

June 2005
Vol. 56

Combat & Healing

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The Importance of Qi

There is only One Move

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Teach What You Know

Nick Jones:

I have only really written two articles for Combat & Healing over the last few years, I'm a bit lazy! Both of these articles related to realistic Self Defence.

In this article I am going to write about the teaching of Self Defence and Martial Arts.

When a new student is in search of a new teacher and a new art to study, making a choice can be very difficult as there are many Instructors with Spurs attached to their boots more than willing to take our hard earned money. On the up side there is more choice nowadays and I think more open mindedness and there are good teachers out there too.

As a new student you must try the classes out, give them a month or two and then make a decision. An art like Taiji is tough to perform let alone understand and you will need time to see if you like it and the person Teaching it. If you do then you are onto a winner.

There are many excellent teachers who both perform and teach the Taiji forms at a high level. There are lots of teachers who have a far better understanding of Chi and the healing of others than I do, which is why I do not pretend to know this area in depth. My thing is structure and movement, the ability to perform a single posture with balance, timing, coordination, grace and power. When I see my students move well in the Form, Push hands and Chi Sau, I am over the moon, I love it.

The other area I love is the Martial side of Taiji. Executed properly it is devastating and you do not need to be big and strong to do it. I do not class myself as an authority in the Martial side of Taiji, but I know that what I

teach my students will work and I am not afraid to test them or myself.

I am sometimes a little sad to see Instructors who cannot even punch, let alone evade, kick, trap, enter and destroy. Yet I know that these teachers take money from students and teach the "secrets of how to defend yourself". If you do not teach the fighting side of Taiji then that is Ok because you are not pretending to know something that you do not. Also you have been honest to your students and said sorry gang but I do not teach the fighting side. However if you are telling your students that this works in this situation and that works in that situation and really haven't a clue then I hope you cannot sleep at night.

Loyal students hang on your every word and trust your knowledge. So if you tell them that something will work when you have not tested it yourself, your student could end up badly injured or worse. Stop pretending to yourself and your students and be honest.

Stop pretending to yourself and your students and be honest.

Taijiquan. Quan or Chuan means Boxing, Taiji is a form of Chinese Boxing. Boxing in the Dictionary is defined as a sport in which two competitors fight by hitting each other with their hands. Well let us ignore the sport bit of the definition but focus on the rest of it. "Two people fighting by hitting each other" this is the most important bit of the definition. If you are a teacher can you Box? If you are a student is your teacher showing you how to Box. Seems to me that we are losing the quan in our Taijiquan.

What to look out for as a Student
The following are some points to look out for if you are studying the fighting side of Taiji boxing. If your answer is Yes to any or all of these then you should be in good hands.

Do you use focus mitts, strike shields etc?

Can your Teacher hit things with maximum effect and minimum effort?

Has your teacher shown you how to create huge amounts of power just by relaxing so that you hit with your whole body and not just with your arm?

Has your teacher shown you how to use your knee, elbow and head but?

Does your teacher show you how to move so that you can destroy some body's guard?

Does your teacher explain balance manipulation and show you how you can transfer your skills from push hands/chisau/da Lu into actual combat?

Does your teacher encourage gradual increase in the severity of your training partners attacks?

Does your teacher occasionally tell you to pad up and where gloves to test things out?

Does your teacher give you advice on making yourself a hard target?

Does your teacher call out his senior students and encourage them to hit him so he can demonstrate with realism?

Have you ever seen your Instructor just miss a punch and get caught a little by the attack?

Has your teacher explained ranges and phases of combat?

Has your teacher had honest experience of being attacked?

Does your teacher tell you that you will get hit in the chaos of combat?

Does your teacher explain the difference between Martial Arts, Self-defence and Self Protection?

Does your teacher occasionally say “to be honest with you I have never been in that situation, let us try it out and see if we can work it out” or “I will find somebody who is better equipped to answer that question and get back to you.

If your answer to any of the following is yes then you need to dig deeper and maybe you are not in good hands.

Does your teacher shout and slap his/her foot on the ground really hard, so that all their power goes in the ground and very little comes out of their hand?

Does your teacher say sorry we cannot practice any part of the technique more realistically as it is just too deadly?

Is your teacher reliant on Dim Mak? Does your teacher say they are too old to hit pads explosively?

Does your teacher brag about their hundreds of fights?

Does your teacher blind you with esoteric language?

Does your teacher tell you that once you are good you will not get hit?

Does your teacher describe dealing with an attacker as something that is easy?

Does your teacher tell you that they were not scared?

The questions that I am encouraging you to ask yourself are not written in stone, but I think they could help you. They are the questions I ask myself so that I give the best service possible to my students.

So if they are attacked at least I have given them a fighting chance.

I would just like to clarify some of the question I have asked.

The use of hitting pads builds up good muscle memory and shows you immediately whether or not you can

generate POWER, after all it is no good tickling your attacker. If Taiji Boxing is Internal and not reliant on strength and fitness then your Teacher should be able to demonstrate their physical tense strikes, physical relaxed strikes and explosive, Fajing strikes. To be honest you should be impressed when you see your teacher move.

Erle demonstrated for me. The guy holding the pads was one of my students, himself a very accomplished Aikido Instructor. Erle hit the pad, my student shit himself and the pad hit somebody else in the back of the head ten feet away.

Have you ever seen Erle hit the pads and react to an attack? It is scary how devastating his power and speed is. I was in one of Erle's classes in Swansea he was correcting one of my strikes on the Pads. Erle demonstrated for me. The guy holding the pads was one of my students, himself a very accomplished Aikido Instructor. Erle hit the pad, my student shit himself and the pad hit somebody else in the back of the head ten feet away. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up and I thought I am just an amateur compared to him.

Anyway I digress let's get back to clarifying my questions. Your teacher should be honest with you. They are not superheroes sometimes they do get hit, sometimes they do cock it up but at least they have been honest with you. We all feel fear and confrontation is very tough to deal with.

It is important that your teacher shows you what the strange and wonder full training methods like Chi Sau and Push Hands are trying to teach you and demonstrates the flow from training method to combat.

Erle has been saying for years that Martial Arts and self-defence are two different things. What Martial Arts do is give attributes that will help you defend your self. Martial Arts are complicated Self-defence should be

simplified so it works under pressure. Self Defence Is physical. Self Protection is mental and emotional.

Why is it that when I see some teachers hit a pad or demonstrate Fajing the ground shakes but the pad hardly moves, this is wrong.

I know that as a Teacher I can not expect a student to perform one of the deadly circular palm techniques on their training partner at full tilt as they could kill them. However there is no excuse for not encouraging the gradual increase in the severity of your training partners attack so you can speed up your initial response. Once the attack is neutralized you can slow down and or pull slightly short of your target. Put protective gear on take your power to 60% and try it that way.

I do not agree with Teachers who brag about their fighting prowess if you have lots of fights and bolster your ego by describing every single one, I think you need a bit of anger management and should do more Qigung. Sure it is good to use anecdotes but again be honest, tell your students how you felt.

Dim Mak is scary and very powerful, but remember if you cannot get close enough to your attacker and break down their guard, it will be as much use as a chocolate teapot. What about generating Fa jing if you cannot create power what good is touching the points? Dim Mak works we all know that, but do you know how to avoid attack and do you know how to attack back.

Over the last ten years I realised more and more that Taiji done properly had the potential to stop any attacker in their tracks with devastating fashion. However in the last few years I have become interested in backup systems in particular, what happens when you fail and end up on the ground. I decided to train some Judo and eventually found Gracie Ju Jitsu, I share my Academy with a Gracie

Ju Jitsu Instructor and we are the only Gracie recognised Academy in Wales. These guys live on the ground so I knew they could add to my knowledge and make me more complete. So for the last two years I have studied the art of ground fighting and received my Blue belt at Christmas from a current Black belt World Champion. I show my students a very rudimentary level of groundwork, just enough for them to get out of trouble and get back on their feet as soon as possible to start defending themselves. This way I answer the What If and do not fob them off.

Fear is a strange thing it can take a highly skilled individual and render them useless.

Fear is a strange thing it can take a highly skilled individual and render them useless. I worked as a nightclub doorman for nearly four years; I am about 90 kg in weight and stand about six feet tall. I am not a small guy, but I was small for a Bouncer. I worked with some very big, tough guys, I even worked with some bullies, and all of them bar one told me they got scared during confrontation. The one guy who said he felt no fear was a liar and would disappear when confrontation began. Strange that!

One night my fear got to me and I took a bit of a whack in the chops, my fault I let my fear override all my years of Martial Training. It was my first week as a bouncer, I learned very quickly. So if your Teacher is not teaching you about fear then get ready to lose.

So I suppose this article is all about being honest to yourself and others. It is about a Teacher being honest to his students and students being honest to their Teachers.

If you are a Teacher and I have offended you then that is not my intention, however if you have taken offence then you are probably teaching things that you should not. If you are a student please ask your Teacher my questions make sure they clear up any doubts you may have. If you attempt to use a doubtful technique on the street you will lose.

As I wrote earlier this article is not directed at people who only teach the form and qigong, as you are being honest, so keep up the good work

This Article is for all you Teachers who are selling your students short.

Just in case you are wondering I am a 1st degree under Erle, I have been with the WTBA for ten years and started out as a no belt and gradually worked my way up. I have been a 1st degree for four years and taught for the same amount of time. The Taiji I teach is Montaigne style and it is the only style of Taiji I will ever teach, as it is the best. I hold Instructor level in Thai Boxing and have a Blue belt in Brazilian Ju Jitsu. I am trained in basic bodyguard skills also. I work with young offenders teaching them anger management. Over four years ago I created a program teaching youngsters Taiji in comprehensive Schools.

The youngsters were the worst behaved in School and the aim was to calm them down. This program has since been copied and exists in most of the Comprehensive Schools in Swansea.

So you see I am no expert but I do have an informed opinion.

Teach what you know.

By Nick Jones

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Chinese Medicine and Baguazhang.

Wally Simpson

In the Ling Gui Ba Fa (8 Techniques of the Mysterious Turtle) system of Acupuncture all the points on the body are dominated by the Shu points of the arms and legs. These points in turn are dominated by 8 Confluent points that are associated with the 8 Extraordinary Vessels. The Confluent points are where the 12 Primary and the 8 Extraordinary Vessels intersect. Each of the Confluent points has its own trigram from the I Ching.

There are said to be three Internal Martial Arts in China. Taiji Chuan is said to be the Mother of the Internal Arts; Baguazhang the Daughter and Xing Yi the Son. BaGuaZhang is based on the trigrams of the I Ching and is reputed to have amazing health maintaining and restoring properties.

At the beginning of the Qing dynasty in the He Bei province of China, Dong Hai Chuan (1796 to 1880) is said to have invented the Art of Ba Gua Zhang. One of Dong's students, Cheng Ting Hua who died during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, had a son who made this art popular in the Beijing and Tianxin regions.

It was Sun Luc Tang (1860 to 1932) another student of Chen Ting Hua's however who became most famous, writing a books on Taiji Chuan, BaGuaZhang, XingYi and a fourth book called 'The Esoteric Way of the Martial Arts'.

Ba Gua Zhang has since built up a reputation as being both a deadly

martial art and an amazing way to gain longevity. It is said that those Master of this art who were not killed in battles, lived very long and healthy lives.

In the style of Ba Gua Zhang that I have learned, we walk a circle holding our hands as Dragon palms. The palms are held in different directions and in different ways (e.g. palm up, palm down, etc). We have 8 different palms and there are 64 different possible combinations of these palms. These 64 combinations are said to contain all the changes that occur in Heaven and on Earth. For all but the 6th palm, these palms are held around the level of the middle Dantian.

BaGuaZhang incorporates the attributes of different animals into it's movements, their appearance, the way they move and think. No 1 Palm for insistence has the character of Heaven and its animal is a Lion, Solemn, it can be Explosive and Aggressive. The Extraordinary Meridian represented by this palm is Chong Mai. Chong Mai according to the Ling Shu is seen as the Ocean of 12 meridians and the Ocean of Blood. Blood is seen by many commentators of the classics as a vessel which carries the Shen. It is said the Shen must be housed in the Heart at night to allow sleep. The Heart is seen as the Emperor of the body and its temperament is Solemn; the Lion is seen as the King of Beasts.

The 8 basic palm changes or the any of the 64 combinations may be done as a Qigong preformed either standing in Horse stance or walking a circle and they are also incor-

porated into a form using various postures.

According to Yoshio Manaka MD, in his book 'Chasing the Dragons Tail' "The 8 Extraordinary Vessels may be the first channels formed as the fertilized ovum divides. The first division between left and right is the axis of the Ren and Du Mai's, while the second division gives rise to the Dai Mai and so on." If this is the case then these Extraordinary vessels may be seen as storehouses of structural information as well as primordial Qi and reservoirs for excess from the other vessels This would infer that they might be used to correct structural imbalances as well as problems of Qi and Xue.

Manaka talks about the Octahedral Model of the body as being defined first by the Ren and Du mai giving us left and right division of the body structure; The Dai Mai giving us superior and inferior division of the body.

These first couple of divisions are very easily to picture, the following ones take a bit more work to see.

If we look at the leg branch Chong Mai Trajectory, we see that it descends the Yin aspect of the leg we can also see it is close in its pathway to the Yin Qiao Mai and the Zu Tai Yin (Sp) [though on the foot it is closer to the Zu Shao Yin (Kid) and Zu Jue Yin(Liv)]; from Zhubin (Kid 9) the Yin Wei Mai also traverses this region of the leg; this

gives suggestion to an Anterior, Posterior dividing line on the Yin aspect of the leg — (Manaka tends to talk about this division as being Spleen Mai.)

The Shou Jue Yin Vessel (Pc) on the arm gives us the Anterior, Posterior dividing line on the Yin aspect of the arm. The Master point for the Yin Wei and Chong Mai's are found on the Pericardium and Spleen respectively.

On the Yang aspect of the leg the Zu Shao Yang (Gb) follows a similar pathway to the Yang Wei and Yang Qiao Mai's and gives the suggestion of an Anterior Posterior dividing line on the Yang aspect of the leg. Manaka suggests this division is formed by the Gall Bladder Mai and indeed this is fairly close to an Anterior Posterior division of the trunk.

The Shou Shao Yang (Sj) fits this division on the Arm.

The Zu Tai Yin (Sp), Shou Jue Yin (Pc), and the Shao Yang Mai's (Gb / Sj) appear to have important relationship with the QiJingBaMai. Not only do they roughly represent Anterior posterior division of the body but 4 of the Confluent—Jiaohui points for the QiJingBaMai lie on these vessels (Gongsun (Sp 4) – Neiguan (Pc 6) – Waiguan (Sj 5) and ZuLinQi (Gb 41).

These dividing lines of the body separating Left / Right – Superior / Inferior and the Front / Back and the regions contained within each division, appear to be responsive to treatment of the Confluence Extraordinary Vessels, this effect then flows over into the Mai that intersect them. Tightness in muscular groups and reactive tissue will change, become looser and less reactive when the Extraordinary Ves-

sel points are treated. This in turn affects body structure and the functional events that caused the tightness and or reactivity also change resulting in a very powerful therapeutic intervention.

Manaka and his associates concluded that the QiJingBaMai have older embryo logical and evolutionary roots than the 12 Main Meridians and have a major effect on the symmetry of the body. In relation to the Octahedral Model, their movement of Qi (primitive signals) appears to be much broader than that of the Main Mai.

BaGuaZhang with its twisting turning centrifugal force gives us the ability to access this group of vessels by stretching and squeezing the Meridians.

When we walk the circle in BaGuaZhang we do it in such a way as to as much as possible, avoid putting weight on the front foot. The moment the weight is transferred to the front foot it must become the back foot. The unique stepping method gathers no momentum; the power for the movement comes only from the waist. This allows the practitioner to be able to stop immediately and go in the opposite direction. For this to occur the practitioner has to become posted on the weighted foot, alter the structure of the waist slightly so as to lift the hip of the unweighted foot which in turn lifts the unweighted foot as a flat foot and moves it to the front with a shake of the waist.

So here we must have the Ren and Du Mai's, the dividing line between left & right sides of the body, communicating (making stable) the upright structure of the body. There is probable some activation of the

Qiao and Wei Mai's contributing to this stabilizing of the upright structure. This allows us to become posed on one leg while explosively moving the other leg and the body around the standing leg. We must also have an activation of the Dai Mai to allow the hip to be lifted enough for the foot to rise as a flat foot and be carried forward by this explosive shaking that originates from the waist. The momentum of each step must not be carried on into the next step, it has to stop when the foot stops and rest unweighted before the next step is taken.

The Ren and Du Mai in some text are seen to arise from the Lower Dantien (referred to as 'the Moving between the Kidneys by Matsumoto & Birch' while the Dai Mai appears to travel through Lower Dantien. If all Ba Gua Zhang achieved was the activation of these 3 vessels, it would be an art worthy of note. It does much more than this as the various palm changes and postures unfold through out the walking of the circle while doing the form.

Each posture can also affect one of the Zang Fu examples of this may be found in postures such as Duck Lands on Water working on the Kidney while Transfer Flower Connect to Wood is said to work on the Stomach. This may indicate some type of activation of the Chong Mai as it is also known as the 'Ocean of the Five Yin and Six Yang Organs and of the 12 Meridians', it is also called the 'Ocean of Blood'.

The activation and Harmonization of Qi through the Ren and Du Mai's is what in Qi Gong terms is called the promotion of the Grand circulation of Qi and it has a powerful effect on all the Yin and Yang Vessels and Qi of the body in general.

The Dai Mai has the ability to harmonise upper and lower / Yang and Yin regions of the body. As its name suggests it acts like a belt around the body holding all the other vessels in place. As we walk the circle and perform the twisting and turning movement that are so typical of BaGuaZhang we generate a lot of Qi in the Dantien (you can become quite hot in general). This Qi then becomes available to the various vessels and ZangFu of the body in the same way as the Qi from food and drink becomes available to the body.

The structure is twisted and an effect is generated through all of the dividing lines / Extraordinary Vessels → when we have an effect on the Yin / structure we also affect the Yang / function of the organism.

Number 1 palm faces up with the fingers pointed away from the body, it represents Heaven / Creativity / Power, it is said to heal the head. Its trigram is called Qian and it is represented by ☰. Its direction is North West and its season is the beginning of Winter. The Shu point for Qian is Gongsun (Sp 4); this is the master point for the Chong Mai. Its animal is the Lion which is Solemn and contains Explosive and Aggressive energy.

Number 2 palm faces down with the fingers pointed away from the body, it represents Earth / Receptivity / Pleasure, it is said to heal the middle jiao. Its trigram is called Kun and it is represented by ☷. Its di-

rection is South West and its season is the start of Autumn. The Shu point for Kun is Zhaohai (Kid 6); this is the master point for Yin Qiao Mai. Its animal is the Monkey which has Agility and has Shrinking ability.

Number 3 palm faces away from the body with the fingers pointed up, it represents Fire / Clinging, it is said to heal the eyes. Its trigram is called Li and it is represented by ☲. Its direction is South and its season is mid Summer. The Shu point for Li is Leique (Lu 7) which is the master point for the Ren mai. Its animal is the Falcon which has Spinning, Turning and Chopping / Swooping ability.

Number 4 palm faces towards the body with the fingers pointed towards each other (it is similar to the 3 circle Qigong of Taiji Chuan). It represents Thunder / Arousing / Shaking, it is said to heal the left side of the abdomen. Its trigram is Zhen and it is represented by ☳. Its direction is East and its season is dividing of Spring. The Shu point for Zhen is Waiguan (SJ 5) which is the master point of the Yang Wei Mai. Its animal is the Dragon which is unpredictable and has Leaping, Twisting, Undulating and Changing form.

Number 5 palm faces medially with the fingers pointed away from the body. It represents Wind / Gentle, it is said to heal the first seven vertebrae. Its trigram is Sun and it is represented by ☱. Its direction is South East and its season is start of Summer. The Shu point for Sun is Zu Linqi (Gb 41) which is the master point of the Dai Mai. Its animal is the Phoenix which is seen Swirling in a Continuous Circle.

Number 6 palm faces towards the body with the fingers pointed towards each other (it is held so the hands are level with the lower Dantian). It represents Water / Danger / Abysmal, it is said to heal the Kidneys. Its trigram is Kan and it is represented by ☵. Its direction is North and its season is absolute Winter. The Shu point of Kan is Shenmai (Bl 62) which is the master point of Yang Qiao Mai. Its animal is the Snake which is Flexible and agile with both Striking Point Paralysing ability and a great capacity to flow.

Number 7 palm faces medially with the fingers pointing upward. It represents Mountain / Stillness, it is said to heal the neck. Its trigram is Gen and it is represented by ☶. Its direction is North East and its season is the start of Spring. The Shu point for Gen is Neiguan (Pc 6) which is the master point of Yin Wei Mai. Its animal is the Bear which is Powerful but Docile with great Uprooting ability.

Number 8 palm faces laterally with the fingers pointed away from the body (when we are using two number 8 palms, we join both Shaoze's (Si 3's) and as much of the Xiao Chang Mai's as possible). It represents Clouds / Yielding (Lake / Joyful), it is said to heal the right side of the Abdomen. Its trigram is Dui and it is represented by ☱. Its direction is West and its season is Dividing of Autumn. The Shu point for Dui is Houxi (Si 3) which is the master point of the Du mai. Its animal is the Unicorn which is seen to Stand on One Leg and Twist like a Tornado.

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DON'T GIVE UP

Steve Morris

Erle some years ago wrote an article about giving up your training. I loved the article and vowed that would never happen to me. How wrong could I be ?

Two years ago after ten years of training I decided I no longer wanted to carry on.

I don't know why. I was totally depressed with the whole thing.

Rising out of bed on a cold damp dark morning , putting on my training clothes and spending the next two hours immersed in Taiji and Qigong was no longer attractive to me. I was finished.

Six months passed and I have to admit I dabbled here and there for the odd day doing a little form or some applications but for most of the six months, I did not train at all.

The first signs something was wrong was while on a family holiday in September 2003 on the island of Ibiza.

I had climbed the steps to our hotel while carrying baby in one arm , push chair in the other and a holdall over my shoulder. On reaching the top of the steps I had to lean on a wall to catch my breath. This happened again a few more times on the holiday.

I was not unduly concerned as I put this down to the immense heat and the altitude.

The following two months back home I started to get the same feeling while walking the dog or climbing the stairs. This had now coincided with a chesty cough. I started Qigong but little did I know it was too late. I even made contact with Erle again looking for help in dealing with the cough. In December 2003 I finally went to see my doctor.

To cut a long story short I was rushed in an ambulance to The Royal Brompton hospital in London where various tests revealed I had a one centimetre diameter hole within my aortic chamber of the heart. The medical term was given as ruptured sinus of valsalva. The hole was leaking blood in to my liver and I was progressively dying.

To cut a long story short I was rushed in an ambulance to The Royal Brompton hospital in London where various tests revealed I had a one centimetre diameter hole within my aortic chamber of the heart.

I was a non smoker , did not touch alcohol and yet I later found out was only the sixth person in Europe to be diagnosed with such a complaint. I had more chance of winning the national lottery.

On January 14th 2004 I had an operation to repair the rupture where my chances of survival were quoted at eighty percent. The fitting of a pacemaker was discussed as was a liver transplant. I was a father of two very young children and was possibly about to die on the operating table.

Without going in to too much detail, the weeks after the operation were a struggle

mentally and physically but one thing I vowed was to renew my training the moment

I could stand. Two of the consultants who were assigned to my case were from Singapore and Hong Kong respectively. They could not understand why the heart was so healthy in all other ways except for the rupture. I discussed with them my Taiji training and they both believed that my symptoms would have progressed earlier in my life had I not trained in Taiji and the reason for my ailment was due to me stopping training. They believed Taiji was holding this at bay. This sounds mythical but I am convinced in what they told me.

Two weeks after the operation I returned home and started the Taiji form one posture per day. Out came the Yang Cheng Fu and Yang Lu Chan video's and I started on the road to fitness. I would train until my legs shook and the spend the rest of the day in bed recovering.

In April 2004 I was checked by one of the top heart consultants in the country who was amazed at my recovery. The letter he dictated in my presence explained that I was in sinus rhythm with blood pressure of 124/72mmHg. Normal LV size and function. Normal RV and RA size and function. Intact SOV , no residual shunts , aortic

annulus is 2.4 cm with aortic root 4.1cm.

Basically I had recovered way beyond all expectation and just as there is no medical reason given for my complaint , there is no reason given for my miraculous recovery.

I honestly believe my recovery was down to my previous and my current training.

Now, when I rise on them cold , damp , dark mornings and it is easier to pull over the duvet and sleep , I think of this time where my life was precariously close to ending.

I will never give up and for that I thank Erle for showing me the meaning of the true internal and how it can help us live.

If this article keeps one person training when they have doubts as to the benefits of Taiji in it's purest form, it will be worth me taking the time to write it.

Keep training and good luck.

If I Had My Time Over

Erle Montaigue

So much time wasted in youth doing things that we discard later in life.

If I had my time over again and knew what I now know, I would never have spent my youth fighting and learning how to fight and be the toughest kid on the block.

It's strange that when I was younger I spent most of my time learning about things that I would think stupid later on. However, in order to actually KNOW that fighting is stupid I had to learn how! And there's the rub: I guess it's a bit like learning the Tai Chi form in correctly in the beginning in order to discard it later so that you can learn the real thing. You have to go through the bullshit in order to learn what life is all about.

If there was a way to tell young people how to learn and what not to bother with I would tell them. However, I have only ever been able to do that to a certain degree with my own children as they have been home schooled with no school influences what so ever. So to a degree, they do not have the problem of wanting desperately to learn things that later will seem like a waste of time.

I would not have been interested in wanting to be tough or the best fighter out there, I would have had more time for the finer aspects of life such as art and helping others and watching my children grow and learn etc.

Being a martial artist is not at all about being the toughest bloke anyone has ever met, it is not about being a great fighter, that's just BS! The martial arts teaches eventually about humanity and selflessness and feeling good when we see just one person gaining good health or becoming a better person for their martial arts training.

Perhaps I would never have been so one minded about my training to the detriment of all other pursuits. I would not have taken myself and my training so seriously. I might have enjoyed my training more rather than doing it because I had to.

I would have seen the larger picture, what lied ahead and how many people I would have come in contact with. I would have been aware of how many lives would have changed just because I decided to do something small. I might have noticed that there were other people in the world.

Today, I can see many of my younger students making the very same mistakes that I made when I was first learning. They only want to know how to be the best fighter in the world. Sadly, no matter what I tell them, will not change their mind as it is a growing thing for males to go through this phase in their lives like all male animals. Females do not have this problem, they have already risen above the ego thing of having to prove oneself. Which is why nowadays it is a joy to get some girls into the classes who are really interested and also talented. They can cut to the chase

without the BS of having to be the best and defeat everyone.

Perhaps I would have run my classes a bit more structured? ...NOT! I am really not a structured person, changing from one thing to the next, doing several things at once. Perhaps I would have worn a Tai Chi suit? ..NOT! I would have made more money doing that, giving out formal gradings and having students bow to me etc. I just can't do it, all of the bowing and scraping to the teacher, I will always be a rebel and would not change a thing in that regard.

I might have made myself a bit more inaccessible so that students would have given reciprocal respect. However, when a teacher is seen to be an ordinary human being, students often look upon that as being somewhat less of a teacher.

I learnt later in life to always see from whence you have come. I wish that I had known that when I was younger. When we can see who we were and not what other see us as, we can only laugh at ourselves.

Had I seen the huge job ahead of me, getting the information out to everyone, documenting everything I ever learnt in book and video, I probably would never have taken this path. I would have stayed a Rock musician and would probably have been dead.

So... Nah, I would not change a thing!

The importance of Qi

Aaron Cross
Gold Coast, Australia

Recently I have been ‘surfing’ the martial arts discussion boards and have come across quite a lot of discussion on the concept of Qi.

As Taiji and Bagua practitioners, Qi is at the very basis of our art. Everything we do in Taiji and Bagua, whether it is martial or healing related, involves an understanding/experience of Qi.

My own progression through the arts of Taiji and Bagua I see most significantly in terms of a deepening understanding of Qi, from my very first Qi Gong experience to push hands, to my evolving understanding of the intricacies of the Taiji and Bagua forms. Indeed, as far as I am concerned, Taiji and Bagua are nothing other than expressions of Qi. Qi is the master concept, the one I always return to, and it is precisely this experience/understanding of Qi that the external arts, in my experience [having previously studied Taekwondo and external Kung-Fu], lack.

Given all of this, one can understand my utter consternation over the flack Qi seemed to be receiving on the Internet discussion boards. Lots of people thought of Qi as a mystical, anti-rational concept, an anachronism of Chinese feudal culture. Other people said that whether an individual chooses to believe in Qi is purely a matter of

personal preference, like belief in God. Rejecting these two positions, the first of which is openly dismissive, the second merely agnostic, I wish to provide a rational, which is to say philosophical, justification of the concept. Put simply, I wish to show why Qi is an important idea.

Qi, wind and transformation

So what is Qi? Historically, the concept of Qi can be traced back to the concept of wind that arose during China’s Shang era [eighteenth through twelfth centuries B.C.E]. Just as winds blow on the earth, Qi is the wind, so to speak, that blows through the body. Thus we get the idea of an energy moving through the body. And for the founders of traditional Chinese medicine, external winds very much affected internal winds. Wind was seen as ‘the chief of the hundred diseases.’ For the early Shang Chinese, wind represented change [e.g. the changing of seasons], and traditional Chinese medicine, which evolved over latter eras, seeks to understand states of change – i.e. transformations of Qi or energy – within the body.

Thus, the application of the idea of wind to the body through Chinese medicine leads to the much broader idea of Qi as ‘life-force.’ ‘Life-force’ might seem a significant departure from ‘wind’, though it is the concept of change, of transformation, that is the common element. Qi is the energy behind the multifarious

transformations that make up the universe. In this, Qi is the very basis of existence; Qi literally is life, or that through which life emerges. Qi is that mysterious ‘some-thing’ that is transformed for there to be an existing universe, though *its transformation is in fact part of what it is*. For instance, in his text on Chinese medicine, *The Web that Has no Weaver* (1983), Ted Kaptchuk writes:

My own progression through the arts of Taiji and Bagua I see most significantly in terms of a deepening understanding of Qi, from my very first Qi Gong experience to push hands, to my evolving understanding of the intricacies of the Taiji and Bagua forms.

We can say that everything in the universe, organic and inorganic, is composed of and defined by its Qi. But Qi is not some primordial, immutable material, nor is it merely vital energy ... Chinese thought does not distinguish between matter and energy, but we can perhaps think of Qi as matter on the verge of becoming energy, or energy at the point of materializing (p. 35).

As such, for Chinese medicine:

Qi is the source of all movement in the body and accompanies all movement [...] Qi is *not* the cause of movement. For example, Qi is the source of growth in the body, but also grows with the body (p. 37).

This is of course deeply philosophical. To speak in the language of philosophy, Qi supposes that the event of Being [of the universe] is radically self-originary.

As Kaptchuk states above, ‘Qi is not some primordial, immutable material.’ And it is as such that the idea of Qi, we might say, is distinctly Chinese, for the West has always sought to know the ground of existence. For Western theology the ground of existence is God, for Western philosophy it is Being, and for Western science it is matter. Qi, on the other hand, is a groundless ground. Qi is the event of existence [‘everything in the universe is composed of and defined by its Qi’] as a radical self-presupposition, acting as the source of its own ‘self,’ irreducible to any given thing that might precede it. What is the source of Qi? Qi is the source of Qi. Qi changes the body [e.g. aging] and in changing the body changes itself. Put as simply as possible, Qi is circular, whereas Western thought has traditionally preferred the linear.

Qi in Taijiquan and Baguazhang

What has any of this got to do with Taiji and Bagua, you might be asking. Well, in Taiji and Bagua, when performing the forms etc., the body must be in a continuous state of change. There are no static postures. Hence we are told that we should never be double weighted.

This applies not just to the distribution of weight between the legs but also to the distribution of weight throughout the whole body.

The hands, for instance, should never be double weighted. One hand should be yang relative to the other hand, which will be yin. The very first move from the Taiji slow form is a good test of this, and I must say that I have yet to come across a practitioner outside of the WTBA who does not do this move double weighted. Why is it, I ask myself, that this most basic principle of Taiji, the principle of continuous change, is only vaguely or partially adhered to? What happened?

Ideally, the application of this principle of continuous change to the movements of the form should lead to an extreme holism, so that, as the classics say, no part of the body can move without the whole body moving. As I see it, the principle, ideally, is this: *it is always the whole body that must be in a continuous state of change rather than any of its parts alone.* So for instance, raising the hands double weighted, we might say that the hands are in a state of continuous change, and leave it at that. However, in terms of the whole, there is no state of change between the hands and no state of change between the hands and the rest of the body. If all the parts of the body are made to be connected, as the Taiji classics say they should, then no part of the body can move without the whole body moving, no part can change without the whole changing. And it is only in moving in this way that the person can come to know Qi. Let me explain my reasoning:

We begin the forms by learning consciously intended movement, of course: i.e. lift the hands, turn to the right, turn to the left, step left etc. However, as we learn to relax, enter a state of ‘sung’ and connect all the parts of the body, each consciously intended movement causes a change in the entire body, which we do not, indeed cannot, consciously intend.

We begin by consciously raising our hands; eventually our raising of the hands will cause the energy of the entire body to shift. To borrow psychoanalytic terminology, our conscious action causes an unconscious or subconscious reaction. Eventually I think the conscious and unconscious/subconscious merge so that our movements are both and yet neither. Our movements, we might say, come to presuppose themselves. Hence we get the experience that, whilst we are moving the body, the body seems to be moving itself. In the manner of the circle mentioned earlier, the Qi moves me as I move it. The classics attest to this with statements like ‘find stillness in motion,’ which is to both move and not move, a paradox indeed.

So, to return to our original question: what is Qi? Qi is life as that which precedes consciousness. I did not choose to be alive, I just am. Indeed, in presupposing itself, as above, Qi would necessarily always already precede itself – i.e. what Qi, as active, transforms is nothing other than, or is inseparable from, itself. Unfortunately, there is a strong tradition in the West that associates life with, or

more accurately reduces it to, consciousness.

As the philosopher Renee Descartes famously puts it, 'I think therefore I am.' However, as arts like Taiji and Bagua make apparent, consciousness cannot exhaust life. Life has a will of its own, it is elemental, electrical, experiential. Of course, Taiji and Bagua are premised upon a certain awareness of Qi, a becoming conscious of it, though not in an absolute sense.

A practitioner might for instance experience different types of energy, or different types of changes in the body. The Taiji posture known as 'fishes in eight' will cause the body's energy, which is always of the whole, to change in a manner that particularly affects the lungs. However, it is not that the practitioner specifically [i.e. consciously] focuses on their lungs or lung Qi when performing this movement. To focus on the part [the lungs] is wrong. The focus, if that is the right word, should be on the whole. All the person need do is perform the movement correctly [i.e. with all parts connected] and the changes will happen by themselves. Thinking of the Qi, some might say manufacturing a belief in Qi, is wrong. The only goal is a state of absolute *sung*: letting go, doing the forms over and over again so that the movements come to 'do themselves' – i.e. so that the changes happen by themselves. As Erle always says, just *do* the forms and they will teach you.

For comments, contact the author at:

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There Is Only One Move And Only One Internal Style

By Paul Brecher

There is only one internal style of martial arts, its name is not important and its moves are not important, it is a style about a way of moving about a way of being and about a way of doing things and a way of not doing things.

It is got to through going down the long road of decades of practice of the Old Yang Style Of Tai Chi Chuan and the Wu Dang Qi (chi) Disruption System and the Ba Gwa Chang System but it is not them Individually nor collectively, it is what is contained within the principles of these styles that is the one true internal style.

When you realise that you can do this or that attack and it contains all the principles from these styles but is not a movement from any one of these styles, when you can do any movement at any time any way you like and it contains the way of moving that is common to these three internal styles but is not a specific move from them then you have the real style that is hidden within these styles.

I tell my students the answers to information about the facts because they ask and one of the reasons I am here is to teach but when they ask me questions about the experience of the Internal Martial Arts or about the experience of Chi kung I give an answer but I also say they

should answer their own questions because it would be more relevant and also

mean more to them because they had worked it out and experienced it for themselves.

Life has some every day small mysteries that can be answered by science or by philosophy or by religion or by spirituality but there are some big mysteries that these subjects either individually or all together are unable to answer completely, they can give an opinion on the What and the How but truly their answers about the Why are inconclusive and just promote more questions.

The Big Why questions are a Mystery they have no definitive answers, Why am I, Here, Now ? Why is Life ? Why is mind ? Why is emotions ? Why is Spirit ?

The practice of the Internal Chinese Martial Arts Do Not Answer these big questions but they do eventually produce an internal experience that is Mysterious and any attempt to explain it will fail.

The practice of the Internal Chinese Martial Arts Do Not Answer these big questions but they do eventually produce an internal experience

that is Mysterious and any attempt to explain it will fail.

The mysterious internal experience of the Internal Chinese Martial Arts is a Mystery and it is the same Mystery as the Mystery of the Why.

The Internal Chinese Martial Arts do not have the answers but they enable you to live with the unknowing.

Paul Brecher is the Senior London Instructor for The World Tai Chi Boxing Association. If you would like more information please call Paul on 020 8264 8074 or visit www.taiji.net

Unity Consciousness in Taijiquan

Franklyn Birbal

The whole universe is an inseparable whole, There is nothing that is not already this one, from the one everything arises and takes form, from the formless the un-manifest,

Pure potential arises.

Taiji follows this same paradigm the realizing of your potential. Through form we achieve the formless the Non technique. But first we must unite the body, the mind and the spirit.

For this we have the taiji Classics and importantly a living human being who is able to pass on the the transmission of the way of taiji, one who is ready to pass on this information and help others up the ladder.

Unite the body, well how do we do that, you first most find the bodies centre, the classics tell us the **qi is issued from the back**, more accurately the spine. Every part of you body revolves around and is connected to you spine. It is the main channel for the body's energies, which we call qi. The spine must be held straight we are told. When the spine is held in this way it has the function of a capacitor, with each vertebra aligning one on top of the other. The chin is drawn in and the waist is held plumb, flattening out the lower back.

Next we must draw the rest of the body into this movement, the shoulders relax down. The weight is held over the heel of the foot mak-

ing sure to keep KI free from obstruction, we connect the full weight of the body with the ground. Breathing naturally through the Abdomen, we now have a united body structure. With it's Central Sun "The spine" grounded with the earth.

Every movement that happens comes from this, **The Hands don't move even one inch with out the spine power**, No turn of the hip no stepping forward with out the central sun making motion happen, Rather like the planets circulating around the sun.

When I first came to taiji Chuan I never knew the great depth the art could go to, now I see the possibilities.

They don't move with out it. Some have heard it, many practice it but few truly understand it. I must admit the moments i perform the form this way are truly wonderful, to issue, release circulate the qi from hear has tremendous benefits from you health and self-defence. **Moving from this point is the reason taiji has such lofty names like the Grand Ultimate Fist.**

So realise its coming from the back in each and every movement, one if not the most important classic "how you move". What happens after this, Yang Cheng fu Taiji Form, Yang Lu-chun's way of taiji, Chi kung, Sung, pushing hands, walking, talking, learning. A whole universe of things to do with the spine will open up for you.

It's been a pleasure writing to you what I think is the most important

thing to happen to my taiji since coming to the WTBA, through which my knowledge of taiji has grown many fold, so come and get the good oil there's a lot to go around.

Human beings live for most of the lives in the consciousness of separation, that is to say they are not fully integrated human beings and this is normal, in that Separation is the playground.

If we where all one, we wouldn't even be able to determine same because that's what makes a difference. At some point from exploration out here, you may find you want to fine your way home, a way of feeling whole again. That which is separate will eventually return to the great unity, the one.

When I first came to taiji Chuan I never knew the great depth the art could go to, now I see the possibilities.

As a young man I was all was interested in why I am here, and what this is. I use to practice many different Meditations, but none so great as *Standing Chi Kung*. One of the first things we learn to do is to be still and stoke the fire.

The fire of the central sun, will begin to do the work necessary to tune you back into nature, But first we have to put energy in to get more energy out

" Investing in loss ". Everyday we must lose a small amount of

are time and effort, to reap a Dailey interest.

It may not seem as if anything is happening, but add up £1 every day for three months and you have some qi you can begin to do something with, as I was soon to discover.

To do Chi Kung we stand with a united body structure completely aligned. The tongue touches the ridge of the upper palate forming and L – shape. This connects a circuit along the energy channels. To stoke the fire we require heat, the bending of the leg provides this heat, which become fuel for your centre the raw material for refining Jing, a more purified form of qi. When bending the legs the knees never protrude beyond the toes. We must bend down low enough while maintaining the straight back and not come up, Simultaneously the hands raise up to form a circle at chest height with palms facing inwards but slightly out with the tile palm hand. The elbows remain over the knees. Breath from the Abdomen to point 3 inch below the navel. Abdominal breathing is what we call normal breathing it's the same breathing the opera singers use and babies of course, "can you be like a baby" they say and the didn't mean crying all the time. A baby has wonderful Sung we need to emulate this in are forms. This first chi Kung position is held for 10 minutes.

The second position we draw the hands down towards the navel we do this by rotating the elbows hands down towards the navel. The hands remain in the same position as first position in a line down only lowered down to navel . This has the act of highly concentrating the chi Built up from the upper Yang movement to Yin movement for this reason it is held for less time.

This position is held for 5 minutes breathing naturally into the navel area.

Upon completion of this movement both hands one on top of the other a brought into the navel and you slowly stand up. (For a more detailed explanation of Chi king please see one Erle's beginners chi Kung DVD's)

Chi Kung gave me my first deep explorations in to working with energy and has been continually deepening over the years. I know feel a flow of force (qi) radical proof to me then the we are not just physical human beings. This qi only began as simple ting lings and afterwards various energetic sessions began to manifest. Heightening my mind body and spirit. It is here we begin to understand what they mean by mind, body, and spirit. They say taijichuan is three-fold. For your health for your self-defence and spiritual unfolding. I prefer to use the term "unfolding" because you already are the one and all that has to be seen is that truth and the embodiment into your life of that. There is an exploration in all areas of this knowing in taiji. **For fighting the body mind spirit must be as one, for Health and spiritual unfolding.**

Now we have some extra qi to do some work with, like this physical problems heal old injuries. You use the natural force in it yin aspect to defend are selves against physical ailments and physical attack from anyone who would won't to rob us of are cultivated good health we take so much care in to preserve.

Why spend you whole life working on good health and spiritual insight when someone can cause you great

harm and it's gone in and instant. That's why Taiji is a balanced art it's always important for you to get home to your family, that's why the self defence exits.

So three in one, personal safety, a healthy life and spiritual unfolding.

Wishing you all bright (qi)

Franklyn Birbal

STUFF

Hayden Chisholm

This wee splurge is if anything a just wee tribute to the teachings and the method of Erle and his network.

It is written by someone who is far from being a Taiji hotshot but who has used some of the teachings in a different way.

I am a Saxophone player and left New Zealand 11 years ago when I was 17 to live in Europe. Since that time I have taught and played in most corners of this planet, from Sydney to Samarkand.

Per chance, one day in 97, I stumbled into a teaching session in a parking building in Oz run by Wally and a few days later in a school hall with Erle.

Not staying longer than a week or so in any place, that was all I got but the impressions still remain. After dancing around in a tai chi suit on a polished wooden floor in a German centre a couple of times this was a breath of fresh air.

There were no questions about who I was or what I did: Wally corrected my form and whipped it into shape before you could say 'yin yang yin'.

Erle walked into the school hall with the same no BS attitude and launched into a formidable teaching display. I don't think I was the only complete beginner that day but the way he integrated us with the rest was something else. In my years teaching Sax I have found out

knowing something about music and teaching it are worlds apart.

Erle's system puts a lot of emphasis on the inner workings of the art. As he himself has written it is here where a lot of music these days seems to have lost its meaning. I can't say much about the state of taiji but I can about music. After meeting 10s of 1000s of musos in my travels I could count the honest ones on my fingers(plus maybe my toes).

Erle walked into the school hall with the same no BS attitude and launched into a formidable teaching display.

When I say honest I mean the ones who understand the inner meaning of their art. And when I say inner meaning that is something I hear the second their fingers hit the strings or the first tone escapes from their mouths. Give me half an hour to play you some examples and you would hear it too (if you don't already!) I'm not talking about what I call the outer shell of the music, that doesn't matter. If you listen to say John Coltrane, or Hendrix, or Japanese Gagaku music, you will probably be touched by something. Even

And yet I can never help thinking sometimes I am teaching people the most obvious facts, things we all know or have known, we just need to be reminded about.

Scottish pilbroch bagpipe music might do it. I probably got a lot of you on that one. The thing is it doesn't matter what the outer shell of the music is, there is an inner force that gives it meaning. Sound familiar?

Where does this force come from? Is it from the breath? The intention? The situation where it is created(ie out of a total necessity? Worth thinking about. With all the waves of sonic BS out there it's about time we opened our ears and got to the essence.

Perhaps music more than any other art is a reflection of the state of the planet today whereas taiji remains somehow unchanged by it. Again something to think about at least. If that's the case we don't seem to be in such great shape at the moment. Another reason to keep plodding away at the forms.

Here's an example of how the small taiji training I did has helped. I recently did a concert in Novosibirsk in Siberia and followed it up with a masterclass at the local conservatory. One after another all these young virtuosi stepped up and ripped it up on their saxes and clarinets. I was supposed to comment through my translator. Technically they could all whip my kiwi ass but there was one thing that suddenly stood out. They were off balance- I could have touched any one of them with my little finger and they would have fallen over. I told them to watch John Coltrane or Maria

Callas on video- two musicians that sprung to mind who for me are like trees when they perform, deeply rooted into the stage. Does this have something to do with this inner force?

You can often catch a musician out when you ask him about how he breathes when he plays a certain phrase or which foot his weight is on at any given time.

Playing the sax is good in the sense that your breath determines your phrase. Teaching someone the saxophone over a period of years is like teaching them how to breathe and move correctly and how to use the breath at a more advanced level. The more breath control you have, the better muso you are, and I apply this to drummers and pianists too.

And yet I can never help thinking sometimes I am teaching people the most obvious facts, things we all know or have known, we just need to be reminded about.

Once you have learnt all the music theory in the world and have mastered your instrument perfectly, what then? You just play. But teaching a lot at conservatories has shown me that something crucial is being left out along the way. It didn't matter if I was in India or South America or Asia or New Zealand- someone seemed to be forgetting to show(or lets say remind) the kids when they were starting out what's behind the music. I would bend my rules a little for Africa. What made it different there was that the kids were given the essence right from the word go, but that's another story for another day.

It's tough for us westerners to get anywhere near the essence of a lot of music from around the world when

we are raised in a straight 4 beat 12-tones-to-the-octave rock, jazz classical environment. As soon as I went to the Balkans and head some Bulgarian 13 beat wedding piece with weird tunings I was blown away. The only way to internalize this for me was to learn the dances. Once the movements were understood I could play it, it made sense and it wasn't a 13 after all, it was another world but that again is a different story.

I could go on for pages but I just wanted to throw some thoughts in, say cheers to Erle and Wally, and maybe open some more ears out there.

Moontagu DVD Titles:

Erle has finally begun his much awaited series "*The Master's Series For Instructors*". This has already become our best selling DVD series even though only two volumes have been completed. See the on-line catalogue for details.

The Full Bagua Animal Forms Volume One: Dragon:

This is something that Erle has wanted to do for many years. He has begun with one of the most beautiful and useful animal forms, the Dragon.

The 12 Secret Yang Family Houses/Rings:

This is also something that Erle has wanted to do for many years and has now begun. See an article on it on the web site. Volume one will be ready soon covering the 3rd Ring or House.

Montaigue's Over Europe:

The European workshops held by Erle Montaigue, Ben and Eli Montaigue have been very well received. So far they have been to Paris, Milan, Lyon, and will be in Madrid and Berlin this Month and into August with London also in May and Norway in June.

Erle is getting in as much as possible before we all move back to Australia possibly before the end of this year. So get down to Swansea for his classes as it may be the last time for some time that you have to experience Erle Montaigue's unique and no BS way of teaching the Internal Arts.

The July WTBA Summer Camp will again be held at the Scout Camp just out of Swansea and if Erle is not playing music on that weekend he will also be there for a while.

Other Montaigue Workshops This Year:

Leicester, Bath, Edinburgh and Ammanford. See the web site for details.