partner is not available, seek these *Jing* in the air. It is pointless to use a punching bag or steel ball for practice.

(十四) 太極拳論云。其根於腳。發於腿。主宰於腰。形於手指。此發勁之原理也。再有禁忌如膝不可過足尖。伸手不得過鼻尖。上舉不得過眉。下壓不得過心窩。此古之遺訓也。如違此禁忌。力卸矣。變化之妙。主宰於腰。如以右手斜左推人。已過鼻尖矣。力已卸矣。但左胸往後稍含。腰部稍稍左轉。力又足矣。此變化在胸。主宰在腰也。形於手指者。渾身鬆靈。鋼堅之勁。在於手指。則如純鋼鬆軟之條。上有鐵鎚。向前一彈。所向披靡。無法禦之。學者細心推敲。不久可得內家真勁。手法特別者。不在此禁。

14. As stated in *Tai Chi Quan* treaties, the source of *Fa* (發—issue) *Jing* is rooted in the feet, issued through the legs, governed by the waist and manifested through the fingers. Do not bend your knee past your toe, do not let your extended arm pass the center of your body or tip of your nose, do not raise your arms above your eyebrows, do not press below your sternum. All these teachings are passed down for generations. To issue with *Li* is to go against these rules. The subtle changes are governed by your waist. For example, if you push someone with your right hand and aim at their left side, their *Li* is disintegrated. But by relaxing and turning your chest and waist slightly to your left, your strength is recharged again. The change is in the chest, governed by the waist, manifested through the fingers. The body is relaxed and nimble, steel-like *Jing* is in the fingers; it is like a steel belt with an iron hammer, and when it bounces forward nothing can stop it. Practitioners should carefully study and practice with these principles, and the internal *Jing* will be quickly developed. These principles do not apply to some exceptional postures.

(十五) 人乃動物。並具靈感。譬如我以拳擊一人。彼當以手推開或身子閃開。決不能靜立待打。抵抗乃人之本能也。靜物則不然。如懸一沙包。垂懸不動。拳擊之後。當前後鼓盪。然其鼓盪之路線。乃一定之路線。向左擊之。向右盪回。此乃物之反應也。人則不然。一拳擊去。對方能抗能空。變化無定。此人之反應也。拳術家有穩，準，狠三字。等求我不發勁。發則所向披靡。然何以求穩準狠。須先求靈感。如何求靈感。讀者應在前篇王宗岳先生之行功論內求之。即彼不動。己不動。彼微動。己先動。須在似動未動之時。意未起形未動之間。爭此先着。所向披靡矣。

15. Humans are animals with sensibility. If I throw a punch at someone, they will deflect my punch with a hand or quickly move away; they will not stand still and wait to be punched. Resistance is a basic instinct of man that inanimate objects do not have. Thus, if I punch a suspended sand bag, it will move back and forth according to the direction of the punch. If I punch it to left side, it will bounce to right side; this is the reaction of an inanimate object. Humans are different, if I throw a punch at someone, one can resist or yield. Human reaction is unpredictable. A martial artist should be *Wen* (穩—stable), *Zhun* (準—precise) and *Hen* (狠—ruthless). Once *Jing* is issued, it can sweep away everything. How can one achieve this energy? It starts with seeking sensitivity as stated in Mr. *Wang Zong Yue's Tai Chi Treatise* (王宗岳先生之行功論). Do not move if the opponent stays still, but move faster when the opponent starts any slight movement. Find the perfect

timing between movement and stillness, before *Yi* arises and Form is fixed. Find the right timing and issue, and everything will be swept away.

(十六) 或云練太極拳後。不可舉重物。不可用蠻力。此則未彼盡然。未學太極拳。一身笨力。全體緊張。既學太極拳。全體鬆軟。筋暢氣通。務必練去全身緊張。仍須保持原來之笨力。因鬆軟之後。笨力變口真勁矣。昔人謂笨力稱之曰膂力。其力在肩膂之間也。不能主宰於腰形於手指也。故笨力口本錢。鬆軟是用法。得用其法。小本錢可做大事業。不得其法。本錢雖大。事業無成也。故得太極拳真理以後。舉重摔角。拍球賽跑。隨意可也。不必禁忌。但依編者愚見。各種運動。不如多打幾趟拳。

16. Some say do not use force, and do not lift heavy objects after *Tai Chi Quan* practice. This is not always true. Before learning *Tai Chi Quan*, the body is stiff and full of awkward energy. After learning *Tai Chi Quan*, the body becomes relaxed and soft, the joints and *Qi* have no blockage. Practitioners must strive to get rid of tension in the body and keep the awkward energy, because once the body becomes relaxed and soft, awkward energy transforms to true *Jing*. Awkward energy was called *Lu Li* (膂力-shoulder strength) in the old days, because it is located at the shoulder blades area and cannot be governed by the waist and shown in the fingers. Therefore awkward energy is like small capital. The method is to relax and stay soft; once the method is applied properly, the small capital can be the foundation for big business. If the method is not practiced properly, even big capital will not lead to success. So if practitioners understand the *Tai Chi Quan* principals, they can lift weights, wrestle, play ball or run - there is no prohibition. But in my opinion, it is more beneficial to practice Tai Chi instead of doing other exercises.

(十七) 道經云。一陰一陽謂之道。太極即陰陽也。在此原子時代。何物非陰陽。故行功論有云。偏沉則隨。雙重則滯。偏沉雙重。陰陽不勻也。故讀者於舉手投足。務須注意。一陰一陽一虛一實。老子曰。吾善藏其餘。祈揣摩之。

17. Yin and Yang are the *Dao* (道-the Way) as mentioned in *Dao De Jing*(道德經). *Tai Chi* is *Yin* and *Yang*. Even in this atomic era, everything is *Yin* and *Yang*. The *Tai Chi* Treatise states: it flows when sunk to one-side, it stagnates when double weighted. Double weighted is the imbalance of *Yin* and *Yang*. Pay special attention to *Yin* and *Yang*; *Xu* (虛-empty) and *Shi* (實-solid) should be in every movement. *Lao Tze* (老子) says “I am good at storing and conserving my energy”; I hope practitioners will try to figure this out.

(十八) 太極文武解。文武二字。文以養身武以禦敵。

18. *Tai Chi* has both *Wen* (文-literary, culture and spiritual) and *Wu* (武-physical and martial) sides. *Wen* is for self-cultivation and *Wu* is for self-defense.

(十九) 以上寫出各條。均經驗也。理論也。真實功夫。尚須在十三式中求之。功夫純熟。自得得心應手之妙。練功時最好少求理論。多做功夫。余曾曰。功夫昔人好。理論今人好。實在理論一多。功夫不專。進境反少矣。拳術界中人多講義氣。學者當尊師重道。厚敬師傅。感動師傅。則口師者必盡心教導。此雖世俗之理。但中國人情如此。不可不注意。愛學真功夫者。更當注意也。

19. All the above points are based on my own experience and *Tai Chi* theory. Seek true *Kung Fu* in the 13 postures. When your *Kung Fu* has matured, everything comes naturally and effortlessly. Do not focus on theory while practicing. Practice more. I used to say, the practitioners in the old days had better *Kung Fu*, and the practitioners nowadays know theory better. Too much focus on theory will distract the practice and development of *Kung Fu*. Martial artists are loyal and respect the codes of brotherhood, therefore students should respect teachers and the *Dao* (道—the Way). Respect your *Shifu* and move your *Shifu* with your sincerity and efforts, then your *Shifu* will teach you with dedication and not hold back. To learn true *Gong Fu/Kung Fu*, practitioners must pay attention to and follow the Chinese value of humility.

(二十) 孟子曰。盡其心者。知其性也。知其性。則知天矣。火之炎上。性也。水之潤下。性也。此物之性也。春茂秋殺。天之性也。惡勞好逸。懼死貪生。此人之性也。然火遇風可吹之使下。水之遇火能蒸之使之上。松柏心堅。秋冬不凋。人知禮儀。見義勇為。此乃易後天之性返先天也。人未練拳之時。百脈滯塞。筋緊縮而短。故力聚於肩臂。既練之後。百脈暢通。筋長力舒。由肩而臂。由臂而腕。由腕而行於手指。漸漸棄後天而轉入先天。如得先天本能。則神妙不可思議。學者得此勁後。當之余言之非謬也。

20. *Mencius* (孟子) says that when one's heart is sincere one knows the nature of things; once one knows the nature of everything, one then knows the universe. Fire has its flames moving up; it is the nature of fire. Water runs down and under; it is the nature of water. These are the nature of things. Thriving in spring and withering in autumn; that is the law of nature. Avoiding hard work and enjoying leisure, fear of death and living with greed; that is the nature of humans. But the wind can blow flames out, and fire can heat water and turn it to steam that rises up. Pine trees and firs have strong trunks and roots, so they don't wither in winter. When people know etiquette and act bravely, it is to change their acquired post-birth nature back to their innate nature. Before one starts practicing *Tai Chi Quan*, all the meridians are blocked; muscle, tendons and ligaments are tight and short, so the energy is stagnant in the shoulder area. Once one starts practicing *Tai Chi Quan*, the meridians open, muscle, tendons and ligaments get longer and energy extends through shoulders to arms, through arms to wrists, through wrists to fingers. One gradually abandons the acquired post-birth nature of habits and transfers back to innate natural ability. It is marvelous and incredible when one achieves the innate ability and instinct. Practitioners will know that what I say is true once they acquire *Jing*.

(Translated by Janet Jin. Edited by Mark Hughes and Takeo Kudo)

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