

The Nature of Taiji and Wuji

By Derek Croley

Over the years I have read and researched a great deal about the nature of Taiji and Wuji in an attempt to uncover the mysteries of both. I have read books, attended seminars, studied with various teachers, meditated...all in an attempt to obtain a greater knowledge of what Taiji and Wuji are. I was firm in my belief that when I was able to understand them and the relationship between them I would be able to ascend into enlightenment- whatever that meant. I also had some crazy ideas about that enlightenment thing- but we will discuss that a little later. What I discovered was that, while all a helpful part of my learning process, none of these things had the answers that I was looking for. Not even the concept of enlightenment as I knew it was valuable. In this article I will attempt to explain the truth as I know it to date about the nature of Taiji and Wuji.

So what is Taiji? Often Taiji is written in English as Tai Chi, and there is a popular martial art named after it. Tai Chi can be translated as "grand ultimate." In the beginning I thought that this simply meant that Tai Chi was the ultimate martial art- but then I learned that there was no such thing as the ultimate martial art. Then when I got a little bit smarter I thought it meant that Tai Chi itself was the ultimate thing. This of course begged the question "well then, what is Tai Chi as a thing?" In reality, Taiji is not about the ultimate anything. It is simply a discussion about opposites. Taiji is not a thing, it is a process. It is the process of the interaction of Yin and Yang in the universe. In fact, this process- Taiji- is the universe. The universe itself is an interaction of opposing forces and Taiji is the name for the process. Consequentially, this is the reason for the martial art being called Tai Chi- it is based upon the concept of the interaction of the two opposing forces- Yin and Yang.

Yin and Yang are often thought of as complete opposites, never to interact at all: yin being the softer, feminine, etc while yang is the harder, masculine. This is of course not the way it is. The reason that there are two different opposing forces is for the relationship that exists between them. Therefore, they must interact. This interaction (Taiji) is often depicted in the logo with a black swirl interacting with a white swirl and there are dots of each in the other. The thing to keep in mind about this diagram is that it is a still picture of a moving idea. Think of it as a still picture of a person running. The picture captures but a moment of the movement.

Wuji means "without polarity" or "without opposite" meaning that there is no opposing force of any kind. Wuji could be thought of as potential energy whereas Taiji is kinetic energy. If Taiji is the universe, than Wuji is what the universe was made from and is supported by. It is not nothing, but it is also not something- it is infinite potential. The function of the study of the Martial Arts is to get yourself from only being aware of Taiji to becoming aware of Wuji. Our objective in the martial arts and as people in general is to get past Taiji so you can look into Wuji. You want to be able to see the stillness from which all the motion was spawned.

So how do you do this? We are held to Taiji by our attachment to it and our fear of losing this attachment. We are attached to our environment, our bodies, our personalities- all are aspects of Taiji. We have built a shell around ourselves that we define ourselves as- completely missing the eternal drop that exists within all of the layers and levels of attachment and fear. Your environment is only what you perceive with your physical body- the things that you can see, hear, taste, and touch. Your body is only a vehicle with which to interact with your environment. Your personality is only the software that is used to process the data collected by your body. These are all things of Taiji- the interaction and relationship of opposite forces- yin and yang, a binary code. It is your attachment to these things and the fear of losing them that prevent you from your knowledge of Wuji, and therefore your true self.

Remember that this is a process of refinement. You are real, your body is real, your thoughts and feelings are real- we simply want to obtain an awareness of things beyond this level. You can try astral projection, talking to spirits, and whatever other crazy things you can think of- but by doing so you are only looking at different levels of Taiji by going to higher and higher vibrating energy patterns. For example, solids have one vibrational density, liquids another, and gas another- then we get into sound, and spectrums of light. All of which having continuing higher vibrations of energy. This is great, but we don't really want to go deeper into the rabbit hole- all paths that way just lead back to the where you are now, only with a head ache. Go the other way- towards stillness. From stillness (Wuji) you can begin to see movement from an external perspective.

Many people take what is often referred to as "false paths." The funny thing is that the only people who refer to false paths are those that are on them themselves. So long as you are looking to improve yourself and actively involved in some form of doing so you are on the right path- even if you find it isn't the right one for you. Anybody who follows a path long enough will get to the place that they intend. All seekers of truth will eventually get to the point where they actually realize that the true answers to the nature of Taiji and Wuji can be found only within themselves. When you get to work cutting away the layers of what you currently think is you, only then will you be able to obtain an understanding of the nature of Taiji and Wuji. I am of course all for study, but you must look within yourself to find the answers.

So how do you look? Obviously, my preferred method is through the study of the Martial Arts. The reason being that true martial arts build the practitioner mentally, physically, and spiritually by building mental and physical discipline, perseverance, a strong moral and ethical code, and the ability to focus all of yourself on a single objective. These are all tools that you will need on your quest to unraveling the mystery of taiji and wuji. When you do, you will be what we often refer to as "enlightened."

Enlightened doesn't mean what you think it means. To be enlightened simply means that you have cut away all of the layers of clutter off of your spirit until your spirit is all that is there. All of your fears, judgments, attachments, opinions... all of them are cut to the core and all that is left is simply what is. Not what you want to be there, not what you think should be there, not even what you were told would be there- just what actually is. When you can see this you have achieved something special. This is in the end, the true objective of the Martial Arts.