

Interview with Gerardo Lopez Sastre

Gerardo Lopez teaches Philosophy at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain

Forum: Hello Gerardo, you are training Wu-style Taichichuan in Spain. Can you tell us about your Taichichuan-history?

Gerardo: In 1995 I had the chance to live in the fascinating city of Hongkong. I saw public parks full of Taichichuan practitioners. After some time wandering in the parks of the city I was fortunate enough to get in touch with a group of people practicing pushhands in Victoria Park from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Saturday. As a result of going there and watching every week, I had the opportunity to meet a lot of Taichichuan practioners who were willing to share their knowledge with me. After some time, one of them invited me to go to the roof of his flat, and there, I began my first lesson of the style created by Grand Master Wu Jianquan.

Forum: How did you going on with learning Taichichuan?

Gerardo: A few months later I left Hongkong. I was happy coming back to my family, my language, and the wonderful places in Spain I knew so well. But at the same time I knew very well that my level of Taichichuan didn't allow me to progress by myself ... to discriminate what was correct and what was incorrect. I knew the name and address of Dr. Zee from the orange colored book Wu Style Taichichuan: Forms, Concepts and Application of the Original Style, written by Wu Yinghua and Ma Yueliang, and translated into English by Dr. Wen Zee. I found it clear and precise, and the pictures were especially helpful. I wrote to him. To my excitement he agreed to come to Spain and set up a one-week seminar in Madrid to teach Wu-style Taichichuan.

Forum: What was Dr. Zee's teaching?

Gerardo: It seems that Dr. Zee is more interested in the health benefits of Taichichuan than in its martial aspects. But I don't quite understand when he said that „the health benefits and the martial arts skills are created from the same channel

of the Wu-style Taichichuan.“ Probalbly it means killing two birds with one stone. Taichichuan has a dual function of self-defense and promoting health.

Dr. Zee often stressed the differences between „relax“ (in Chinese pronounced as „song“) and slackness. „Song“ is natural, the whole body is in a most functional state, it is most sensitive, has more awareness in receiving and adapting to any of the outside stimuli. Beside „song“, another feature of the movements of Wu-style Taichichuan is its emphasis on naturalness. Adding unnecessary or self-made flowery movements should be avoided. To quote a Chinese saying, this is „adding legs to a snake“.

Dr. Zee had also (but this „also“ is a mistake, as gives the idea that it was an addition, and it was not inside all his teachings) a philosophical teaching: everything in the Universe is one thing. Everything has yin and yang. They are in balance. Lack of this balance is a source of problems. We are part of this Universe and we have to look for this balance in ourselves. Taichichuan is not ending at the door of our training hall or at the gate to the park where we practice. We have to carry it - so to speak to our daily life, to our ability to respond to the circumstances of our life, and some of them will be quite difficult and demanding! In the long term, this is what makes the Taichichuan so difficult, but so rewarding.

Forum: Dr. Zee died some years ago. What have you done then?

Gerardo: I began to attend the London seminars of Freya and Martin Bödicker. Dan McGiff has also taught me a lot. I feel very happy about the quality of the teaching, and little by little I am getting more involved in the world of Wu Style Tai Chi. So many things to learn and a lot of friends to make!

Forum: Gerardo, thank you very much.