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Role and influence of Chinese martial arts on human body and mind

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Abstract

Main permission One of the oldest martial arts in the world is *Tai Chi Ch'uan* (太极拳 /chin. *Tàijíquán*; 太极 *Tàijí* – supreme ultimate 拳 *quán* – fist, box), which have roots and rose in Chinese civilization. Philosophical and health aspect was based on the experience gained during many years of war, which had always took place in Chinese history until World War II. Between the wars, people stopped fighting with each other, however they haven't parted with martial arts, still continuing training the *wǔshù* (武术 *wǔshù* – chin. Art of war). In preparation for any subsequent wars, they perceived the advantages of this type of training, adding health (healing) and prophylactic (health benefits) aspect. That way, *Tàijí* was created. People have observed that motion helps to improve physical health as well as mental one, because training this martial art led to development not only the body but health of a man and his spirit.

Tàijí combines elements of self-defence with understanding human inner energy and uses Chinese philosophies such as Taoism and Confucianism. In *Tàijí* power describes *Yin* and *Yang* energy as the primary forces, opposite, which complement one another, being in harmony with each other. *Yin* literally means cloudy, it is meant as negative force, passive, while *Yang* meaning is bright, positive force and active. Both of these forces are all around us, where they are constantly transforming and human lasts between earth and the universe. The interaction of universe, earth and surrounding nature on man means constant flow of energy. The gravity force on earth, electromagnetic waves or black matter in outer space that pervades everything, all the physical and chemical phenomena constantly taking place on the ground, are nothing more than just penetration of the two opposing elements. Practicing *Tàijí* teaches how to use this energy.

Training assimilate use of internal energy (from birth), elements of self-defence, external energy along with physical and chemical, such as food or warmth. One of the main *Tàijíquán* training is development of nervous system through flexibility training, concentration, and above all – coordination by maintaining control of the body in space and time. This ability is useful for every human being, as a pro-health, keeping everyone in a very good psychophysical condition. If we add to this elements of good nutrition, hygiene elements of life and mental training, we will achieve full harmony of the body with mind. One of the basic elements of *Tàijí* training, is work on the flexibility – stretching, so that trainees can perform motions confidently and fluently the harmonious sequences in the movement and combat forms.

Nowadays our civilization has led to neglect physical activity. *Tàijí* is watching nature, going back to nature and draws inspiration from it, to create new forms and exercise, to achieve complete harmony between man and nature. For this reason an essential and inseparable element to obtain proper performance of *Tàijí* is the practice of *Qigong* (气功 *Qìgōng* – master use of ones internal energy), consist on a combination of concentration (mastering thoughts in an advanced aspect) through the use of multiple senses while performing movement (polymodal synaesthesia spontaneous and directed). We achieve complete conscious control over every tiny motion of the body (skeletal, nervous, muscular, circulatory system, etc.) combined with correct breathing. The experience of primal body control in relation to the mind is achieved by the right order of understanding harmony lever between earth and universe, mind and body and lastly applying in actual form of combat and healing our body.

In general, the level of knowledge about our body is very modest, and *Tàijí* is a powerful knowledge about the man. Practicing *Tàijí* affects the deepening awareness of the body and mind in carrying out various activities, even outside of training time. Besides, it teaches conscious breathing, which also is translated into the health facet. In *Tàijí* training is another aspect of health that cannot be overlooked: it is relaxation – meditation combined with breathing techniques and meditation in motion, or to relax our bodies. Adding to the self-defence training and combat elements, we increase self confidence in the action, reduce the fear of failure, and thus aggression.

Source of inspiration Program and *Tàijí* training implemented by the author are the result of decades of experience gained during stays in China, training many styles beside martial art masters like: *Kyokushin* – A. Drewniak, J. Pietras; *Aikido* – C. Tissier; *Qìgōng* & *Tàijíquán* yang style – Jwing-Ming Yang; *Jujitsu* in polish Jujitsu association; *Wing Chun Kuen* – William Cheung, D. Beddar, B. Corles; *Gongfu Wu Dang* – M. Plyaskin; *Tàijíquán* Chen style & *Qìgōng* – Han Kui Yuan, M. Plyaskin.

Innovation and implementation Rich experience led to the creation of authors programs: 50+ activation, martial art workshop for blind, deaf, deaf-mutes and regular training groups that proves how training can be adapted in a wide range cases of diseases or disability. Even young individuals in the age of 9-11 years already receive the possibility of multifaceted development of both body and spirit, because

of the greater plasticity of the brain. People middle-aged and older regain verve, health and stamina. But nevertheless recent research shows that the brain regenerates until death, and new connections are created through aspects of polymodal stimulus through training.

Conclusion Generally, these actions are a continuation of the path initiated by the creators and subsequent masters of *Tàijí*. Enriched with their own experiences and thoughts, the influence of Chinese culture, as well as advancing scientific knowledge in the field of biomechanics, manual therapy (techniques, stretching, mobilization of peripheral joints and spine, as well as neuromobilization), dietetics, neuropsychology, proxemics and a new field of neuroscience polymodal synaesthesia allowed to create their own author training program.

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Keywords: *Qìgōng* training • self-defence • stretching techniques • traditional movements forms of *Tàijíquán* Chen Style

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