

Taking a Punch

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There is truth in a blow to the head.

The pugilist learns to savor it, that quick snap of the neck, the blink out of consciousness. It becomes a lesson. A sharp steel burr that months of training couldn't shave down, now snagging on the canvas. He exhales spit and blood.

The Upanishads speak of four states of consciousness. The first, Vaishvanara, is waking life. The senses turned outwards to the external world. The second, Taijasa, is a dreaming state. The senses turned inwards to memory and the subconscious. The third, Prajna, is dreamless sleep. A state of quietude, of unity without awareness. And the fourth, Turiya, is the infinite beyond sleep or waking. The consciousness underlying all of existence.

The practitioner of yoga finds insight even here, in the gap punched out. The mind stripped violently of rhythm or form. An inhale pulls him back from his Tamasic stupor. A left jab places the other's guard right where it needs to be. A right hook to the liver staggers. He slips past a straight punch as the two fighters become one.