



Author Shi Ming was featured
on Bill Moyers' acclaimed PBS
series *Healing and the Mind*.

MIND OVER MATTER

武 *Higher
Martial
Arts*

術 **SHI MING**
with Siao Weijia
Translated by
Thomas Cleary

INTRODUCTION

New Perspectives on Martial Arts

by Siao Weijia, Li Jianmin, and Yu Gongbao

THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT of modern civilization and technology has brought people into a domain formerly only imagined; human beings ride rockets to the moon, countless robots and machines have taken the place of heavy labor. Self-regulated and automated production lines are gradually freeing people from simplex tasks that not only tire them out but also make them subordinate to machinery. Computers are replacing or reducing the use of the human brain in every field.

But just as humanity is becoming complacent about conquering nature, and is continuing endless consumption and ceaseless ambition, all sorts of perils and dangers are unexpectedly also confronting humanity, entrapping this world of actualities, which sometimes cannot avoid losing direction through blindness. Destruction of balance in the biosphere, the threat of nuclear devastation, pollution of the environment, depletion of resources, economic arrhythmia, psychological aberrations and new ills of the age—at this point intoxication turns into anxiety, and the hangover induces a rude awakening and self-examination.

Conquest must touch off counterconquest. With each step of human conquest over nature, we encounter the reaction of the equilibrating power of nature. This is the principle that whatever comes to a climax must reverse; everyone recognizes this fact. The central issue of the world of the future is how to attune the relationship between the individual, society, and nature, how to transform a war of conquest into a harmonious, united collaboration of humanity

and nature. Being a combined product of nature and society, humankind will be at the center of the issue.

There is a real problem confronting humankind and modern science, one that cannot be overlooked. Science is a product of economic development, and it also serves the development of an economy, to the point where even if finance began with human needs, it does not work only for the benefit of humanity, not entirely as people imagine. Finance is animated by its own rules; not only is it often alienated from, or contradictory to, urgent human needs, it also continues to create new demands that people originally did not have, demands that are not of use to their complete development, and which can even influence their progress and evolution along a misguided path to self-loss and self-destruction.

Very few people consider our central purpose to be a gradual surrender and deterioration under the cover of all sorts of complicated systems of fancy scientific and economic terminology, to the point where many primary capacities and skills lapse from a manifest state into latency because of having been replaced by technology. This devolutionary tendency cannot but be called a big mistake.

Science causes people a rude awakening, when we realize that humanity in a civilized state has already lost something, and is thus in urgent need of replenishment. We reflect that there have been various gaps and limitations in purposes and methods ever since science has been dominant, urgently calling for the actualization of a new breakthrough, a new leap of progress.

Human needs as they are undistorted and undeflected by commercial economics, latent human capacities and a more reasonable relationship between humanity and nature, the elevation of the level of development of the human race itself as well as the overall development of health—such issues as these have aroused the sincere concern and attention of the entire scientific and intellectual community. With the economies and technologies of newly developing nations of the East catching up to the developed modern West, and the developed nations of the West turning to the ancient civilizations of the East to search out their roots, this concern and atten-

tion have fostered an ever deepening dialogue and intercourse between each field of study, between East and West, between the present and the past, between macrocosmic and microcosmic views, using scientific thinking freely to nurture a new creative attitude and scientific methodology, facilitating communion between past and present, East and West, such that they interpenetrate and complement each other.

In scientific information theory, robotics, systematics, and entropics, the highest achievements of cosmophysics and particle physics, and ancient Eastern "mysticism," the philosophy of nature as an organic whole in which Nature and humanity are united, and the idea of universal laws governing the totality of the universe, call and respond to each other over vast distances, knocking on the door of postindustrial society. The sails of life science based on the satisfaction of authentic and long-term human needs are slowly rising, announcing to science and humanity the coming of a new era.

The legacy of corruption in traditional Chinese culture is one of the main culprits in the general deterioration and backwardness of the Chinese nation and people over the last few centuries, and is being subjected to ever greater, deeper, and sharper criticism. This criticism is for the sake of a great liberation, a great revolution, to catch up with the developed nations of the world, to participate in the world market, to modernize the society, polity, and economy of China. In short, to revitalize China and sweep away a millennium's barriers of thought by getting rid of the stale and the rotten, to open up new consciousness and new thinking, it is necessary to be about the business of revolutionizing the spiritual aspect of our people.

Nevertheless, even in times of most intensive forward movement, the finest product of traditional Chinese culture, its ever youthful essence, has never ceased its own work of discovery, perpetuation, and expression, regardless of misunderstanding, destruction, or oppression. Countless people of knowledge and perception who have penetrated deeply into the underlying currents of history, who have found a treasure that will ever shine forth with a brilliant light for humankind, who have been silent and unknown yet indefatiga-

ble, having at heart an ever fresh enthusiasm, combining related scientific results, have never given up intensive research. After the Revolution and Liberation, within the short period of ten years there appeared innumerable sprouts of scientific research, which have nearly blossomed into full flower.

When the fruits of the technological civilization of a developed country are clearly showing various signs of decadence, when the law of competition has fully exposed the various kinds of imbalance it brings to nature, society, and the individual, when physical and mental injuries have left their aftereffects, people at least generally realize that competition also requires compensation and balance. Such effective compensation and balance, furthermore, can be found in the ancient culture of the East, especially China, which seeks the highest spiritual state, seeking dynamic balance in all activity and movement. Thus the essence of traditional Chinese culture, much like a newly unearthed artifact, has been rediscovered by human civilization.

Discovery is not the same as mastery. What was already a fertile field for the people of olden times is for people of modern times still virgin ground requiring intensive cultivation, fertilization, and irrigation. As far as research into ancient Chinese civilization is concerned, while some minor results have of course been obtained, nevertheless on the whole it has been a series of failures, making people aware that there is still within Eastern culture an extraordinarily effective scientific system that cannot be simply explained, interpreted, or accepted by modern science. So a new way out must be found. Traditional philosophy, medicine, hygiene, and physical education are all facing the same kind of problem.

In such a profound and far-reaching interaction between scientific culture and social thinking, Chinese martial arts have also beautifully set forth their tremendous fascination, seeming to show unlimited presence without even intending it, and giving ever greater demonstrations of their irreplaceable function.

In traditional Chinese culture, martial arts constitute a priceless treasure, and a science with a vast experiential background. The many

styles and forms of martial arts, and the nearly mystical individual experiences they bring, have fascinated people everywhere; their incomparable profound inner contents have inspired deep reflection in people everywhere, and their lofty realms of experience often make people feel they can only be longed for but never actually reached. Thus, like all pristine yet profound truths, they have caused people to become so involved that many have gone to infinite pains in their quest. Yet very few people have attained the mysterious realm of great awakening in which everything is comprehended through one realization, and after attaining which no effort at all is expended.

Their extraordinary character and transcendental physical and mental contents have unavoidably caused martial arts to be subject to misunderstanding and attack throughout history by ordinary people with vulgar opinions, and have suffered both man-made and natural oppression. At the same time, the theories, practices, and individual techniques and peak spiritual experiences that have gone through countless refinements along this tortuous and perilous road have not failed to bring along the essence of ineffable wisdom that conceals infinite levels of deeper and deeper realization within layer after layer of masks of self-defense.

Nowadays, there are some people who reject martial arts as being "unprovable individual mystical experience," while there are others who praise martial arts as being the "crystallization of transcendental reason." Both of these opinions actually reflect the fact that advanced martial arts training produces extraordinary physical and mental elements that give people a sense of unfathomable profundity, and martial arts have a deeply hidden value that cannot be comprehended at a glance.

People of the modern day have often been amazed at the cultural achievements of the ancient Chinese people; but they have also often been stymied by the thinking methods and the cryptic symbolic language of the ancients. The reception of martial arts has certainly been no exception to this. The scientific democratization trend of the May Fourth movement prompted a few martial artists with a

grasp of the new culture and new science to look at martial arts from a new angle, attempting to use scientific language to decipher the symbolic codes of martial arts, and to make modern philosophical interpretations of classical theories. In the chaos and turmoil of the time, however, the Chinese people had plunged the energy of the nation, and indeed their whole lives, into a decisive battle to rescue the Chinese nation and people from a devastating fate. Under these conditions, in such an era, early attempts at scientific study of martial arts certainly had no power to obtain outstanding results.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the young People's Republic of China rose from the ruins. While healing the wounds of war, the thoughts of the people turned to a peaceful, constructive life. Now the martial arts were widely promoted as physical culture, as exercises to strengthen the body. And yet, because there was no call for non-military and nonpolice personnel to practice aggressive and defensive pugilistic exercise, this nearly brought about the loss of the inner work of martial arts, the truly extraordinary technical patterns, including the corresponding unique exercises and secret methods, as well as the core inner content. Scientific study of martial arts was limited to the domains of exercise routines and physical therapy.

Coming to the beginning of the 1980s, having gone through ten years of turmoil, a wounded People's Republic of China absorbed the lessons of various mistakes, stood up straight, and went on a new path of complete modernization. At this time, martial arts finally began to revive again, bringing their total value with them. Striding quickly out the door to the enthusiasm of the Chinese people and the *applause of international appreciation*, bounding onto the silver screen transcending national borders, Chinese martial arts have reached the five continents of earth.

Everywhere throughout China, popular types of pugilism have set off a profusion of martial arts studios and martial arts teams. Even the institutes of higher learning have established their own martial arts teams. Martial arts have begun to permeate the Chinese people's physical education system, and China has organized contests on the prefectural, city, and national levels. There have already

been many international martial arts contests, and there is a growing momentum toward making martial arts an Olympic event.

This rapid development and expansion have promoted overall dissemination and improvement of martial arts exercise. They have also promoted entirely new scientific research in martial arts. Martial arts have found their way into popular study groups, institutes of higher learning, and national research institutes. The Chinese government has organized large-scale, nationwide efforts to unearth and systematize the heritage of martial arts; it has also set up the Chinese Martial Arts Research Institute. Scientists, researchers, university students, the literary and art worlds, and the world of philosophy have combined their own specialists' knowledge of modern technology, publishing research articles and scientific hypotheses in martial arts magazines at all levels. The intercommunication of martial arts and science has developed into an independent trend.

In June and July of 1987, the first national conference on scientific study of martial arts was held in Beijing under the auspices of the National Committee on Physical Education, the People's Physical Culture Publishing Company, the Chinese Martial Arts Research Institute, and Chinese martial arts magazines, involving units from every level of the national structure. At this conference, which was organized on an unprecedented scale, mass high level contact and full interaction took place for the first time between researchers in every field of modern science and the martial arts education and training going on in the provinces, towns, and specialist institutions.

Another result of this conference was the establishment of a national learned society for the scientific study of martial arts. This society links the scientists researching martial arts with workers in martial arts at all levels, local martial artists, and fans of martial arts, in the form of a nationwide organization. Thus, a new flower has opened in the blooming garden of modern science, a new domain of scientific research.

Even if the scope, depth, accuracy, and specialization of the discussion still await some improvement, even if the essence of martial arts still awaits more penetrating discovery and organization for a

more thorough development and sublimation, and even though martial arts organizations also need better and more natural systems, nevertheless the historical significance of this conference far transcends the initial academic results and the joy of the participants. It showed that martial arts have won the attention of the nation and society at all levels, that the originally indivisible processes of martial arts and science have started to reconverge, and are beginning to carry on effective dialogue and cooperation, representing the birth of a new science. All of this foreshadows the arrival of a new era, a new age, in which Chinese martial arts will be modernized, integrated with science and society on a large scale. Therefore, this conference is a new landmark in the millennium-long history of the development of martial arts.

The authors of this book maintain that martial arts are distinct from any other system of physical exercise or self-defense, having extremely pronounced special characteristics. It is precisely these special characteristics that make it possible for martial arts to constitute a new, independent field of scientific inquiry, which is the motive and reason for writing this book. The following is a summary of some of these special characteristics.

The most essential, most outstanding, and most profound peculiarity of martial arts, especially higher martial arts, is their connection with philosophy, even when treated as a method of self-defense. Furthermore, because classical Chinese philosophy holds a holistic view of the universe in which all things have the same source, therefore martial arts also have an intimate relationship of mutual influence and interpenetration with every aspect of Chinese culture, including arts, sciences, and medicine.

Because of this, martial arts have not only brought fresh popular culture and psychological color; based on self-defense techniques, they have demonstrated a series of astonishing breakthroughs, with amazingly rapid progress. The martial arts originated from the basic instincts of self-defense and attack, went through a history of creating fighting methods, then passed into the domain of hygiene and physical exercise; in their heyday, they gained the depth and inner

content of philosophy, as well as a holistic interrelationship with all domains of nature and human society. When advanced martial artists of the past announced that fighting technique per se is a minor art, this also made it known that martial arts had been sublimated from fighting into a way of seeking the Tao.

We need not discuss the nuances of the word "Tao," because in the philosophy of the ancients, the word "Tao" is just another name for "Truth," although with a somewhat richer and deeper sense than ordinarily understood. The word "Tao" also includes the meaning of "a path by which to seek truth." Thus "seeking the Tao" can be understood as the effort to seek truth. Seeking truth and producing happiness for humankind, furthermore, are the essence of all science and culture.

The concepts and terminology of Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist philosophies can now be gradually decoded and interpreted to yield these same principles. The sublimation of martial arts from its primitive motives and purposes to the attainment of these philosophical teachings has assured that martial arts are no longer merely fighting techniques or physical culture, but are rather a psycho-physical activity in which classical Chinese philosophy, science, culture, and arts are combined into one. Based on this, the meaning of martial arts far transcends the domains of ordinary physical and mental exercises, or combative exercises. We can say that the highest level of martial arts is the philosophy of psychophysical enlightenment, while all other levels are graduated manifestations of different levels of philosophy.

Another breakthrough and leap forward made by martial arts as a way of self-defense is in placing the highest elevation of human character, virtue, and spiritual state far above mere attack and defense techniques. This has caused the fighting instinct, technology, and consciousness to be included in a broader, more lofty, and more appealing domain. In order to communicate this vast universe, advanced martial artists have not been satisfied with physical and mental health and strength, or with killing power and strategic skill. Because the violence of the elementary and middle levels of martial

arts training shut off the finest and best of what could be hoped for, advanced martial artists gradually developed training conforming to medical principles and peaceful means of deciding superiority, making sure that once people had mastered the highest technical principles and fighting skills, they would not abandon the effort to seek the Tao and sublimate human character.

Chinese philosophy and humanistic ethics have a strong color of search for universal beauty and a fresh new aesthetic, rich in the special charm of folk art. This is also a major feature indispensable to martial arts. The many exercise routines of the various individual schools all have the same aesthetic standard of unification of form and spirit, with each one constituting a system. All of them have a quiet joyfulness, a formless color; all of them have a musical rhythm and meter, crescendo and diminuendo of mood, mixing and alternation of movement and stillness. The shapes formed by the human body, some firm, some soft, are like a rock carving, like floating clouds and flowing water, like inspiring poetry and art. There are an enormous number of lively and expressive movements and gestures imitating the movements of life: there is human body language expressing the cycles and energies of mountains and rivers, plants and trees, sun, moon, stars, and planets; there is symbolic language representing struggle and harmony between humanity and nature, and between people; there is also the human body's own capacity to intimate all sorts of subtle feelings and aesthetic senses of spirit and temperament. The ability of the esthetics of martial arts to express eternal life is a result of the interpenetration of martial arts and technology, philosophy, literature and art, music and painting, drama and dance.

"Nearby, find it in yourself; at a distance, find it in things." Every domain and branch of Chinese culture draws limitless nourishment and power from the vast universe outside oneself, from nature, society, and culture. Because of this, just as masters of Chinese painting emphasize the idea that "the effect is outside the brush," in higher martial arts as well, the craft is in the body but the effect is outside the fist.

\$12.95

MARTIAL ARTS/T'AI CHI CH'UAN

Mind Over Matter: Higher Martial Arts

This unique book by Master Shi Ming and Siao Weijia explores the Chinese science of mind/body and the refinement of consciousness in the higher martial arts.



Shi Ming is a highly accomplished master of the traditional Chinese martial art of *Taijiquan* (T'ai Chi Ch'uan), with over forty years' experience and training. He is the inheritor of a private tradition that is outlined in this book, and has many students and followers. A board member of the China Martial Arts Society and the Beijing Martial Arts Society, Master Shi was fea-

tured on Bill Moyers' acclaimed 1993 public television series *Healing and the Mind*, where he gave astounding demonstrations of the extraordinary inner power developed by an advanced martial artist.

Siao Weijia is a longtime practitioner of martial arts and one of Shi Ming's leading disciples. Multilingual, Mr. Siao teaches Russian language in Beijing and *Taijiquan* in Moscow.



Thomas Cleary is the translator of more than forty works of philosophy, religious texts, and literature from Chinese and Japanese sources, and is the leading translator of Taoist texts. Internationally recognized, Dr. Cleary's works have been retranslated into ten modern languages.

ISBN 1-883319-15-3



9 781883 319151



FROG, LTD.

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA