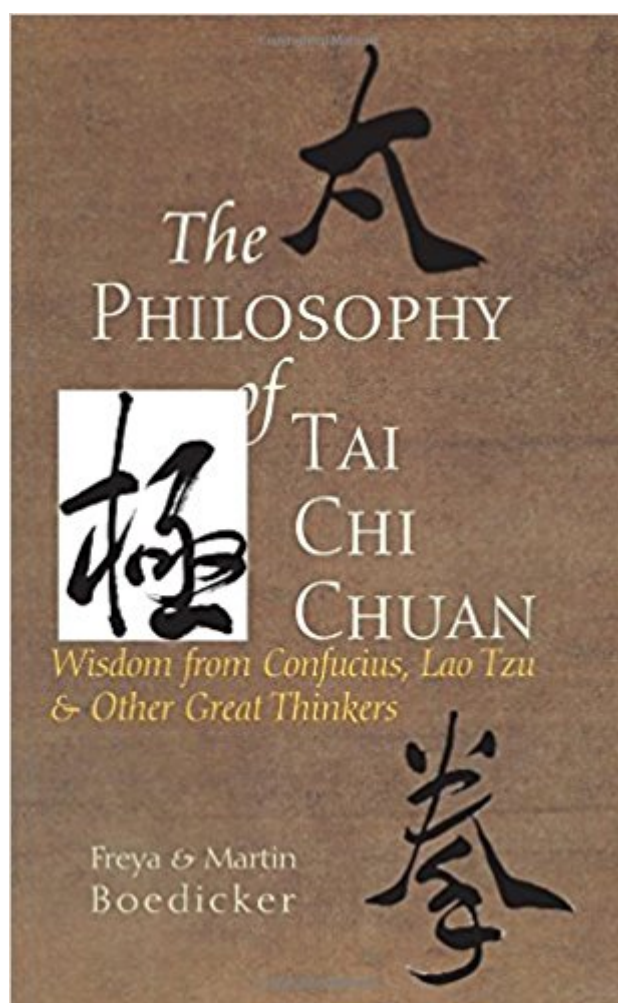


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The Philosophy Of Tai Chi Chuan: Wisdom From Confucius, Lao Tzu, And Other Great Thinkers



Synopsis

The essence of Tai Chi Chuan lies in the rich philosophy of ancient China. While most Tai Chi practitioners are aware of the value that studying Chinese philosophy can bring to their practice, it is often difficult to pick out those texts that are most relevant to Tai Chi and connected to its development. The Philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan presents, for the first time, a concise overview of the Chinese martial and spiritual philosophies that drive this ancient tradition. Authors Freya and Martin Boedicker, who teach Tai Chi throughout Europe and South Africa, present freshly translated excerpts from such popular and widely studied works as the Tao Te Ching, the I Ching, and The Art of War, as well as writings by philosophers and strategists such as Zhuangzi and Wuzi. Each chapter of this concise volume focuses on a single work or philosopher, and includes a short history of each one as well as a description of their relevance to Tai Chi. An extensive glossary of important Chinese terms rounds out the book. The Philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan offers readers a direct connection with the concepts that form the foundation of Tai Chi, inspiring a deeper understanding of the art and its applications.

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Customer Reviews

“An important work for the practitioner that wants to understand the inner works of Tai Chi, to raise the essence and attune the spirit.” The Philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan is also a good quality rendition by Blue Snake Books and should find a welcome spot in the Philosophy section of your library.

Freya and Martin Boedicker run the Forum for Traditional Wu Tai Chi Chuan and teach Tai Chi in Germany, England, Holland, Poland, Belgium, Spain, and South Africa. They are long-time students of Ma Jiangbao, the son of Wu Yinghua and Ma Yueliang. Martin Boedicker, who has obtained a master's degree in East Asian Science, has taught a seminar on "Visualizing Chinese Thinking Structures" at the University of Witten for six years. Freya Boedicker, a chemistry teacher, also develops Tai Chi teacher training. Both have published articles on Tai Chi theory and application in Tai Chi journals across Europe. They live in Willich, Germany.

This book was not at all what I expected. Maybe my expectations were improper, but this book just seems very basic and incomplete. The selections are short, the translations basic, and the commentary almost non-existent. This is what you get with this book:- a one and a half page introduction from the authors/translators- a brief (4 page!) overview of the history of Chinese philosophy. This section is severely lacking and is more of a chronology of Chinese dynastic eras and name-drop mention of the major thinkers of some of the time periods. I'm not really sure why they put this in here.- After this, the bulk of the text follows the format of offering a very brief (1.5 page average) introduction to a philosopher/text followed by a very short presentation of a few parts of the text that the authors felt to have relevance to TCC philosophy. The translators do not offer commentary on the selections beyond what may have been in the short intro. This was particularly disappointing to me, due to the fact that Chinese philosophy takes place mainly through commentary amended to the chosen selections. As for the selections themselves, most of them are pertinent to TCC philosophy but there are numerous key texts which are not mentioned here. To me, the most glaring omissions are those of the Neo-Confucian philosophers Zhou Dunyi and Zhang Zai. How you can discuss the classical roots of TCC without including the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate Explained (taijitu shuo) is beyond me, especially in light of the fact that the Tai Chi Classics and several noted 20th century Yang and Wu scholars quote it heavily. But this brings up another point, which is that there is absolutely nothing from the Tai Chi Classics (the TCC specific literary commentary from Chinese culture) in this book. No mention that I have found. This is a really odd omission.- the book concludes with a glossary of terms. It is basic, but serves its purpose here. As for the translations themselves, they are not particularly enlightening. If you do not have any of the works in any other form, these translations will serve adequately enough. However, the selections from the original texts are so short and truncated that I would recommend seeking out just about any other translation of the full texts that dates from any time later than the early 1960s. A

Sourcebook of Chinese Philosophy isn't a terrible compendium and Wing-tsit Chan's commentary is solid. I do not mean to be harsh on this book, as it is well meaning and does present some good selections. But for me it is just too incomplete to be of much service. I think it is probably good for people that think TCC is only a Taoist art, as it does point out that TCC is a quintessential amalgamation of Chinese culture. The authors are right to reinvigorate the philosophy of the art, but this is not the best attempt at doing so. I get the feeling that the authors wanted to let the selections speak for themselves, but there is not enough included here to allow this to happen. If you are really interested in the topic, Barbara Davis' translation and commentary on the Tai Chi Classics is much more thorough and insightful.

Freya and Martin Boedicker have brought together an important set of Chinese philosophical readings for the "mature" taiji player and, in general, for all practitioners of traditional Chinese martial arts. What I mean by "mature" is that practitioner who has "eaten the bitter", liked the taste, and desires to pierce the veil of the Chinese mindset of the art he or she practices. This is not for a beginner and this has nothing to do with the depth or content of the translations. Beginners often become side-tracked by the philosophical, new age potential of taijiquan and philosophical excursions, at this stage, obscures the need for hard, repetitive, basic training. Furthermore, these are serious translations and are not of the new age variety. They help bring about a deep understanding of the world view that gave rise to the art of taijiquan and other Chinese systems. There is wonderful model, McCormick and Chapman, explaining how executives adjust to being relocated in a new culture and identifies several stages: 1) Unreality, 2) Fantasia, 3) Interest, 4) Acceptance of Reality, 5) Experimentation, 6) Search, and 7) Integration. In many ways the journey into taijiquan follows a similar path. The Boedicker translations are for those who have reached the 7th and 8th stages. I hope the authors continue to offer more translations in the future. For sure I will be in line for the next purchase of their material.

For the first time, as far as I know, English readers have a comprehensive book on the main line philosophers who have influenced this ancient martial art. This is a wonderful book, either for the newcomer or the seasoned Tai Chi Chuan practitioner. For the newcomer, because it helps to situate and understand the philosophy that is embedded in this art he, or she, is becoming acquainted to. For the seasoned practitioner, it fulfills a gap in the study, helping the understanding of many important aspects of the art through the connection of the long practice to the original roots of the philosophy underneath. Very well organized in chapters named after the main philosophers it

includes also a Glossary for the main Chinese concepts covered. But, most of all, since the translation was focused on the Tai Chi Chuan practitioner, by a couple who have themselves been practicing Tai Chi Chuan for so many years, and have drunk its knowledge through one of the main families in this magnificent art, The Wu Family, the result for the readers is one of those books we must read and keep for consultation every once in a while.

Interesting. Quick reading. Summary of the various philosophies is a little too short. Very good for new players of tai-chi.

Would recommend it for any serious Tai Chi student.

G'Day, I feel this is good reading for most but it be better for a person that has been in the art form for a while. Cheers Joseph

sorry, it might be a good book but it just couldn't hold my attention and I am interested in the subject matter and have read other books that were better.

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