

## Wuji - The Fist, Wuji - The Dao

As I was practising Wuji Quan on a daily basis in my backyard through the seasons, whether during the tender Spring, the blazing Summer, bountiful Fall, or into the chilly Winter of 2020, I again and again found myself embracing the Dao, the Way of the Universe, forever being pointed into the direction of the light, an experience that has been with me for many years.

This past year of 2020 was marked by chaos and restrictions. In the deep meditative practice of Wuji Quan, when I embraced each moment that the Dao intends for us, my heart went to the millions of people who got swept up in the emotions of fear, panic, anger, and anxiety, and as a result were left feeling heartbroken, helpless and powerless. I wished they could have the tools and practices that would support them to bring their troubled hearts back into the flow of life. Practicing Wuji Quan and cultivating the inner state of abiding in Wuji, we gain deep trust in the universe, a knowing that it will always have our back and is forever on our side. We learn to rest in the certainty that we are truly supported no matter how chaotic the world appears to be.

I entered this unfathomable world of Wushu, Taichi and Qigong under the tutelage of my father, Grandmaster Shouyu Liang, at the tender age of four. Not only I was physically trained by my father on a daily basis in all the fundamental skills, routines, countless short and long forms of the various styles, I was also introduced to the written texts of many of the Wushu, Taichi, Qigong Classics, as well as to many of the great Daoist and Buddhist sutras. I frequently found myself citing and chanting passages out loud from these classics, mesmerized, but not really understanding any of the concepts. My father would tell me, "It's ok if you don't understand, just continue to cite, chant, feel and practice, one day it will come to serve you". Mysteriously,

gradually the deeper meanings and messages of these ancient wisdoms simply came to me, without needing any verbal explanations, as I continued to practice my Wushu and Taichi forms or Qigong meditations. Each time I practiced, I felt I was embraced by the Dao. And hadn't my father been ever so correct in telling me that these wisdom teachings would come to serve me one day?

Having immersed myself wholeheartedly in the great many styles of Wushu, Taichi and Qigong for over 4 decades, there are a number of these practices that I am especially fond of, Wuji Quan being one of them. This Wuji Quan is considered an internal style of Chinese Martial Arts (Wushu). For a very long time, the practice was veiled in mystery. Legend has it that Zhang Sanfeng, after having created Taiji and Bagua, painstakingly created yet another major form in his old age, Wuji Quan.

I was introduced to the Wuji tradition by my father, Grandmaster Shouyu Liang, one of the few individuals in China who had mastery of this art. He had first been initiated to this form by his great grandfather in the 1940's. Even though this precious teaching had been handed down through the generations of my family, it really also evolved through a moment of grace, when my father later on happened to come upon an ancient copy of Wuji Quan instructions. It turned out that the sequencing of the Wuji Quan in this book was identical to the one that had been handed down through the generations of my family. The names of the movements were also mostly the same. According to this ancient illustrated manual, there are altogether 128 movements in the sequence. This number contains two sets of the 64 hexagrams of the Yijing. Wuji transforms into Taiji, and Taiji transforms back into Wuji. After some deep investigation and study of the manual, my father thought that since there were too many repetitions, he

deleted all the duplicates, thereby reducing the movements to 81, greatly facilitating the memorization and study of the form.

Wuji Quan means the “Fist of Wuji”. Wuji is a central concept of Daoist philosophy and stands also for a meditation practice. Literally the term Wuji consists of two Chinese words, Wu (無) and Ji (極). The word Wu means no/without. Ji can mean ultimate/extreme/limit/polarity. Together Wuji can be interpreted to mean, “without limit”, limitless, “without boundary”, boundless, without polarity, or infinite. In the Chinese cosmological world view, Wuji stands for the primordial condition, characterized by Hundun (混沌), an undifferentiated chaos, existing in a state of neither stillness nor movement.

Gradually from this state a tremendous force accumulated until it erupted. This force is called Taiji. Taiji is a pivotal, spiraling, or coiling force which can be called the motive force of creation. Taiji then transforms the state of Wuji into complementary polarities – Yin and Yang, the two opposing yet complementary energies in the universe. It is said in the classics: Wuji existed within the state of chaos, and was brought forward when the universe took shape. When the universe was taking shape, heaven (sky) and earth were formed. The clear and light Yang Qi rose to the top and became the sky; the heavy and turbid Yin Qi sank to the bottom and solidified, becoming the earth.” These are the two opposing principles in nature we call Yin and Yang. (正所謂“無極本來在混沌，混沌初開無極生”。而後開始“混沌初開，乾坤始奠，氣之輕清上升者為天，氣之重濁下凝者為地。”此乃乾坤兩儀). Yin and Yang are constantly changing, as they interact with, and transform into each other, resulting in the “Ten Thousand Things” of this manifested world. Yin and Yang can also reunite to the state of Wuji at any time.

This process corresponds to the Daoist principle of the Way (Dao). As Lao Zi said in the classic of Daoist philosophy, the *Dao De Jing*, written in the fourth century B.C., “The Dao is said to have given birth to The One (Unity), which then gave birth to The Two (the polarity of Yin and Yang), which brought forth The Three (the famous Trinity of Chinese philosophy: Heaven, Earth, and Human Being), out of which arose the myriad things of the universe, which is to say, the interactions between the Three created All Things. The myriad things support Yin and embrace Yang. They blend with Qi to achieve harmony.” (道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和.)

In Daoist metaphysics the One (Unity) creates the Ten Thousand Things. In Daoist cultivation, the Ten Thousand Things return to the One or to the Primordial, the state of Wuji. Again, as Lao Zi says in *Dao De Jing*: “Returning is the motion of the Dao”, and “The Dao is great, it is elusive, and so it forever flows, flowing far away, and having gone far, it returns”. (反者道之動，弱者道之用，天下萬物生於有，有生於無 chapter 40; 道曰大，大曰逝，逝曰遠，遠曰返, chapter 25). We can say that Wuji is also the spiritual state of a person who is engaged in Daoist practice. That is to say, the practitioner’s goal is to return to the state of Wuji, a state of realization beyond time and space, an infinite and boundless state of consciousness. Amazingly, abiding in the state of Wuji allows access to a mysterious source of wisdom that arises spontaneously in response to the needs of the moment.

Wuji Quan is a very powerful and comprehensive method of cultivating the body, mind and spirit. It focuses on body strengthening, health and well being, as well as spiritual cultivation through meditative/Wuji Qigong practices. The Wuji Quan practice allows us to plunge into the depths of our body, mind and spirit.

On a physical level, being a martial discipline, Wuji Quan contains useful martial applications. Soft and hard elements complement each other during the practice: movements suddenly change from high to low, from fast to slow, or from calm to surging. Practicing the entire form in a slow manner usually takes about 30-45 minutes. Especially when practised in low stances, the sequence builds the strength of our legs, arms, and core, as well as increases our power, stamina, flexibility, balance, and coordination. As far as the medical aspect of Wuji Quan is concerned, the form contains a great many stretching movements that are designed to improve the circulation of Qi and blood in the body, rid it of stagnation, and strengthen the functions of the internal organs.

Yet it is the meditative aspect of the practice - Wuji Qigong that opens the door to higher states of consciousness and guides us to reconnect with the source - the Primordial, the state of Wuji, an all encompassing and all embracing state of being. The form begins by offering our Original Spirit (元神) to the practice, then leads us along in accordance with the changes of the universe. It is a profound form of Daoist Qigong. We can have a glimpse into its deep wisdom simply by learning the names of the movements. For example, the beginning movements of “Bow to Wuji” (拜無極), “Illuminating the Three Dantian” (印三田), and “Nourishing Dantian” (坐盤養丹田), are all Daoist ways of Lian Dan (Cultivating the Elixir) that teach us how to concentrate on the Dantian, the major energy center of the body, and strengthen Dantian Qi. In Daoist practice, strengthening Dantian Qi is the basis for learning the various ways and methods of circulating Qi in the major vessels. Building strong Dantian Qi is essential and most fundamental for practices such as the Microcosmic and Macrocosmic Orbit, the Extraordinary Vessel Circulation, Sunrise

and Sunset Circulation, Golden Light and many others. Movements such as “Bring Original Spirit to Illuminate Upper Dantian” (請無極，請元神) can be an advanced cultivation that the Daoists refer to as Spirit Light Cultivation (靈光修持). We also cultivate the notion of how Wuji becomes the Ten Thousand Things through movements such as “Wuji Surging” (無極激盪), “Wuji Generates Taiji” (分太極), “Taiji Generates Yin and Yang” (太極生兩儀), “Yin and Yang Generate the Four Phases” (兩儀生四象), “Four Phases Generates the Eight Trigrams” (四象生八卦), “Empty Emptiness is not Empty” (空空不空), and “Something Arises From Nothing” (無中生有). Through rising and sinking the body and hands, and through the upward and downward circulation of Qi, we cultivate the human connection with nature through “Hand Support the Three Treasures, or the Trinity of Heaven, Earth and Human Being” (手托三才). By holding an energy ball in Horse Stance or Standing Posture, we meditate on emptying the mind through “Dao is Emptiness” (太虛本來無). In the end movements such as “The Ten Thousand Dharma Return to the One and Reside in the Centre” (萬法歸一居中心) and “True Emptiness is Empty of Notions” (真空無相) lead us back to the primal emptiness that is empty of form and empty of phenomena where there is no more division. We are back to the One, the state of Wuji.

We can be profoundly inspired, even by only a brief glimpse of the state of Wuji through this profound form of Daoist Qigong/meditation in motion, as it allows us to go beyond fear and limitation, and meet life’s challenges with peace and grace.

25 years ago, shortly after graduating from university, I was diagnosed with terminal stage Lymphoma, a very rare and aggressive form of cancer. It all started with a wisdom tooth

extraction that resulted in some serious infections. Lumps started to appear all over the back of my head, neck and down along the lymph glands, accompanied by a raging and long lasting fever. After a devastating course of chemotherapy failed to eradicate the disease, doctors told me that I had only three weeks to live. My only hope was an extremely painful bone marrow transplant with a success rate of less than five per cent.

At that time, cancer to me meant the end of the world, it equaled death. Nowadays some people might still react that way, though increasingly people are experiencing less panic when faced with this disease, thanks to major advances in medicine, our better understanding of this disease and the availability of many alternative modalities, all of which have contributed tremendously to how much more gracefully people are dealing with such a diagnosis. But for me at the time that was not my experience at all. It was pure fear and desperation.

When I was taken to a wing of the hospital by the doctors and saw what it was like for people who were undergoing transplant treatments, I was utterly shaken. I saw all kinds of tubes running into the patients' bodies, each one of them looking so frail and having to be kept in isolation due to their extremely low immunity. To me, that wasn't a life anymore. But the doctors told me that this was my last hope, otherwise I would only have a maximum of three weeks to live. There came that day when I had to make a decision whether or not to go for a bone marrow transplant. If I decided against it, they would have to send me home. It was the hardest decision I had to make. No one could help.

I realized then, that for more than half a year since the very beginning of my diagnosis with Lymphoma, to that very day when I had to make that hardest of decisions, I had been living in utter fear and denial. Why me? I was in my mid-twenties, a time of

boundless optimism and big dreams, but all been shattered. There was so much self pity and non-acceptance in me. I felt very insecure and scared, and had become extremely weak and physically and mentally dependent.

When I had finally made the decision of not going for bone marrow transplant and just go home to spend the last few weeks with my loved ones, I felt something shifted inside of me. It was as if a switch had been turned on. And that switch was acceptance. I realized that at that very moment I had finally peacefully accepted or surrendered to what was happening to me, as it was, there was no more resistance. I realized that it was ok for all that time to be feeling afraid or devastated, because that was the natural state of my mind. I had reached a stage where I could acknowledge and allow it to be.

After returning home, I still did not give up hope. With the help and support of my father, I immediately embarked on a course of Qigong, Taichi, Internal Arts and alternative Western and Chinese medicine. A close friend of my father's from Seattle fortuitously introduced us to Dr. Wang, a Chinese doctor originally from Beijing, to help me. Dr. Wang wrote me a prescription of Chinese herbal medicine and faxed it to me immediately after I had described my illness and symptoms to him over the phone. My parents rushed to get the herbs which primarily aimed at bringing my weeks of high fever down, and my mom would be boiling them for hours to make them digestible. However, given my frail body at the time, even small amounts of this herbal concoction made me vomit. But I forced myself. I was not giving up. After persisting for a few days, my fever did start to subside. I also had diarrhea as the medicine worked its way through my system, ridding the body of impurities and clearing the inflammation. With my fever more in control, I started to feel more relaxed. Although I was still quite immobilized as a result of months of hospitalization and was



feeling extremely weak, I started doing some very gentle Qigong, internal martial arts, and Taichi exercises with my father on a daily basis. We'd be doing these exercises in the quiet bamboo shade of our garden, in the crisp air of the Vancouver beach, or any outdoor spaces, away from crowds, where there was fresh air, so that the deep breathing involved with these exercises would allow my body to obtain optimum oxygen levels. When the body is rich in oxygen, organisms like bacteria, deadly viruses and cancer cells can hardly survive.

One day, I went into a deep qigong meditation and came out of it with one profound realization: everything that happens comes and goes. I am called to embrace everything that is happening to me in this very moment, be it good or bad. I realized that I had lived in such a noisy mind for months and months after I was diagnosed with Lymphoma. I was feeling very negative but kept trying to force myself to feel positive, even though my body and mind wouldn't want to cooperate at all. I realized I didn't have to look at any situation in a positive or negative way. Both a positive mind and a negative mind is a noisy mind. I needed a silent, an accepting, an embracing mind - embracing everything that was happening to me, be it good or bad, sad or joyous, life or death, Yin or Yang, the duality of everything.

Yin and Yang are not absolutes. Whatever is happening to us comes and goes. Yin and Yang are always changing and transforming into each other, just as fortune can be hidden in misfortune and vice versa. All things show cyclic patterns of coming and going, of expansion and contraction. Life is the meaningful coexistence of all opposites. The apparent opposites are part of a unity that undergoes a constant flow of change and transformation. Abiding in this unity is to abide in the state of Wuji, and to be one with the Dao. The Dao embraces the duality of everything, and is in endless motion and change. It is the source

of creation, and of all cyclic happenings. Isn't that what my practice (Qigong, Taichi, Wushu) had been teaching me all those years? Isn't that what I had been feeling all along while practicing Wuji Quan? Isn't that what my father meant by "they will come to serve you one day?"

Continuing the practice of my favourite internal martial arts styles such as Wuji Quan, Water Style and Qigong meditation, my focus never wavered, I took in life moment by moment, day by day. With the combination of my practices and Chinese herbal medicine, soon two weeks passed by. I was still there. Another two weeks, and then another. Week after week and year after year until my awareness of time started to fade. There was only this present moment. Abiding in this moment was to abide in Wuji - this boundless state of consciousness.

What was once just a conceptual understanding of Wuji now became a reality during the meditative aspect of my practices. The very first time, when all of a sudden I felt the disappearance of my physical body, or to be more exact, it was the disappearance of the boundaries of my bodily sensation, I was lost in time and space. I was meditating on a bench in the serene bamboo shade of our garden where I felt a mere few minutes turned out to be an hour or two. During that time I felt I was one with everything around me. I couldn't figure out where the "I" was, as it was expanding in all directions and seemed to be everywhere yet nowhere. It was chaotic, but miraculous and beautiful. I was only aware that "all is well" and I was intensely absorbed in a kind of indescribable blissfulness. Maybe it was a glimpse of, or a reconnection to the whole, to Source, to the state of Wuji, this big one-ness? Within this eternal, boundless one-ness, all is bound to be well, because this one-ness embraces all. Although this experience repeated itself later on during my practices, that first glimpse left an eternal imprint in a way that

was nearly impossible for me to convey through words. My perception was changed. My consciousness shifted. I am Wuji, I am this one-ness! This one-ness is here and now; it is immensely powerful, and the power to heal is within this one-ness. Tapping into this power requires that we embrace this moment. We have no access to the past or the future to make a difference to the present. Whatever we are experiencing in this very moment cannot be any better or worse, it is just the way it IS. It is pure perfection that is never corrupted by the ups and downs of life. So why not embracing this very moment? Embrace all that is going on for us with a still mind. Only with a still and embracing mind, are we able to listen to that inner voice, bringing us the deepest messages that the Dao intends for us. We are asked to pay attention to all the details around us and watch for guidance. No matter how chaotic the world is around us, we are able to take the reins of control and act with spontaneity and feel an unshakable inner silence and deep peace.

Continue to practice Wuji Quan and be one with the movements, postures, breathes, and meditation, I embrace this moment and abide in Wuji.

The End