

Taijiquan Treatise

The Brennan translation is titled **The Taiji Boxing Classic** and is from a group of texts headlined **An Outline of Taiji Theory**. It is an appendix to a compilation on Taiji by Chen Yanlin published in 1943. Link [here](#).

The Wile translation is from the book **Yang Family Secret Transmissions** (1983). It is titled **Wang Tsung Yüeh's Treatise on T'ai-chi ch'üan**.

The Christensen translation is from the book **Tai Chi – The True History and Principles** (2016). It is from the Li family manual, said to have been dictated by Li Helin in 1787. For further details, I suggest you buy the book.

The Liang translation is from the book **T'ai Chi Ch'uan For Health and Self-Defense** (1974,1977). It is titled **T'ai Chi Ch'uan Treatise**. He attributes it to Wang Chung Yueh of the Ming Dynasty

The Liao translation is from the book **T'ai Chi Classics** (1977,1990). It is titled **Treatise by Master Wong Chung-yua (ca. 1600 C.E.)**.

I have copied the Chinese text from Brennan's website and put it at the end of this document.

Paul Brennan: The Taiji Boxing Classic	Douglas Wile: Wang Tsung Yüeh's Treatise on T'ai-chi ch'üan	Lars Bo Christensen: Treatise on Taijiquan	TT Liang: T'ai Chi Ch'uan Treatise	Waysun Liao Treatise by Master Wong Chung-yua
Taiji ["grand polarity"] is born of wuji ["nonpolarity"], and is the mother of yin and yang [the passive and active aspects].	T'ai-chi [The Great Ultimate] is born of Wu-Chi [The Infinite] and is the mother of yin and yang	Taiji is born of Wuji and is the mother of yin and yang	T'ai Chi (The Supreme Ultimate) springs from Wu Chi (The Limitless). It is the source of motion and tranquility and the mother of Yin and Yang	T'ai Chi is born out of infinity. It is the origin of the positive and the negative
When there is movement, passive and active become distinct from each other. When there is stillness, they return to being indistinguishable.	In motion they separate; in stillness they become one.	In motion it separates. In stillness it comes together.	In motion they separate; in tranquility they fuse into one.	When T'ai Chi is in motion, the positive and negative separate; when T'ai Chi stops, the positive and negative integrate.
Neither going too far nor not far enough, comply and bend then engage and extend.	Avoid both excess and insufficiency; Extend when the opponent bends and bend when he extends.	There is nothing past it and nothing does not reach it. If you follow its curve, it keeps extending.	There should be no excess and no insufficiency. You bend as your opponent	When practicing T'ai Chi, doing too much is the same as doing too little. When the body is in motion, it

			stretches out and expand as he contracts	should follow the curve to extend the movements.
He is hard while I am soft – this is yielding. My energy is smooth while his energy is coarse – this is sticking.	The opponent is hard while I am soft. This is yielding. I am yielding while the opponent is resistant. This is adhering.	The other is hard, I am soft. This we call going away. Then I follow along on the outside. This we call sticking	To conquer the unyielding by yielding is termed “to withdraw”; to create a defective position in your opponent and obtain a superior position of your own is called “to adhere.”	If your opposite side is hard, change your own side to make it soft. This is called <i>following</i> . If your opponent is moving and you adhere to him while following in the same direction, it is called <i>sticking</i> .
If he moves fast, I quickly respond, and if his movement is slow, I leisurely follow.	Respond to speed with speed and slowness with slowness	If the movement is quick, I respond quickly, If the movement is slow, I respond slowly.	You respond quickly to your opponent’s fast action and slowly to his slow actions	Then you are <i>attached</i> to your opponent: when he moves faster, you also move faster; when he moves slower, you move slower, thereby matching his movement.
Although there is an endless variety of possible scenarios, there is only this single principle [of yielding and sticking] throughout.	Although the changes are infinite, the principles remain the same.	Although there are infinite variations there is only one principle.	Although the changes are numerous, the principle remains the same.	Regardless of your opponent’s actions, the principle of your response remains the same.
Once you have ingrained these techniques, you will gradually come to identify energies, and then from there you will work your way toward something miraculous. But unless you practice a lot over a long time, you will never have a breakthrough.	From mastery of the postures, you will gradually awaken to interpret energy. From interpreting energy, you will arrive at spiritual insight. However, without long and arduous practice, you will not suddenly make this breakthrough.	From steady practice, you will gradually come to understand energy. From understanding energy, you will gradually reach spiritual enlightenment. But without prolonged effort how can you suddenly get a profound realization?	From the mastery of all the postures you will apprehend “interpreting energy”; from apprehending interpreting energy, you will arrive at a complete mastery of your opponent without recourse to detecting his energy. But without a long period of arduous practice, you cannot find yourself possessed of a wide and far-reaching insight.	Once this type of movement has become your own, you will understand internal power. After coming to an understanding of the internal power of movement, you can approach the theory of natural awareness. Natural awareness is developed through practice over a long period of time; you cannot reach a sudden

				understanding of natural awareness without proper practice for an extended length of time.
Forcelessly press up your headtop. Energy sinks to your elixir field. Neither lean nor slant.	There is a light and sensitive energy at the crown of the head; sink the ch'i to the tan-t'ien; do not lean or incline.	Empty the neck and the top of the head and let the jing and qi sink to the Dan Tian. Do not lean, incline or move unevenly.	A light and nimble energy is to be preserved on the top of the head; the ch'i is to sink to the tan t'ien. There should be no inclination and no leaning.	When you practice T'ai Chi, you should relax the neck and suspend the head as if from a height above you. Internal power should sink to the lower part of the abdomen. Your posture should keep to the center. Do not lean in any direction.
Suddenly hide and suddenly appear. When there is pressure on the left, the left empties. When there is pressure on the right, the right disappears.	Suddenly disappear and suddenly appear. If the opponent puts pressure on the left, become empty on the left; if he puts pressure on the right, become empty on the right.	First the left [leg] has weight, then the left is empty. Then the right [leg] has weight, then the right is empty.	Suddenly disappear and suddenly appear. When [the opponent] puts pressure on the left, the left becomes insubstantial; when pressure is brought on the right, the right becomes empty.	Your movements should be constantly changing from the substantial to the insubstantial. If your left side feels heavy, you should make your left side light. If your right side feels heavy, you should make your right side disappear.
When looking up, it is still higher. When looking down, it is still lower. When advancing, it is even farther. When retreating, it is even nearer.	Looking upward, it seems higher and higher; looking downwards, it seems deeper and deeper. Advancing, it seems further and further; retreating, it seems shorter and shorter.	Looking up it becomes higher and higher. Looking down it becomes deeper and deeper. When advancing you want to go longer, retreating you want to go shorter.	Looking upward it seems to become higher and higher; looking downward it seems to become deeper and deeper. When advancing, one feels the distance incredibly long; when retreating, one feels it exasperatingly short.	Make your opponent feel that when he looks upward, you are much taller, and when he looks downward, you are much lower. When he moves forward, he should feel that he cannot reach you, and when he retreats, he should feel that he has nowhere to escape to.
A feather cannot be added and a fly cannot land.	A feather cannot be added to the body nor a fly alight.	One feather cannot be added, a fly cannot land.	A feather cannot be added to the body, nor can a fly alight.	Your body's sensitivity should be such that you are aware of the tiniest feather

				brushing against your skin. Even the mosquito finds no place to land on you without causing you to move.
The opponent does not understand me, only I understand him. A hero is one who encounters no opposition, and it is through this kind of method that such a condition is achieved.	My opponent does not know me, but I know him. Wherever the hero goes, he is unmatched. This is the goal to which we aspire.	The other part does not know me, I alone know them. That the hero is unmatched comes, in fact, from this.	My opponent does not know me, but I know him quite well. If you can master all the techniques, you will become a peerless hero.	Then there will be no way for your opponent to detect or control you, but you will be aware of your opponent and control him. If you achieve this level of sensitivity, there is no force that will defeat you.
There are many other schools of boxing arts besides this one. Although the postures are different between them, they generally do not go beyond the strong bullying the weak and the slow yielding to the fast. The strong beating the weak and the slow submitting to the fast are both a matter of inherent natural ability and bear no relation to skill that is learned.	There are many other schools of martial arts. Although there are differences in style, they do not go beyond strength bullying weakness and slowness giving way to speed, the strong beating the weak and slow hands yielding to fast. All of this is native physical endowment and has nothing to do with what is acquired through serious study.	This technique is taught by many questionable schools. Although their Style appears to be different from each other, in general, they are nothing but the strong bullying the weak, and the slow being inferior to the fast. Those having strength striking those who have not, the slow hand being inferior to the fast hand. This is an inborn ability that does not involve knowledge and talent.	In martial arts there are many other schools. Although they differ in postures, they do not go beyond reliance on the strong defeating the weak, the swift conquering the slow, or the slow yielding to the quick and the weak being defeated by the strong. But these are all the result of innate physical endowments and do not relate to techniques acquired by study and experience.	There are thousands of methods and techniques in the martial arts. Regardless of the techniques and postures employed, most depend on physical condition (strong destroys weak) and speed (fast defeats slow), so that the weak must fall to the strong and the slow must lose to the fast. This, however, is dependent on physical ability and does not relate to the discipline that we now discuss.
Examine the phrase “four ounces moves a thousand pounds”, which is clearly not a victory obtained through strength.	If we examine the concept of four ounces repelling a thousand pounds, it is clear that it is not brute force that prevails.	Consider the saying “Four ounces lifts a thousand pounds”. It is obvious that it is not strength that does it.	If one examines the principle of deflecting momentum of a thousand pounds with a trigger force of four ounces, clearly it is not brute force that wins.	Look into the technique of using four ounces of energy to control the force of a thousand pounds. Such techniques as these do not depend on brute force to overcome.

Or consider the sight of an old man repelling a group, which could not come from an aggressive speed.	When we see an old man successfully defending himself against a large number of men, what has this to do with speed?	In contrast, look at someone old who is able to fight off a crowd, how can fast movements do this?	If one sees an old man defending himself and defeating a great number of men, what has this to do with swiftness?	Observe the ability of the old man who can successfully defend himself against many opponents at once. This proves that speed does not determine victory.
Stand like a scale. Move like a wheel.	Stand like a sensitive balance; move actively like a wheel.	Stand like a balanced scale and move vigorously like a carriage wheel.	Stand like a balanced scale; move actively like a cartwheel.	When you practice T'ai Chi, you should stand with your posture balanced like a scale. When you move, your movements should revolve as effortlessly as the turning of a wheel.
If you drop one side, you can move. If you have equal pressure on both sides, you will be stuck.	If you keep your weight to one side you will be able to follow; if you are double-weighted you will be clumsy.	Sink low to one side, then follow. Weight on both sides makes you immovable.	If you keep your weight on one side you can adapt to all circumstances; if you "double-weight," your actions will be impeded.	Following the changing situation, you move as is necessary. If you are unable to respond in this way you will become double-weighted.
We often see one who has practiced hard for many years yet is unable to perform any neutralizations and is generally under the opponent's control, and the issue here is that this error of double pressure has not yet been understood.	We often see people who have faithfully studied this art for several years but cannot neutralize an attack and most often are bested by an opponent. This is simply because they have not yet corrected the error of double-weighting.	It is often seen that people practice many years but are not able to change and adapt their moves. Usually this all comes from oneself wanting to control the other and having not realized the problem of double-weightedness.	We can often see one who has painstakingly practiced T'ai Chi for several years but cannot neutralize an attacking energy and is generally subdued by an opponent. This is because he has still not understood the fault of double-weighting.	Often martial artists who have practiced for years still cannot move properly and so cannot follow the flow of their opponent's movement. This is essentially because they are hindered by their mistake of double-weightedness.
If you want to avoid this error, you must understand that passive and active exchange roles.	You must seek to avoid this error. You must know yin and yang. To adhere is to yield; to yield is to adhere. Yin never leaves yang and yang never leaves yin.	But if you want to avoid this mistake you must know yin and yang. To adhere is to evade, to evade is to adhere.	If you want to avoid this defect, you must know Yin and Yang. To adhere is to withdraw; to withdraw is to adhere. Yang does not leave Yin	To avoid double-weightedness you should further understand that positive and negative must complement each other.

		Yin does not separate from yang, yang does not separate from yin.	and Yin does not leave Yang.	
Once you have this understanding, you will be identifying energies.	When yin and yang complement each other, this is interpreting energy.	Yin and yang supplement each other, when they are side by side you have understood energy.	The coordination of Yin and Yang can be called interpreting energy.	Then you will understand the flow of internal power,
Once you are identifying energies, then the more you practice, the more efficient your skill will be, and by absorbing through experience and by constantly contemplating, gradually you will reach the point that you can do whatever you want.	After learning to interpret energy, the more you practice, the more your skill advances. Silently memorize and thoroughly ponder. Little by little you will reach the stage where the body will automatically follow the mind.	After having understood energy, the more it is practiced the higher skill. Study and learn by heart gradually until attaining your goal.	After you have learned to interpret energy, the more you practice, the better your skill will be, and by examining thoroughly and remembering silently, you will gradually reach a stage of total reliance on the mind.	and, having repeatedly practiced and refined your technique and explored your own awareness, you can use and control your internal power at will.
The basic of basics is to forget about your plans and simply respond to the opponent.	The root of all is to give up yourself and follow others.	The basic principle is to let go and then comply with the other.	The fundamental point is to forget oneself and follow others.	The T'ai Ci principle is as simple as this: yield yourself and follow the external forces.
We often make the mistake of ignoring what is right in front of us in favor of something that has nothing to do with our immediate circumstances. For such situations it is said: "Miss by an inch, lose by a mile." You must understand all this clearly.	Most people make the mistake of scorning what is near and pursuing what is far. The slightest error will take you a thousand miles off course. Students must finely discriminate; hence the reason for this treatise.	Many ignore what is close to seek what is far. That is called "being off by a hair's breadth, and miss it by a thousand miles." Students must discern all details in this. This comprises the treatise.	But most people misunderstand it and sacrifice the near for the distant. This is what is called, "a slightest error or deviation will result in wide divergence (from the true way)". For this reason the Classics have been made.	Instead of doing this, most people ignore such obvious and simple principles and search for a more remote and impractical method. This is the so-called inches mistake, which, when allowed to develop, becomes the distance of a thousand miles. All disciples of T'ai Chi should be aware of this and study diligently.

太極拳經

太極者。無極而生。陰陽之母也。動之則分。靜之則合。無過不及。隨屈就伸。人剛我柔謂之走。我順人背謂之黏。動急則急應。動緩則緩隨。雖變化萬端。而理為一貫。由着熟而漸悟懂勁。由懂勁而階及神明。然非功力之久。不能豁然貫通焉。虛領頂勁。氣沉丹田。不偏不倚。忽隱忽現。左重則左虛。右重則右杳。仰之則彌高。俯之則彌深。進之則愈長。退之則愈促。一羽不能加。蠅蟲不能落。人不知我。我獨知人。英雄所向無敵。蓋皆由此而及也。斯技旁門甚多。雖勢有區別。概不外乎壯欺弱。慢讓快耳。有力打無力。手慢讓手快。是皆先天自然之能。非關學力而有為也。察四兩撥千斤之句。顯非力勝。觀耄耋能禦衆之形。快何能為。立如平準。活似車輪。偏沉則隨。雙重則滯。每見數年純功。不能運化者。率自為人制。雙重之病未悟耳。欲避此病。須知陰陽相濟。方為懂勁。懂勁後。愈練愈精。默識揣摩。漸至從心所欲。本是捨己從人。多誤舍近求遠。所謂差之毫釐。謬以千里。學者不可不詳辨焉。