

## Practice Essentials

In taking up the study of Taijiquan, you must be respectful. If you are not respectful, externally you debase your teachers and friends, internally you debase your health. If in your heart, you are not somewhat restrained, how can you study the art?

In taking up the study of Taijiquan, you must not be arrogant or unrestrained. If you are arrogant, there is trouble. Not only your actions must not be unrestrained, your words also must not be arrogant. You must carry yourself with an air of refinement. Otherwise, you will be unrestrained on the outside and will necessarily have lost the center.

In taking up the study of Taijiquan, you must not be self-satisfied. If you are, you will lose. There is a folk saying: Beyond Heaven there is still Heaven. If you can be modest, then your empty heart will receive teaching. Who does not enjoy reporting their skill at something? Regard an accumulation of many skills as skill. Then, the skill is great.

In taking up the study of Taijiquan, you should figure out these postures in great detail. The reasoning behind doing these moves in the end may be obscure, and special attention should be paid to the places where they begin and end. If there is not this attention, then the flow into the meridians is not real and the closure at the junctures is not nimble. If each movement is seen as an individual movement, then you will not be able to thread it all together from beginning to end. If you can't thread it all together, then it will be hard to discover the Grand Harmony of the Primordial Qi<sup>1</sup>.

In taking up the study of Taijiquan, first study by reading. When what you have read is clear, then studying boxing will come natu-

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1 太和元气 – Tai He Yuan Qi – A phrase from ancient times, even inscribed over the entrance to The Confucius Memorial in Qufu, Shandong.

rally and easily.

In taking up the study of Taijiquan, simply study Yin and Yang, opening and closing. There is a foundation within oneself, but speaking of Yin and Yang, opening and closing, it is not something that a teacher can increase or decrease. One can recover this foundation but the teacher then stops there. (The teacher teaches by custom, that is the principle of Da Zhong Zhi Zheng<sup>2</sup>.)

In taking up the study of Taijiquan, although it may not have great practical value, in today's world, with the great powers struggling for supremacy, if we don't have the martial arts, how can we maintain? The only thing to do is to practice it, while seeking out books and performances. Practicing the way the army practices marching would be of some help. If everyone in the country were to practice it, then if we were to encounter a hand-to-hand combat situation, even though the enemy were strong, what could he do to us? This is one path for preserving our national prestige. Those who care must not discard it as of no consequence.

In taking up the study of Taijiquan, it cannot be for the purpose of stealing and robbing. Were it to be used for robbery, this would be tantamount to death, unblessed by the spirits, let alone by people. In all the world, who could countenance such?

In taking up the study of Taijiquan, you cannot use it to run roughshod over people. As soon as you do so, it will infuriate everyone and you will be nothing more than an eminent criminal.

Excerpted From Chen Xin's

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2 大中至正 – Means something like Achieving Perfection by Way of the Great Mean.