

SUN LU TANG: My Personal Experience

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Ever since I began training boxing in childhood, my teachers always told me “Boxing embodies the Tao”. I was skeptical about it. But when I learned ‘concealed energy’, and the unification of hard and soft, my movements became lively and swift and then I understood the truth of it. When I got together with fellow trainees, we shared our personal experiences and results. But as I progressed to understanding the next level of ‘mysterious energy’, although I remained willing to talk about it with classmates, I didn’t want to share my experiences with outsiders. But now I want to write my personal experience for people who have started on the same path in the hope that we can all improve together.

As I began the progression to ‘mysterious energy’, after practicing formal sequence (of Xing Yi Quan) I would finish with upright standing, trying to to unify my spirit and energy. And every time I did that, I'd feel some slight subtle movement in my perineal area. At first it was barely perceptible. When doing my quiet standing after each day’s practice, I’d sometimes feel it and sometimes not. But over time, the movement became stronger and more frequent, until it got to the point that as soon as I returned to standing at conclusion of any formal drill, all I had to do was concentrate for a moment, and I would feel a vectored energy discharge. I realized that this was the spontaneous energetic movement of the true yang-power, which is described in classical works on Taoist static meditation. The ancient Taoist meditation masters thoroughly understood this process, which they referred to as movement arising from the stillness of their seated practice disciplines. What I was doing was the inverse of that - I had been creating stillness (the upright standing) subsequent to the movements of my prior boxing practice. It’s hard to understand. This state is also described in the ancient boxing classics with the phrase “omnipresence without movement”. Anyway I persisted relentlessly in my daily practice. Finally I reached the point that immediately on assuming the upright standing posture, my entire body entered a state of absolute emptiness, within which the true yang power resonated and flowed. This condition has been characterized by Taoist Master Liu Hua Yang as re-experiencing one’s original nature. In this state, if I moved even slightly the real yang resonance would immediately discharge. I realized I could use the boxing method itself to transform this raw potential

I used my mind to sink my insubstantial spirit, filling my dan-tian. At the same time I used the insubstantial spirit to slightly elevate the perineal area energy accumulation (cf. Translator Note 1), which resulted in full coordination of inner and outer activity.

Thereafter, when I merely directed my mind briefly to my dan-tian, even for just a moment, the real yang resonance would immediately concentrate itself and rise up into that area. At that time my body would experience a sensation of absolute ease. At that time I hadn’t yet heard of the doctrine of ** (cf. Translator Note 2), but anyway I felt as though two powerful forces were interacting within my dan-tian. After standing in this state for up to four or five hours, I would gradually come back to my normal self. I believe that this immobile state was the result of my

gradual accumulation, through the formal boxing practice, of two kinds of breath that were retained in my dan-tian after that practice finished. These internally retained breath elements were entirely different from the breathing of daily life. I had not intentionally created or retained these internal breath elements, but after a practice session I would have persistent experience of them. Zhuangzi wrote that the superior man breathes from his feet, and my experience was consistent with this basic idea. I was then able to use these elements of internal breath to smooth and refine the movement of the real yang resonance so that it uniformly suffused my entire body.

Thus I continued as I have already written, with the process of raising the resonance up to my dan-tian, and every time I practiced a boxing sequence my inner and outer movements were absolutely coordinated into one. I would practice gently and slowly, always careful to maintain my balance. When I practiced the formal sequences, I would take care to keep my limbs relaxed, my movements soft and harmonious, maintaining that feeling of emptiness.

Over time, my dynamic boxing practice came to generate exactly the same state as the static work I described above. Sometimes I would stand after performing only one sequence, sometimes after two, and then begin moving again. No matter what, I would always elevate the internal yang resonance to my dan-tian, and leverage the internal breath elements generated by the boxing practice as feedstock for the internal flow. The flow begins at the coccyx (Cf. Translator Note) and rises through the vertebral points (Cf. Translator Note 4), then to the upper gate/Jade Pillow (Cf. Translator Note 5), then to the crown of the head, before lowering down the front, exactly as taught in seated meditation methods, back to the dan-tian. Sometimes the flow would circulate two or three times before settling into the uniform state of full-body permeation, while at other times it would make three or four orbits before suffusing into the uniform state. There seemed to be a correlation between the number of circulation orbits and the number of prior practice sets. But that was only in the beginning.

Later, even without any prior practice at all, whenever I would merely sit down, or take any action at all, I could use the internal breath elements to achieve the same preliminary circulation. Finally I could achieve it even while asleep. I'd be sleeping soundly when the internal yang resonance would suddenly activate itself, immediately awakening me. Again I was able to use the breath elements derived from the boxing practice to transform this into the uniform state of energetic suffusion. Finally the yang resonance no longer spontaneously activated itself during my sleep, and my entire body inside and out, as well as all four limbs, would suddenly transform from the state of full suffusion to the ultimate state of complete emptiness. I experienced this as a kind of shower of complete bliss. I could apply this internal breath to achieve this ultimate state even while dreaming. When I awakened I would realize that I had experienced that while dreaming. Later I experienced a final abbreviation of this process so that as soon as I fell into deep sleep, I would enter the state of ultimate emptiness.

In daily waking life, while walking or sitting, my limbs would suddenly feel absolutely light or empty, and my body would enter a state of absolute comfort. After each evening's practice of the boxing sequences, when I went to sleep each night, I would almost always experience

this transform to ultimate emptiness. But if I went to sleep without practicing, I would be less likely to experience the shift. Finally I understood that the internal practice as described here strengthened my internal state to the point of warding off any illness of body, mind, or spirit. I also realized that the process I had gone through in my boxing practice was identical to that taught in classical Taoist meditation, thus these two arts have exactly the same theoretical basis.

What I've written about here, above, is my own personal experience of internal and external transformation. I've laid it out openly for the benefit of all fellow practitioners.

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Translator Notes:

1. For quibblers - I am fully aware that 中醫古稱肛門為「谷道」, thus this can be alternately translated as 'anus' but 'perineal' is more faithful to the felt nature of the actual experience
2. Citation missing from original text
3. 尾闾关, Wei Lu Guan
4. 夹脊关, Jia Ji Guan
5. 玉枕关, Yu. Zhen Guan

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Translator Commentary:

This important piece is written in semi-classical Chinese, the difficult hybrid style of writing that came into being in the interim between the lingering attachment to the ancient imperial exam system based on millennia-old seminal works of Chinese civilization and the early 20th century efforts to modernize and standardize the written and spoken language, often heavily influenced by Western grammarians. This piece leans more toward the really hard-core ancient style. Thus if you run this through Google translate, the result is total garbage and gibberish.

I have done my best to render the most complete, thorough, and accurate translation. But this piece talks about things far beyond most people's experience and uses terms that philosophers and linguists have debated for centuries. There is simply no way to avoid endless quibbles about whether I've translated this or that phrase, every mysterious word, accurately.

Best then to avoid tedious legalism. The process Master Sun describes is something I have personally undergone in almost every detail. Take it as a finger pointing to the moon - once you

see the moon, forget about the finger. Focus on the moon.

And as always, if you don't like how I've done it, do it yourself.