

GREAT-POLE BOXING: THE THEORY

Attributed to Wang
Zongyue (Wang
T'sung-yeuh) (late
18th century)

A note from Erle
Montaigne:

The following is all that we have from the original classics of Taijiquan or H'ao Ch'uan. Many have tried to translate them and have not done these classics and service or their writer! To write about this particular classic, one must be well versed in the advanced areas of the art. You cannot lay this classic over basic form! It was meant as a guide for those just beginning to understand the more advanced principles of Taijiquan boxing. If you look deeply into what is said (the fine print), you will uncover many great ideas not only about boxing but also about life in general. Like the fact that most beginners never see the woods for the trees, always searching for something better on the other side! Or thinking that they know it all because they have been practising for fifteen years, when in that small amount of time really knowing nothing!

Take great notice of what Wang has to

say, as it is his legacy to us all. But do not take it lightly or think that you understand it, you will forever in your own training return to these words and find more and more hidden within them. I will place numbers next to certain pertinent phrases and leave a commentary at the end as to my own interpretation.

The Great Polarity without poles is born:

Of negative and positive it is the mother -

In motion it divides,

In stillness, it unites.

It has neither over-reaching nor falling-short:

Following contraction it proceeds to expansion.

When men are hard, I am soft -

This is called "running";

When I go along and men are turned -

This is called "sticking".

Move fast and the reaction is fast,

Move slowly and the reaction is slow.

Though the metamorphoses be ten thousand,

One principle pervades them. From familiarity with the moves, one gradually awakens to understanding power.

From understanding power, one by stages reaches spiritual enlightenment. (1)

Without long application of effort
One cannot thoroughly penetrate it.
Unobstructed draw up the crown's power,
Let the breath sink to the point beneath
the navel.
Be neither one-sided nor leaning,
Suddenly conceal, suddenly reveal.
Left is full, then left empty.
Right is full, then right insubstantial.
If he turns upward, go higher,
If he turns downwards, go deeper.
If he advances, press in closer,
If he retreats, draw out longer.
One feather cannot be laid on one,
A fly cannot alight from one.
"Men don't know me, I alone know men (2)
The irresistibility of the hero's progress
Is surely entirely achieved through this.
This skill has many side schools. (3)
Although each one has its distinctive
postures,
As a rule they don't go beyond strong
oppressing weak,
Slow yielding to fast.
Have-force beating lack-force and

Hands-slow yielding to hands-fast
Is all from innate, natural ability,
Not brought about through learning.
Refer to the phrase: "Four ounces deflect
a thousand pounds"
This is clearly not force's victory.
Regard the image of the old man able to
hold off a multitude-How could this be by
speed accomplished?
Stand like a level balance,
Lively as a carriage wheel -
Depress one side and the other follows.
(4)
When both are weighted they are
impeded.
Every time I see one of several years'
pure practice
Unable to manoeuvre and transmute
Invariably causing him by men to be
controlled,
It is because the fault of double
weighting has not been realized.
To avoid this fault, one must know
negative and positive "Sticking" is
"running", "running" is "sticking".
Negative does not leave positive.
Positive does not leave negative.
When positive and negative complement
each other,

This then is understanding power.

After understanding power,

The more practice, -the more skill.

Quietly learning and experimenting,

One gradually arrives at following what the heart desires. (5)

Its root is to discard self and follow men:

Many mistakenly discard the near and seek afar. (6)

This is known as being out by a hair's breadth

And going wrong by a thousand miles.

Students cannot but carefully distinguish.

This is the theory.

Erle Montaigue's Commentary

1/. This means that we do not practice Taijiquan (H'ao Ch'uan) for the sake of doing Taijiquan! It is only a tool that we use to gain other areas of learning, like spiritual awakening and the ability to heal others. The fighting art is only an interim tool that we use to gain the upper levels of Taijiquan.

2/. This means that you as the Taijiquan practitioner are always in control of the situation whether it is a physical confrontation or a mind confrontation. You are grounded causing all bad Qi to be drawn into the ground and not into yourself. But first of all, to know others you must know yourself!

3/. Here he is talking about the other schools of martial arts that have come out of Taijiquan, most have only ever taken the shell and not the internal part! In other words, they only exist for the fighting!

4/. He talks about double weighted movements. But not only does he mean that we should not stand with the weight placed evenly upon both feet, but also that we should not have equal Qi in the hands, elbows, shoulders, hips, knees. This can be taken even further to each of the six organ pairs where we should also not have double weightedness. It goes even deeper into that the sub-conscious and the conscious should also not be double weighted!

5/. We move in accordance with how the inner mind wants us to move and not because we have trained to move a certain way. In other words we move because the 'attacker' is moving and in complete accordance with that movement.

6/. Unfortunately, many students are always searching for something better. And even though they might have found the very best that there is, they still look and search, missing out on what is in front of their noses!