

道

dao — the Way

The Way to *wen wu*

文武

Why and how to seek *wen wu shuang quan* 文武雙全,
completeness in the civil and the martial

A synthesis and entry point to a three-volume series
on the martial, the civil, and the cultivated person

A source-based reflection on the reasons for the whole,
its ethical center, and its integration into a modern life

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A scholarly work for practitioners, teachers, and masters

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*This text stands above the three volumes of the series rather than beside them.
Volume I treats the wu, the martial; Volume II the wen, the civil; a short third volume
the inner cultivation (xiulian, including qigong) that carries both as their common root.
The present essay asks the question the three answer in detail: why the complete person, and how.
It may be read first, as the door to the series, or last, as its keystone.*

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Summary

This essay is the connecting text of a series that treats the traditional Chinese formation of the person in three separate volumes: the martial (*wu* 武), the civil (*wen* 文), and the inner cultivation (*xiulian* 修煉, with qigong) that lies beneath both as their common root. Each of the three volumes answers, in historical and practical detail, the question of *what* a given side of that formation was and *how* it might be revived. The present text answers the question the three presuppose but do not fully argue: *why* a person should seek to be complete in both the civil and the martial — *wen wu shuang quan* 文武雙全 —, and how the three separate paths join into a single life. It is deliberately shorter than the volumes it crowns, essayistic rather than historical, and written so that it may be read first, as an entry point to the series, or last, as its keystone.

The argument turns on a single word of the title. *Dao* 道, “the Way,” is the oldest and most capacious concept of Chinese thought, shared, with different accents, by Confucians and Daoists alike; and the tradition understood the formation of the person not as the accumulation of a possession but as the walking of a way. The complete person is therefore not a collector of two sets of skills, but a traveler on one road that has two sides. From this the essay develops four reasons to seek that completeness. The first is philosophical: education understood as a way, not a stock, demands wholeness, because a way cannot be walked with one leg. The second is anthropological: the person of modernity is, in a precise and measurable sense, a halved person, physically inactive on the one side and attentionally fragmented on the other, and the two halves of the classical formation answer exactly these two deficits. The third is ethical: the *junzi* 君子 of the civil tradition and the *wude* 武德 of the martial are not two moralities but one, the binding of a trained capacity to its rightful purpose, and only the whole person carries that binding on both sides of his power. The fourth is practical: the daily plans of the three volumes are not three competing demands on a scarce week, but the movements of a single integrated day.

The essay presents these reasons in the manner of the series: it separates legend, documented institution, and modern empirical finding; it cites only serious scholarship and verifies every modern figure; and it refuses the exaggeration that surrounds this field, rejecting in particular the myth of far transfer, the notion that a practice makes one globally cleverer or better beyond the matter practiced. Its guiding sentence is the one that recurs through all the volumes: the tradition needs no exaggeration to be worth preserving; it gains when examined closely. What it offers the modern reader is not a promise of transformation but a coherent reason to undertake a lifelong, modest, and whole practice — in the morning the breath and the form, by day the work and the patience, in the evening the book and the stillness — and a map of how the three volumes of the series fit into that one life.

A Note on Method and Sources

Because this essay synthesizes rather than investigates, it rests almost entirely on the three volumes it connects and on the sources established there; the reader who wishes to check a claim in depth is referred, at each turn, to the relevant volume and chapter. Three commitments of method are nonetheless worth restating, since they govern this text as strictly as they govern the volumes.

The first is the source-critical division of every statement into one of three kinds, and the visible marking of which kind is in play. Founding legends — the Yellow Emperor, the script-inventor Cangjie, the monk Bodhidharma — are told where they illuminate, but named as legends. Datable institutions, texts, and finds — the Six Arts of the Zhou, the ritual classics, the canonization of the military and civil examinations, the medical manuscripts of Mawangdui —

carry a source in the footnote. Modern empirical findings — the clinical and cognitive research invoked in the anthropological and practical sections — are weighted by strength of evidence and cited exactly. This stance is itself a Chinese inheritance, founded for the martial arts by the historian Tang Hao 唐豪 (1897–1959) and paralleled in the *kaozheng* 考證 philology that tested the classics; the series stands in that line.¹

The second is the honest ranking of evidence and the active refusal of overstatement. Where this essay gathers the modern data on the halved person and on the benefits of the classical practices, it presents them in descending order of certainty, names their limits in place, and declines the transfer myths — “music makes you smart,” “chess makes you clever” — that a careful literature has laid to rest.² The value of the whole formation lies in the forming of the person within each matter, not in a magical spillover beyond it.

The third is consistency with the three volumes and with one another. The distinction between the this-worldly, moral self-cultivation of the Confucian tradition (*xiushen* 修身) and the spiritual cultivation of the Daoist and Buddhist traditions (*xiulian* 修煉) is maintained as in the volumes; Taijiquan is assigned by its function, to the martial where it is practiced as combat and to cultivation where it is practiced as health; and the recurring lessons of the series — that institutions remold a tradition to their purposes while the transmissible core is the pedagogy, and that a living tradition survives only by being practiced and can be practiced only by being adapted — are taken here as established and built upon rather than argued anew. The five groups of sources on which the series rests — classical primary texts and finds; the scholarly historiography of the martial and civil traditions; the religious-studies literature on cultivation; the reference apparatus of ChinaKnowledge.de; and peer-reviewed medical and cognitive research — stand behind this essay through the volumes, and the annotated list at its close names those it draws on directly.

1. Introduction: One Question Beneath Three Volumes

Three volumes of this series each take up one side of a single thing. The first traces the *wu* 武, the martial, in its entirety: the body and its weapons, mobility and maneuver, the bow, and the art of war, from the founding legend of the Yellow Emperor to the abolition of the military examination in 1901 and the sportive transformation of the tradition in the twentieth century. The second traces the *wen* 文, the civil and cultural: ritual, music, writing, and number, from the legend of the script-inventor Cangjie through Confucius and the canon to the abolition of the civil examination in 1905. A short third volume traces the inner cultivation, *xiulian* 修煉, that both sides presuppose: the *daoyin* of the Mawangdui silk, the inner alchemy of the Daoists, the silent sitting of the Buddhists, and the modern qigong into which all of this was reframed. Each volume answers, patiently and with sources, two questions about its side: what it was, and how a person of today might revive it.

But there is a prior question that none of the three fully argues, because each takes it as its horizon rather than its subject. It is the question of the whole. Why should a person seek to

¹ On Tang Hao as founder of critical martial-arts historiography cf. Kennedy, Brian / Guo, Elizabeth, *Chinese Martial Arts Training Manuals. A Historical Survey*, Berkeley 2005; Henning, Stanley E., *Ignorance, Legend and Taijiquan*, in: *Journal of the Chen style Taijiquan Research Association of Hawaii* 2/3 (1994), pp. 1–7. On the conceptual pair *wen/wu* throughout this essay, Louie, Kam, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity. Society and Gender in China*, Cambridge 2002.

² The decisive reference is Sala, Giovanni / Gobet, Fernand, *Does Far Transfer Exist? Negative Evidence From Chess, Music, and Working Memory Training*, in: *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 26/6 (2017), pp. 515–520. The overall effect of far transfer is found to be null once active control groups and publication bias are accounted for.

be complete in both the civil and the martial, to hold, as the classical formula has it, bow *and* book in the same hands? The tradition had a name for that completeness — *wen wu shuang quan* 文武雙全, “fully accomplished in both the civil and the martial” — and treated it as the measure of the finished person.³ This essay is devoted to that measure. It asks why the whole is worth seeking, and how the three separate paths of the volumes join into a single walkable way.

The title names the answer in advance. The oldest and most encompassing word of Chinese thought for what joins the parts is *dao* 道, “the way” or “the path”: at once the road one walks, the right course of conduct, and, in its deepest register, the generative order of things. The tradition did not understand the formation of the person as the acquisition of a possession, a stock of skills to be gathered and then owned, but as the walking of a way, *gongfu* 功夫 in its literal sense of sustained effort over time. This single shift of picture — from possession to way — is the hinge of the whole essay, for a possession may be partial without contradiction, but a way that is walked with one leg is no way at all. The complete person of the tradition is therefore not a rare prodigy with two unrelated talents, but an ordinary person who walks one road with two sides.

The essay is written for the same reader as the volumes: for the sincere practitioners, the teachers, and the masters who have received some part of this tradition and wish to understand, and to transmit, not merely its techniques but its point. It proceeds in five movements. It first fixes the concepts — *wen*, *wu*, the root beneath them, and the *dao* that binds them (Chapter 2). It then gives, in the manner of a systematic argument rather than a history, four reasons to seek the whole: the philosophical reason of the way, the anthropological reason of the halved modern person, the ethical reason of the single virtue, and the practical reason of the single life (Chapter 3). It shows next how the three volumes interlock into one architecture of formation (Chapter 4). It states, as every volume of the series must, the honest limits of what may be claimed (Chapter 5). And it closes with the shape of an integrated practice and a plea for the whole (Chapters 6 and 7). Figure 1 previews the long arc along which the idea of the complete person rose, split, and now invites recovery.

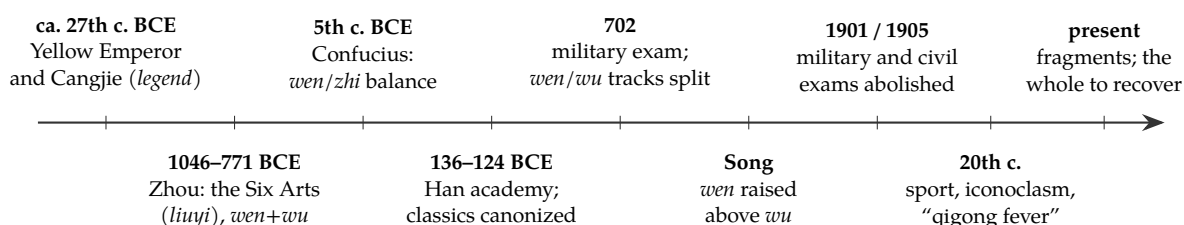


Figure 1: The long arc of the complete person: the rise, division, and dispersal of the *wen wu* ideal (timeline not to scale; founding figures marked as legend). The three volumes trace the strands, this essay the arc itself.

A word on tone belongs at the outset, as in every volume of the series. This is not a nostalgic argument. The curriculum of the Zhou cannot be reinstated, and much that is sold today as ancient wisdom is young and commercial. What is defended here is neither the restoration of a lost world nor a promise that the old practices will make the modern person exceptional. It is the more sober claim that the tradition needs no exaggeration to be worth preserving; it gains when examined closely.

³ On the conceptual pair and the ideal cf. Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, chaps. 1–2; earlier, Louie, Kam / Edwards, Louise, *Chinese Masculinity. Theorising Wen and Wu*, in: *East Asian History* 8 (1994), pp. 135–148. The present essay uses *wen* and *wu* throughout in Louie’s sense of a mobile, complementary pair rather than a rigid opposition.

2. The Concepts: wen, wu, the Root, and the Way

2.1 Wen and wu: two sides of one coin

Classical Chinese culture organized human accomplishment around a complementary pair. *Wen* 文 named the civil, literary, and cultural: writing, ritual, music, learning, the ordering of self and society by form and word. *Wu* 武 named the martial: the trained body, the weapon, the campaign, the discipline of force. The educated person of the early empire was not asked to choose between them. The ideal was *wen wu shuang quan* 文武雙全, completeness in both, and the institutions of the Zhou and the early empire were designed to produce persons so formed.⁴ The later separation of the scholar who despised the soldier from the soldier who could not read is a development of the middle and late empire, not an original feature of the tradition; the arc of Figure 1 is in part the story of that separation.

Kam Louie has shown that *wen* and *wu* are not a rigid opposition of pen against sword but a mobile, complementary pair whose balance defined the cultural ideal of the whole person.⁵ It is this very mobility that makes the completeness thinkable: if *wen* and *wu* were contraries, no one could hold both, but because they are complements, each corrects the characteristic excess of the other. The tradition possessed its own precise formula for this, in a sentence of the *Analects* that is at the same time the finest classical argument for the design of this series: “Where substance outweighs form, one is crude; where form outweighs substance, one is a mere scribe. Only where form and substance are in balance is one the noble one.”⁶ Crudeness and pedantry are the two ways of being half; the noble one is whole. This is the coin of which *wen* and *wu* are the two sides, and it is the first meaning of the completeness this essay defends.

2.2 The root beneath both: xiulian

Beneath the two sides lies a third thing that is neither, and that both require. The tradition cultivated the body and the attention as a lifelong matter, not as a bundle of skills to be acquired and stored; the word for this is *xiulian* 修煉, “to cultivate and refine.” *Xiu* 修 means to tend, to repair, to discipline oneself; *lian* 煉 means to smelt and temper in fire, a metaphor from metallurgy and alchemy. Together they name the patient transformation of the person over years, and the term belongs originally not to sport but to Daoist inner alchemy (*neidan* 內丹) and to Buddhist practice (*xiuxing* 修行), where the refinement of body and breath serves the refinement of moral nature.⁷ The third volume traces this root in full — from the *daoyin* of the Mawangdui silk, documented in the second century BCE and thus older than any datable martial system or examination, through inner alchemy and silent sitting to the modern qigong of the twentieth

⁴ Cf. Lorge, Peter A., *Chinese Martial Arts. From Antiquity to the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge 2012; Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, chaps. 1–2. The Six Arts of the Zhou (*liuyi* 六藝) contained the martial skills of archery and charioteering beside the civil skills of writing and reckoning, ritual and music straddling both; the two volumes of this series each reconstruct one half of that curriculum (Volume I, ch. 2.2; Volume II, ch. 2.2).

⁵ Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, chap. 2, against the widespread reduction of *wu* to mere brutality. That both volumes of the series had to defend their subject against an opposite prejudice — Volume I the *wu* against the suspicion of crudeness, Volume II the *wen* against the suspicion of bloodlessness — is itself evidence that the pair is felt, wrongly, as an either/or.

⁶ *Lunyu* 6.18: “質勝文則野，文勝質則史，文質彬彬，然後君子。” Here *wen* 文 stands for cultivated form and *zhi* 質 for unformed substance; cf. Volume II, ch. 2.4. The martial without the civil tends to the crude, the civil without the martial to the desiccated; the balance is the person.

⁷ On the family of terms and on Daoist and Buddhist self-cultivation cf. Kohn, Livia (ed.), *Daoist Body Cultivation. Traditional Models and Contemporary Practices*, Magdalena (NM) 2006; Komjathy, Louis, *Cultivating Perfection. Mysticism and Self-Transformation in Early Quanzhen Daoism*, Leiden 2007; the full treatment is Volume III, chaps. 2–3.

century.⁸

For the purposes of this essay the root matters in a particular way. From the cultivating sense of *xiulian* follows a definite *form* of practice, and it is exactly the form available to a busy modern adult: daily, regular, patient exercise in small steps, sustained over years, that transforms the practitioner rather than filling him with technique in weeks. This is why the root can carry both sides in a modern life: the breath trained in the morning is the same lever whether the day's practice is the form of the *wu* or the brush of the *wen*, and the disposition to daily, transformative practice is the same disposition on both sides. The root is not a third demand added to two; it is the ground the other two stand on.

2.3 Dao: education as a way, not a possession

The word that gathers all of this is *dao* 道. It is shared by the two great streams of Chinese thought, with different accents. For the Confucian, the *dao* is above all the right way of conduct and of learning, a path of self-formation that leads outward from the cultivated self to the ordered family, state, and world; the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學) sets self-cultivation, *xiushen*, as the root of all order.⁹ For the Daoist, the *dao* is the generative order of nature itself, the nameless way from which the ten thousand things arise, and cultivation means aligning oneself with it rather than mastering it. What both share, and what this essay takes from them, is the picture of formation as a *way*: something walked, not owned; a direction and a discipline, not a stock of acquisitions.

This picture has a direct consequence for the question of the whole. If education were a possession, one could reasonably hold a part of it and call the holding sufficient; a person might own the martial and simply lack the civil, as one might own a house and lack a boat. But a way is not owned in parts. The person who walks it walks with the whole body, and the completeness of *wen wu shuang quan* is not the sum of two possessions but the wholeness of one traveler. Figure 2 shows the concepts in their relation — the two sides, the root beneath, the ideal above — and this figure is at the same time the design of the entire series, of which the present essay is the connecting arch.

3. Four Reasons to Seek the Whole

Why, then, should a person of today take up so demanding an ideal as completeness in both the civil and the martial, when either half alone is already a serious undertaking? The tradition largely assumed the answer; a modern argument must make it. This chapter gives four reasons, of ascending concreteness. The first is philosophical and follows from the concept of the way just established. The second is anthropological and rests on measurable facts about the modern person. The third is ethical and concerns the single virtue that both sides serve. The fourth is practical and concerns the single life into which the three volumes fit. None of the four is a promise of extraordinary results; together they are a sufficient reason for a whole and lifelong practice.

⁸ On the chronological priority of the cultivation root cf. Volume III, ch. 3.1, with Harper, Donald, *Early Chinese Medical Literature. The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts*, London 1998. The 1973 find precedes the earliest documented martial systems (Ming, Volume I) and the examination system (Sui/Tang, Volume II) by centuries.

⁹ On the Confucian *dao* as a way of conduct and learning, and on the *Daxue* sequence, cf. Volume II, ch. 2.3; on *dao* as an ethical path, Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*. The two readings of *dao* are not opposed here but layered: the way of right conduct is walked within the larger way of things.

dao 道 — the way that binds the parts into one

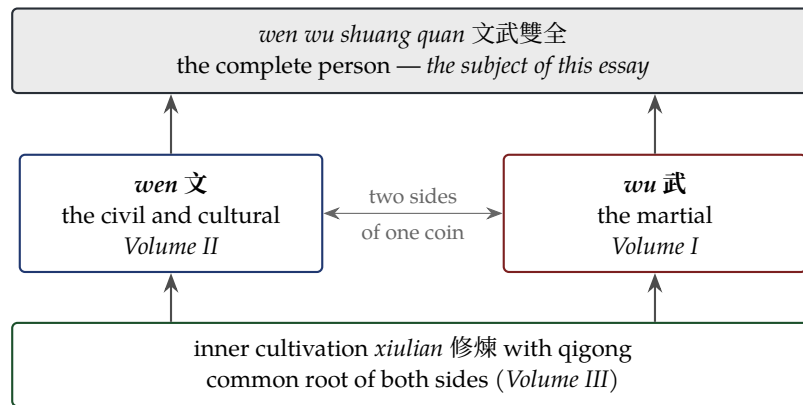


Figure 2: The concepts and the design of the series: the two sides *wen* and *wu*, the cultivation root beneath, the ideal of completeness above, and the *dao* that makes of them one way rather than three possessions

3.1 The philosophical reason: a way cannot be walked with one leg

The first reason has already been stated in outline and need only be drawn out. If the formation of the person is a way and not a possession — *dao* and not property — then partiality in it is not a smaller version of the same thing but a different and lesser thing. A possession can be held in fractions; a way is walked or it is not. And the classical way had two sides for a reason that is not arbitrary but anthropological in its own right: the human being is body and mind at once, force and form at once, and a formation that trains only one leaves the other not neutral but deformed. The *Analects* names the two deformations exactly — the crudeness of substance without form and the desiccation of form without substance — and locates the noble one precisely in their balance.¹⁰ The martial pursued alone hardens into force without cultivation; the civil pursued alone thins into cultivation without ground. Each is the other's needed correction, and this is why the tradition treated the whole not as a luxury for the exceptional but as the ordinary target of a complete education.

There is a second, quieter philosophical point in the word *dao*, and it governs the practical chapters below. A way has no terminus at which one has “arrived” and may stop; one is always on it or off it. This is the cultivation model that all three volumes share and that the root volume grounds: the daily small exercise sustained over years, the spiral rather than the finish line.¹¹ Understood as a possession, completeness in *wen* and *wu* would be an impossible burden, two full curricula to be finished. Understood as a way, it is a direction of daily travel, and the question is never whether one has completed it but only whether one is walking it, on both sides, today. This reframing is not a rhetorical softening; it is the precondition under which the ideal is available to anyone with a working life at all.

¹⁰ *Lunyu* 6.18, cited above, ch. 2.1. The point is not that the martial and the civil are each “half” of a person in some quantitative sense, but that each, pursued alone, tends to a characteristic vice that only the other corrects.

¹¹ On the cultivation model as the shared principle of all three volumes cf. Volume III, ch. 8 and its conclusion; the same model organizes the training plans of Volumes I and II (each ch. 12). It follows directly from the cultivating sense of *xiulian* (ch. 2.2 above): progress is transformation over time, not accumulation of technique.

3.2 The anthropological reason: the halved person of modernity

The second reason is the strongest, because it can be measured, and it is here that the two data-bearing volumes of the series meet. The classical formation trained two things above all: the body, through the martial arts and their movement, and the attention, through the civil arts of reading, brush, string, and board. These are precisely the two capacities that the modern environment erodes, and it erodes them on both sides at once. The person of modernity is, in an exact and documentable sense, a *halved* person: physically under-moved on the one side, attentionally fragmented on the other.

Consider first the body. According to a pooled analysis of 507 population-based surveys with 5.7 million participants, nearly a third of adults worldwide — some 1.8 billion people — failed to meet the World Health Organization’s minimum recommendations for physical activity in 2022, up from about 23 percent in 2000, with the trend projected to worsen through 2030.¹² Consider now the attention. According to an analysis of twenty years of the American Time Use Survey, the share of adults who read for pleasure on an average day fell from 28 percent in 2004 to 16 percent in 2023, a decline of roughly forty percent within a single generation.¹³ The two figures are the two faces of one condition. The same life that sits nine or ten hours at a screen both under-moves the body and fragments the attention; the deficits are not independent misfortunes but the joined signature of a single environment. Figure 3 sets the two trends side by side.

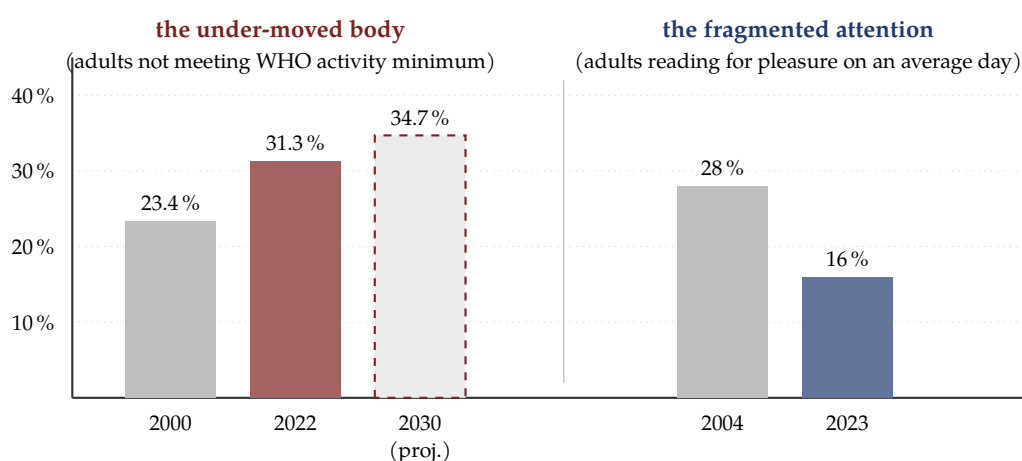


Figure 3: The halved person of modernity: physical inactivity rising (left, after Strain et al. 2024; 2030 a trend projection) and reading for pleasure falling (right, after Bone et al. 2025, USA). The two deficits are the joined signature of one environment; the two halves of the classical formation answer exactly to them.

The anthropological argument is now simple to state. If the modern condition is a halving

¹² Strain, Tessa et al., *National, regional, and global trends in insufficient physical activity among adults from 2000 to 2022. A pooled analysis of 507 population-based surveys with 5.7 million participants*, in: *The Lancet Global Health* 12/8 (2024); World Health Organization, *Nearly 1.8 billion adults at risk of disease from not doing enough physical activity*, press release, 26 June 2024. The WHO guideline is 150–300 minutes of moderate or 75–150 minutes of vigorous activity per week plus muscle-strengthening on two or more days: Bull, Fiona C. et al., *World Health Organization 2020 guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour*, in: *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 54/24 (2020), pp. 1451–1462. This is the datum on which Volume I, ch. 8.1, builds.

¹³ Bone, Jessica K. / Bu, Feifei / Sonke, Jill K. / Fancourt, Daisy, *The decline in reading for pleasure over 20 years of the American Time Use Survey*, in: *iScience* 28/9 (2025), article 113349 (N > 236,000). The survey concerns the United States; comparable shifts in time use are documented across industrialized societies. This is the datum on which Volume II, ch. 8.1, builds.

along precisely the axis of body and attention, then a formation that trains only the body, or only the attention, meets the person's deficit on one side while leaving the other untouched — and, worse, risks the characteristic imbalance the *Analects* warned of. The completeness of *wen* and *wu* is not, on this reading, an antiquarian ideal at all; it is the shape of the answer that the modern deficit itself has, so to speak, drawn in negative. What each half repairs is examined in the volumes and summarized in Chapter 4 below: the martial arts carry substantial, systematically reviewed benefit for the body,¹⁴ the civil arts a measurable gathering of attention,¹⁵ and the cultivating root the densest clinical evidence of the entire field, in the fall-prevention trials of Taijiquan.¹⁶ The strength and the honest limits of this evidence are the business of Chapter 5; here it is enough that the two halves answer to the two deficits, and that no half answers to both.

3.3 The ethical reason: one virtue, two names

The third reason is the one the tradition itself would have named first, for it placed ethics not at the margin of formation but at its center. Each side of the classical education carried an explicit moral core, and the two cores are, on inspection, one. On the martial side the core was *wude* 武德, “martial virtue”: the conduct expected of a person to whom the power to harm had been entrusted — restraint, respect for teacher and opponent, humility, and the subordination of force to right purpose.¹⁷ On the civil side the core was the ideal of the *junzi* 君子, the “noble one”: originally a designation of rank, recast by Confucius into a term of character acquired through formation, whose inner standard is *ren* 仁, humaneness.¹⁸ These are not two moralities but two expressions of a single one: the binding of a trained capacity to its rightful purpose. *Wude* binds the trained power to harm; *ren* binds the trained power to persuade, to judge, and to order. In both, the point is identical — that a capacity formed by long discipline is dangerous precisely in proportion to its strength, and must therefore be bound, from within, to a purpose it does not itself supply.

From this identity a specifically ethical argument for the whole follows, and it is the sharpest of the four. The two sides train two different powers: the *wu* trains the power of force, the *wen* the power of word, judgment, and social form. A person formed on one side alone acquires one dangerous capacity together with the virtue that binds it — but remains unformed, and therefore unbound, on the other. The martial artist without the civil has learned to master his force but not his judgment or his speech; the scholar without the martial has learned to master

¹⁴ On the evidence for the martial strands cf. Volume I, ch. 9.1, with Bu, Bin et al., *Effects of Martial Arts on Health Status. A Systematic Review*, in: *Journal of Evidence-Based Medicine* 3/4 (2010), pp. 205–219; Origua Rios, Sonia et al., *Health Benefits of Hard Martial Arts in Adults. A Systematic Review*, in: *Journal of Sports Sciences* 36/14 (2018), pp. 1614–1622.

¹⁵ On the evidence for the civil strands cf. Volume II, ch. 9, with Kao, Henry S. R., Shufa. *Chinese Calligraphic Handwriting for Health*, in: *International Journal of Psychology* 41/4 (2006), pp. 282–286; Van der Weel, F. R. / van der Meer, Audrey L. H., *Handwriting but not typewriting leads to widespread brain connectivity*, in: *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2024), article 1219945.

¹⁶ On the fall-prevention evidence cf. Volume III, ch. 6.1, with Sherrington, Catherine et al., *Exercise for preventing falls in older people living in the community*, in: *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2019/1, CD012424 (108 trials, over 23,000 participants; fall rate reduced by about 23 percent), and Lomas-Vega, Rafael et al., *Tai Chi for Risk of Falls. A Meta-analysis*, in: *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 65/9 (2017), pp. 2037–2043.

¹⁷ On *wude* cf. Volume I, ch. 2.4 and ch. 7; Lorge, *Chinese Martial Arts*; Kennedy / Guo, *Chinese Martial Arts Training Manuals*. A formation that trains the capacity for violence without equally training the disposition to master it is incomplete and dangerous; the classical curriculum built ethics into practice rather than appending it.

¹⁸ On the *junzi* and *ren* cf. Volume II, ch. 2.4; the *Analects* make the ethical core the condition of all the formal arts: “人而不仁，如禮何？人而不仁，如樂何？” — “A man without humaneness, what has he to do with ritual? A man without humaneness, what has he to do with music?” (*Lunyu* 3.3).

his word but knows nothing, in his own body, of the discipline of force he presumes to judge. The tradition's insistence on the whole is thus at bottom an ethical insistence: only the complete person carries the single virtue on both sides of his power, and the binding of capacity to purpose is left with no ungoverned flank. This is why *wude* and *junzi* are, in the architecture of Chapter 4, drawn not as two frames but as one frame enclosing the whole. The ethics is not divided between the volumes; it is the same ethics, and it demands the whole person because only the whole person is dangerous on both sides.

3.4 The practical reason: three volumes, one day

The fourth reason is the most concrete, and it answers the objection that the first three invite. Granted, an objector might say, that the whole is philosophically coherent, that it answers the modern deficit, and that its ethics is one: it is still, surely, impossibly much. Two full curricula and their root, in the remaining hours of a working life? The answer is that the three volumes were designed, from the outset and in concert, not as three competing claims on a scarce week but as the movements of a single integrated day. This is not an afterthought of the present essay; each volume closes with training plans built to the same realistic time budgets and organized by the same cultivation model, expressly so that they could be combined.¹⁹

The shared root is what makes the combination economical rather than additive. Because the same trained breath underlies the martial form, the civil brush, and the silent sitting, the minutes given to one are not wholly separate from the minutes given to another; the disposition cultivated is one disposition.²⁰ A whole day, on this design, has a natural shape that Chapter 6 sets out in detail and that the closing image of the root volume already named: in the morning the breath and the form, by day the work and the patience, in the evening the book and the stillness.²¹ So understood, the whole is not the sum of three burdens but the rhythm of one life, and the practical reason to seek it is that seeking it does not, in fact, cost the impossible sum it appears to. It costs a shaped day, held over years.

The four reasons converge. A way must be walked whole; the modern person is halved along exactly the axis the whole repairs; the ethics that binds trained capacity to purpose is single and demands both sides; and the whole fits, by design, into one integrated day. What remains is to show how the three volumes lock together into that whole, and then, honestly, what may and may not be claimed for it.

4. The Architecture of the Complete Person

If the four reasons establish that the whole is worth seeking, it remains to show that it is one whole and not a heap. The three volumes each divide their side into strands, and the strands do not merely coexist; they are built to interlock, both within each side and across the two. This

¹⁹ Each of the three volumes closes with three plans (A, the working person, about 3–4 hours per week; B, the committed practitioner, about 6–8 hours; C, family or shift work, fragmented time) and a twelve-week progression: Volume I, ch. 12; Volume II, ch. 12; Volume III, ch. 9. The plans share a structure precisely so that a reader need not choose one volume against the others.

²⁰ On the shared mechanism of trained, slow breathing across all three volumes cf. Volume I, ch. 9.5; Volume II, ch. 9.5; Volume III, ch. 6.4, with Zaccaro, Andrea et al., *How Breath-Control Can Change Your Life. A Systematic Review on Psycho-Physiological Correlates of Slow Breathing*, in: *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 12 (2018), article 353. Slow, diaphragm-led breathing is one of the few voluntary levers on the autonomic nervous system and is common to the form, the brush, and the seat.

²¹ The formulation is that of Volume III's conclusion: the complete person, *wen wu shuang quan*, "is not a hero with two talents, but an ordinary person with an unusually sustained practice." The present essay adopts it as the practical shape of the whole.

chapter sets out the architecture, first as a picture, then strand by strand.

On the martial side, Volume I distinguishes four strands: the body and its weapons (*gongfu* 功夫, the structural foundation of stance, alignment, and conditioning); mobility and maneuver (*yu* 御, the body moving in space under pressure); archery (*she* 射, precision bound to ritual and self-examination); and the art of war (*bingfa* 兵法, strategy as a discipline of the mind).²² On the civil side, Volume II distinguishes four in parallel: ritual and ethical formation (*li* 禮, conduct shaped until consideration becomes disposition); music (*yue* 樂, the discipline of ear and feeling in the scholar's zither); writing (*shu* 書, the triad of slow reading, calligraphy, and poetry); and number (*shu* 數, exact and forward-looking thought, cultivated above all in the strategy game *weiqi* 圍棋).²³ Beneath both lies the single field of the cultivation root, the breath-led practice of *daoyin*, silent sitting, and the health form of Taijiquan.²⁴ Figure 4 shows how these fit: two ascending columns rising to the shared ideal, the cultivation root beneath as their common ground, and the single ethic enclosing the whole.

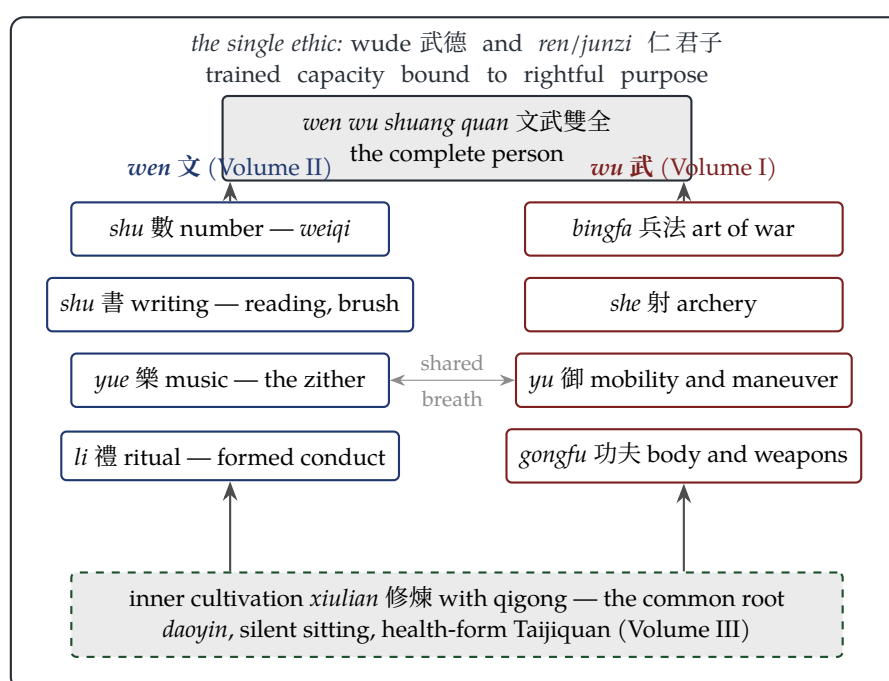


Figure 4: The architecture of the complete person: the four civil and the four martial strands rising as two columns to the shared ideal, joined at every level by trained breath, standing on the single field of the cultivation root, and enclosed by one ethic. The vertical order within each column follows the tradition's own staging from foundation to crown.

Three features of this architecture deserve emphasis, because they are what make it a whole rather than a collection. The first is the shared root. All the strands, martial and civil alike, live on the same trained, slow breath, and the cultivation volume shows that this is no metaphor: slow diaphragm-led breathing is a measurable lever on the autonomic nervous system, and it is the same lever whether it steadies the archer's release, the calligrapher's stroke, or the sitter's

²² Volume I, ch. 2.5 and ch. 7. Combat medicine (*wuyi* 武醫) is honored there as a historical constituent but not carried as a modern primary strand; Taijiquan is assigned to the martial where practiced as combat and to cultivation where practiced as health.

²³ Volume II, ch. 2.5 and ch. 7. Statecraft (*jingshi*) is the honored vanishing point there, not a modern main strand, just as combat medicine is on the martial side.

²⁴ Volume III, ch. 5, treats the root not as a set of strands but as a single field of exercise, precisely because it is the common ground rather than a further parallel branch.

stillness.²⁵ The second is the shared mechanism above the root: gathered, form-bound attention. Each strand, on each side, demands and produces the same state of calm gathering — over the book, under the brush, at the string, before the board, in the stance, at the draw — so that practice in one rehearses the basic skill that all the others need.²⁶ The third is the shared ethic, drawn in the figure as the single enclosing frame: *wude* and *ren* are, as Chapter 3.3 argued, one binding under two names, and it encloses both columns rather than dividing between them. Root below, attention throughout, ethic around — these three commonalities are why the eight strands and the root compose one formation. Table 1 summarizes the whole at a glance.

Side	Strands	What it forms, and where the series treats it
<i>wu</i> 武 (Volume I)	<i>gongfu, yu, she, bingfa</i>	the body, mobility, precision, and strategic judgment; strongest evidence for physical health and conditioning
<i>wen</i> 文 (Volume II)	<i>li, yue, shu</i> (writing), <i>shu</i> (number)	conduct, feeling, expression and attention, exact thought; strongest evidence for gathered attention
root: <i>xiulian</i> 修煉 (Volume III)	one field of exercise (<i>daoyin</i> , sitting, health Taijiquan)	the breath and the disposition to daily transformative practice; densest clinical evidence, in fall prevention
binding all	<i>wude + ren/junzi</i>	the single ethic: trained capacity bound to its rightful purpose
joining all	trained breath, gathered attention	the shared mechanism that makes combined practice economical, not additive

Table 1: The complete formation at a glance: two sides, one root, one ethic, one joining mechanism. The three volumes supply the detail; this essay supplies the join.

5. Honest Limits: What May and May Not Be Claimed

Every volume of this series carries a chapter of honest limits, and this essay, which gathers the claims of all three, owes the most careful one. The danger is greatest precisely here, at the level of the whole, because it is at the level of the whole that the temptation to promise a transformed person is strongest. The argument of the preceding chapters must therefore be fenced on four sides.

The first and most important limit is the refusal of the transfer myth. It is tempting to argue that the complete formation makes a person not merely fitter and more attentive but glob-

²⁵ Volume I, ch. 9.5; Volume II, ch. 9.2 and 9.5; Volume III, ch. 6.4. The physiology of slow breathing (Zaccaro et al. 2018, cited above) is the bridge that the three volumes independently reach; calligraphy physiology (Kao 2006) measured the same profile of gathered attention that Volume I described in the archer.

²⁶ On gathered attention as the common “hinge” of the civil strands cf. Volume II, ch. 9.5; the martial strands share it through the trained breath, Volume I, ch. 9.5. This is the single strongest reason to practice the strands together rather than separately: each rehearses the same underlying capacity.

ally better — wiser, cleverer, more virtuous across the board —, and the marketplace of self-improvement makes exactly this argument daily. The careful literature does not support it. The claim that a demanding practice improves the mind in general, beyond the matter practiced — that music or chess “makes you smart” — has been tested and found wanting: once active control groups and publication bias are accounted for, the overall effect of such far transfer is null.²⁷ What archery trains is attention in archery; what calligraphy trains is the gathered hand; what the martial form trains is the disciplined body. These are real and worth having, and several of them carry, as Chapter 3.2 noted, solid or even strong clinical evidence. But their value lies in the forming of the person *within each matter*, not in a magical spillover beyond it. The whole is worth seeking because a whole person is better than a halved one, not because either half secretly confers the powers of the other.

The second limit concerns the strength of the evidence itself, which is uneven and must be reported in its unevenness. The clinical case is strongest for the cultivation root, where fall prevention rests on large randomized trials and Cochrane-grade review; it is solid for the martial arts in matters of fitness, balance, and conditioning; it is real but more modest for the civil arts, where samples are small and the field young; and it thins, on every side, the further one moves from the measurable body toward the ethical formation that the tradition valued most.²⁸ The honest summary is that the parts of this formation are, to very different degrees, supported by modern research, and that the ethical center — the binding of capacity to purpose that Chapter 3.3 made the heart of the argument — is not measurable at all and is defended on other grounds. To pretend otherwise would be to commit, at the level of the whole, exactly the exaggeration the series was built to avoid.

The third limit is cultural. This is a Chinese tradition, and its concepts — *dao*, *wen*, *wu*, *junzi*, *wude*, *xiulian* — do not map without remainder onto the vocabularies of other traditions. The temptation, in an essay written in English for a modern reader, is to smooth the concepts into familiar equivalents and thereby lose them: to make *dao* into “lifestyle,” *junzi* into “gentleman” in the European sense, *xiulian* into “wellness.” The series resists this throughout, and this essay must too. What is offered is not a universal self-improvement scheme dressed in Chinese characters, but a specific tradition, presented on its own terms, from which a modern reader of any culture may learn — provided the terms are kept and not dissolved.

The fourth limit is the irreducible one: time. The whole cannot be had cheaply. Chapter 3.4 argued that the three volumes fit into one integrated day and that the shared root makes the combination economical rather than additive; this is true, and it is the honest good news. But an integrated day is still a day that must be shaped and held, over years, against the same environment that produced the halving in the first place. There is no version of this formation that does not cost sustained, daily effort; the cultivation model is precisely a model of patience, not of shortcut. What the essay can promise is that the cost buys something coherent and whole. It cannot promise, and does not, that the cost is small.

Within these four fences the argument stands. The tradition needs no exaggeration to be worth preserving; it gains when examined closely — and examining it closely means, above all, refusing to claim for it more than the sources and the evidence can bear.

²⁷ Sala, Giovanni / Gobet, Fernand, *Does Far Transfer Exist? Negative Evidence From Chess, Music, and Working Memory Training*, in: *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 26/6 (2017), pp. 515–520; the same result is confirmed in their and others’ later second-order meta-analyses. Each volume of the series rejects the transfer myth for its own domain (Volume I, ch. 10.2; Volume II, ch. 10.1; Volume III, ch. 7.1); this essay rejects it for the whole.

²⁸ On the descending strength of evidence cf. Volume III, ch. 6 (fall prevention: Sherrington et al. 2019; Lomas-Vega et al. 2017); Volume I, ch. 9 (martial arts: Bu et al. 2010; Origua Rios et al. 2018); Volume II, ch. 9 (civil arts: Kao 2006; Chu et al. 2018; Van der Weel / van der Meer 2024). The ethical core of the formation, which the tradition prized above all, is by its nature the least measurable, and no claim of measured virtue is made here.

6. One Integrated Life: The Shape of the Whole in Practice

The detailed plans belong to the volumes; each closes with three, scaled to different time budgets, and a twelve-week progression.²⁹ This essay owes not a fourth set of plans but the picture of how the three combine: the shape of a single week in which the whole formation is walked, modestly, on all three of its parts. Five design principles, drawn in common from the three volumes, govern that shape.

The first principle is the primacy of the root. Because the trained breath underlies every strand, the day begins with it; a few minutes of slow, diaphragm-led breathing is the lowest threshold into the entire field and the ground on which the rest stands.³⁰ The second is daily smallness over occasional largeness: the cultivation model asks for a little every day rather than much on rare occasions, because it aims at transformation over years, not at accumulation in weeks. The third is the pairing of the sides: on a given day, one martial and one civil practice, so that neither column is left standing for long, and body and attention are trained in the same rhythm. The fourth is the ethical review: the week ends not with a count of minutes but with a question about the patience, honesty, and restraint of the days just past, keeping character above technique as all three volumes insist. The fifth is the spiral: at the end of a cycle one begins again at a slightly higher baseline, not at a finish line, because a way has no terminus.

Table 2 sketches how a modest week — on the order of the “working person” plans, some four to five hours in total — carries all three parts. It is an illustration, not a prescription; the volumes give the real detail, and the individual reader will weight the sides according to where he begins and what he lacks.

Time of day	Practice	Which part of the whole
morning, daily (10–15 min)	slow breathing, then a short form or standing practice	the root (<i>xiulian</i>); on martial days the <i>wu</i> form
by day, in the work itself	formed conduct, patience, restraint under pressure; the greeting, the table, the dealing with others	the <i>wen</i> ethic (<i>li, ren</i>) and the <i>wu</i> ethic (<i>wude</i>), lived rather than rehearsed
several evenings a week (20–40 min)	alternating: the martial form or bag- and footwork; the brush, slow reading, or the board	the two columns paired — <i>wu</i> one evening, <i>wen</i> the next
one longer session weekly (60–90 min)	the week’s emphasis at length: a fuller martial session or a fuller civil one, alternating by week	the deeper practice of whichever side the cycle is weighting
week’s end (10 min)	the ethical review: patience, honesty, restraint of the week; then the coming week’s resolve	the enclosing ethic; the turn of the spiral

Table 2: One modest week carrying the whole: the root every morning, the ethic through the working day, the two columns paired across the evenings, one longer session, and a closing review. Times are illustrative; the volumes supply the graded plans.

The essential point of the table is that the whole does not require the sum of three separate practices bolted together. The root is practiced once, in the morning, and carries both sides; the

²⁹ Volume I, ch. 12; Volume II, ch. 12; Volume III, ch. 9. The reader who has chosen a starting point should take the corresponding plan from the relevant volume; the purpose here is only to show how the plans of the three combine into one week rather than three.

³⁰ Volume III, ch. 6.4 and ch. 8: even a few minutes of trained breathing carry measurable benefit and can be practiced anywhere. The root volume makes this the first design principle, and this essay adopts it as the first principle of the whole.

ethic is practiced not in a separate hour but in the work and relations of the ordinary day; and the two columns share the evenings by alternation rather than competing for them. What looks, stated as three curricula, like an impossible burden becomes, arranged as one day and one week, a shaped and sustainable rhythm. This rhythm is walked not toward an end but in a spiral: each cycle returns to its beginning at a higher baseline, and it is this returning, not any arrival, that the tradition meant by a way. Figure 5 shows the cycle.

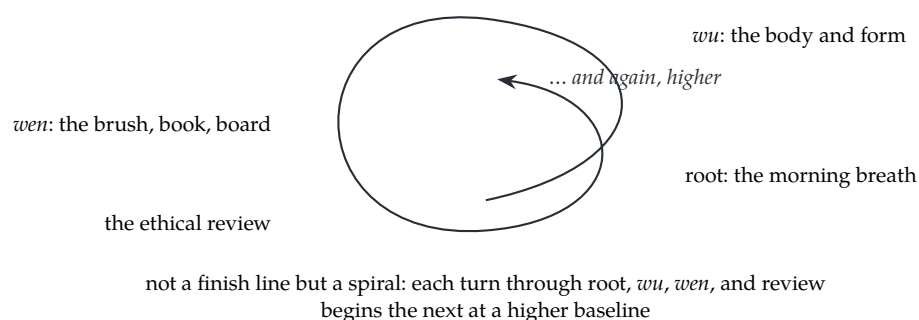


Figure 5: The cultivation model shared by all three volumes: the whole is walked as a repeating cycle — root, martial, civil, review — that returns to its start at a higher level. A way has no terminus; the practice is the point.

7. Conclusion: The Way to the Whole

This essay set out to answer the question that the three volumes of the series presuppose but do not fully argue: why a person should seek to be complete in both the civil and the martial, and how the three separate paths join into one. The answer has been given on four grounds and shown in one architecture. Because the formation of the person is a way and not a possession, it must be walked whole, for a way is not owned in parts. Because the modern person is halved along precisely the axis of body and attention that the two sides train, the completeness of *wen* and *wu* is the very shape of the answer to the modern deficit. Because the ethics that binds trained capacity to its rightful purpose is a single ethic under two names, *wude* and *ren*, only the whole person carries that binding on both sides of his power. And because the three volumes were designed in concert, standing on one root and joined by one breath, the whole fits into a single integrated day and week rather than demanding the impossible sum of three curricula.

None of this promises a transformed or extraordinary person, and the honest limits were drawn firmly: there is no far transfer, no magical spillover from one matter to another; the evidence is real but uneven and thins toward the ethical core the tradition valued most; the concepts must be kept in their own terms and not dissolved into modern equivalents; and the cost in daily, sustained time is irreducible. What the whole offers is not exceptional powers but coherence — the recovery, in one shaped life, of the body and the attention that the modern environment takes apart, bound together by an ethic that governs both.

The tradition understood the complete person, *wen wu shuang quan*, not as a hero with two rare talents but as an ordinary person with an unusually sustained practice: in the morning the breath and the form, by day the work and the patience, in the evening the book and the stillness. That is the whole to which the three volumes are the detailed guide and this essay the door. Whether it is read first, as an entry to the series, or last, as its keystone, its argument is the same and its closing word is the series' first: the tradition needs no exaggeration to be worth preserving; it gains when examined closely — and it is not preserved by being examined, but

by being walked. *Dao* is a way; one has it only in the walking.

Glossary of Key Terms

dao 道 — “way, path.” The oldest and most encompassing concept of Chinese thought, shared by Confucians (the right way of conduct and learning) and Daoists (the generative order of nature). Here the picture of formation as a way walked, not a possession owned.

wen 文 — the civil, literary, and cultural; one side of the pair. Treated in full in Volume II.

wu 武 — the martial; the other side of the pair. Treated in full in Volume I.

wen wu shuang quan 文武雙全 — “fully accomplished in both the civil and the martial”; the ideal of the complete person, the subject of this essay.

wen/zhi 文/質 — cultivated form and unformed substance; their balance defines the noble one (*Lunyu* 6.18).

xiulian 修煉 — “to cultivate and refine”; the spiritual self-cultivation of the Daoist and Buddhist traditions, and the common root beneath *wen* and *wu*. Treated in full in Volume III.

xiushen 修身 — Confucian, this-worldly moral self-cultivation; the root of order in the *Great Learning*. Distinguished from *xiulian* throughout the series.

junzi 君子 — the “noble one”; the ideal of character acquired through formation, whose inner standard is *ren*.

ren 仁 — humaneness; the ethical core of the civil tradition.

wude 武德 — “martial virtue”; the conduct expected of one entrusted with the power to harm. With *ren/junzi*, the single ethic that binds trained capacity to rightful purpose.

liuyi 六藝 — the Six Arts of the Zhou: ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, reckoning; the original curriculum in which *wen* and *wu* were one.

gongfu 功夫 — “sustained effort, skill acquired through time”; both the martial body-and-weapons strand and the literal name of the cultivation model of daily practice over years.

far transfer — the (unsupported) claim that a practice improves the mind in general, beyond the matter practiced; rejected throughout the series (Sala / Gobet 2017).

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Methodological Concluding Remark. This essay is a synthesis and therefore derivative by design: its facts, figures, and citations are those established and verified in the three volumes of the series, to which it refers at each step, with the single modern reference featured anew — Sala and Gobet on far transfer — verified independently for this text. It maintains the method of the series without exception: the source-critical division of legend, documented institution, and modern empirical finding; the honest ranking of evidence and the active refusal of overstatement, above all of the transfer myth; the clean distinction of the this-worldly *xiushen* from the spiritual *xiulian*, and the assignment of Taijiquan by function rather than name; and the recurring lessons that the transmissible core of a tradition is its pedagogy rather than its institutions, and that a living tradition survives only by being practiced and can be practiced only by being adapted. Its one addition to the three volumes is the argument they presuppose: the reasoned case for the whole, and the map of how the three parts compose one way. Founding attributions (the Yellow Emperor, Cangjie, Bodhidharma) are treated as legends; no claim of measured virtue or of extraordinary transformation is made; and the limits of the evidence are named in place. *Wen wu shuang quan* is, in the end, not a boast but a direction of daily travel.