

April 2008
Vol. 59

Tai Chi & Bagua

Combat & Healing

Lead Story Short Tai Chi

Staying 'Soft'

Advanced Mind Power

Suspended From Above

Advanced Mind Power

My Chang San-feng
Moment



Eli Montaigne & Vincenzo Staltari in Italy

PLUS

WTBA NEWS

Tai Chi & Bagua

Editor in Chief

Erle Montaigue

Executive Editor

Sandra Montaigue

Managing Editors

Ben Montaigue

Eli Montaigue

Senior Writers

Erle Montaigue

Senior Copy Editor

Kathleen Montaigue

Copy Editor

Bonnie Montaigue

Research Editor

Aisha Caouche

Research Associates

Erle Montaigue

John Sklotz

Art Director

Goanna Blurnog

Senior Copy Editor

Goanna Gets Tuffed

Copy Editor

Mike Hunt

All of the articles published in this magazine are protected by International Copyright laws. Please contact the publisher for permissions.

We take no responsibility for articles written by other people and published in this magazine.

Moontagu Books
PO Box 35
Gwynfe, Llangadog SA19 9WR
Wales UK

CONTENTS

Page 1Short Tai Chi (And why it is bad for your health!)
Erle Montaigue
Page 3.....Staying Soft.
Erle Montaigue
Page 5.....Suspended From Above.
Erle Montaigue
Page 6Advanced Mind Power
Gavin Mitchell.
Page 17.....7 Layer Taoist bean Salad
Kurt Levens
Page 19.....Choosing, Not Losing
Gavin Mitchell
Page 29.....My Chang San-feng Moment
Don Morgan
Page 30..... Burdock: Annoying & Beneficial
Igor Serenkov
Page 32WTBA NEWS
Page 33.....What's So Good About Tai Chi Form?
Jerry Shaw
Page 37In Search of Chang San-feng
Paul Brecher
Page 41Bagua's Mighty Wooden Man

Shot Tai Chi Forms (Why They Are Bad For Health)

By *Erle Montaigue*

Yang Cheng-fu changed the original Yang Lu-ch'an form that he received from his Father the most that it could have been changed without losing the original essence. In fact, Cheng-fu, in one of his books (written by Chen Wei-ming, as Yang was illiterate), he stated that to change the form any more than he changed it was to bring disaster! Students of Yang Cheng-fu who weren't particularly good students, then came after him and did exactly what Yang had said not to! They changed his form so that we Westerners could do Tai Chi in the park while eating our hamburgers in our lunch break! The Chinese Government went even further and had an old friend of mine, Wang Xin-wu invent even more shortened forms so that Tai Chi could be put into tournaments and be standardized!

So Yang Cheng-fu's words were never heeded and indeed much of Tai Chi today has gone down the "disaster path" just as Cheng-fu had predicted.

I hear from so many who have been practicing shortened forms of Tai Chi for many years who are beginning to get ill for no apparent reason. Then when I tell them about shortened forms and why they shouldn't do them, they begin one of the original longer forms and hey ho, they get well again.

So why does this happen? Aren't we only doing a set of exercise movements? No, of course we

aren't, we are not only doing simple movement, we are also activating and enhancing the energy (Qi) flow in the body through the 12 main and 8 extra acupuncture/dim-mak meridians. This doesn't happen of course if you are only beginning as you are only doing a set of exercise movements. However, when you begin to get more advanced and the energy kicks in, this is when people who do shortened forms get into trouble health wise.

So Yang Cheng-fu's words were never heeded and indeed much of Tai Chi today has gone down the "disaster path" just as Cheng-fu had predicted.

The reason is that the Tai Chi movements have been developed by family generations of genius in the field of body energy and movement. These Masters knew about how the Qi flowed through the body because of their TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) background. They invented a series of movements that would work on the exact same flow of energy that is activated during a 24 hour period when the Qi flows around the body every and is activated in each meridian each 2 hour period. Each movement was meticulously placed in the set of movements to represent each organ in the body and which of those organs were activated by the Qi in a 24 hour period one after the other. So when we practice our Tai Chi ch'uan form, we are actually causing the Qi to become activated in those meridians an extra 3 times! The amazing thing is

that when we finish the Tai Chi form or set of movements, where our Qi flow and activation should have been at that time of the day, is exactly where it should be with nothing out of place! This is why Tai Chi is so good for health, not because of the exercise, but rather what it does for the whole body energy system.

So if someone was to perhaps change the set of movements, placing "Single Whip" posture for instance in a different place and coming after a different posture, this upsets the natural flow of energy. If we were to then leave out certain groups of movements in order to shorten the form, such as "Grasping Swallow's Tail" because that set is repeated 8 times during the form, we also upset the natural flow.

The main excuse for doing shortened forms is that we haven't got the time. What? We can't find 20 or 30 minutes in the morning or afternoon?

The main aim in our Tai Chi practice is to try to emulate the internal flow of energy with a set of natural movements. So we do a posture that works upon the Colon, then we do a movement that works upon the Lung etc. So if we change these postures around, and our movement is linked to our internal Qi/energy, we will upset that balance because our movement is no longer flowing

from one organ to the next. And we then become ill over time, allowing external pathogens into the body because we no longer have protections.

The main excuse for doing shortened forms is that we haven't got the time.

it is perfectly OK to stop after we complete the first, 2nd or 3rd third. The first third only takes between 3 and 5 minutes, so we have a perfectly balanced and health-giving short set of movements right there in the first third of the form!

What? We can't find 20 or 30 minutes in the morning or afternoon? However, what we weren't told is that each third of the original Tai Chi set of movements represents a complete round of Qi/energy through each of the 12 main meridians! So, it is perfectly OK to stop after we complete the first, 2nd or 3rd third. The first third only takes between 3 and 5 minutes, so we have a perfectly balanced and health-giving short set of movements right there in the first third of the form! Or if we want a slightly longer work out, we could do the 2nd third only, or the final third. Much better of course to do all 3 thirds, but if you haven't got the time, this is the only safe way to go. No excuse for learning or teaching a shortened form such as Peking 24 or 48 or any of the Cheng Man-ching short forms. Go for an original long form and you will be much better off in the long run.

Staying 'Soft'

Erle Montague

Ever wondered why the ancients, the old masters from whom we have received all of this information, always stressed many many times that we must be 'soft' or 'relaxed'? It is because both of these translations are indeed the most important part of one's internal training, either for the self defence part or for the self healing or the medical healing areas. However, both of these words might sound great in Chinese and to a Chinese master, they mean everything but to we Westerners, the simply mean what they mean in English or any other Western country language. So most so-called masters and other teachers have taken these words literally in English which has given them a completely incorrect idea of what the internal systems are all about. So we now have 'masters' teaching students that they will be able to defend themselves against sudden violent attack from a raving lunatic in the street, using soft methods! "Just train for a further 30 years in my system and you will finally get it"!

There really aren't any translatable words for 'soft' and 'relax' in Chinese. Both of these words need a sentence or two, in order to say what they old masters really meant. And you must also take in to consideration that when the old masters spoke about Tai Chi ch'uan for instance, they weren't only talking about the slow form but rather the whole shebang of training methods that are present

in all internal systems. What most 'masters' only ever teach and actually know are the initial basic beginner's forms and when we stick the two words 'soft' and 'relax' over the initial basic forms, and especially if those masters then teach that those forms are used for self defence, you get a somewhat different view of what the old masters actually meant!

You can do the basic Tai Chi form for instance slowly, this is relatively easy to do, but try using that in a real street fight and you will lose. The slow form is only about 5% of one's total Tai Chi training and it is the other stuff where the words of soft and relax really come into their own both in the healing and the fighting art.

There really aren't any translatable words for 'soft' and 'relax' in Chinese. Both of these words need a sentence or two, in order to say what they old masters really meant.

When students begin Tai Chi or Bagua, they are told that these arts are 'soft', so they do the initial forms 'softly'. But when, if they are lucky to have a teacher who knows the more advanced methods, they come to the fighting and more advanced training, they tense up, thinking that it is natural to do this as they are now 'fighting'! But this couldn't be further from the truth. The student should be told that when they get to the more advanced areas, those two words are even more important.

When we practice the Pauchui/Large San-Sau form with or without a partner, this is where our sub-conscious learns about yin and yang; and it is this yin and yang that gives us the balance internally which in turn imparts great power with very little energy used. We must use 'soft' AND 'explosive' movements in these advanced forms as well as in the Old Yang Style Tai Chi. The same is pertinent for Baguazhang. It is the 'empty' moves that are most important and this is why we must learn to practice the more advanced forms in a Qigong/Explosive manner. So the movements when for instance we are moving onto the next attacking move should be extremely 'Sung', like the body doesn't exist, you can't even feel yourself moving at this time; your arms are like branches of a tree just swaying in the breeze. But then along comes a huge gust of wind to cause those limbs to explode from the base of that 'softness' and from the base of the trunk, NOT from the arm itself. This only happens for a moment in time and then all is back to swaying in the breeze again until the next huge gust. This is the true meaning of 'soft'. The limbs at the 'soft' times gently re-direct on-coming power in an attack for instance, it causes us to use the BODY rather than then limbs to move around the on-coming power rather than to meet it head on when the attacker might be larger and stronger than us. Then, when

we are in an advantageous position from the sub-conscious body movement, we attack with great force for a moment only, directing pure physical force and energy into the attacker's softer parts and points. This way give us the true meaning of Yin and Yang which is also a section that the old masters spent much time on trying to teach.

All internal fighting arts have the above aspects, especially the advanced explosive forms. In Tai Chi, we are taught to have these explosive movements at certain times during our slow form practice as this gives us the first door into mastery of the art. The all slow forms are fine for when we are ill perhaps and just cannot do the explosive moves; however, even the Old Yang style can be done with all slow movements if one wishes.

When students begin Tai Chi or Bagua, they are told that these arts are 'soft', so they do the initial forms 'softly'. But when, if they are lucky to have a teacher who knows the more advanced methods, they come to the fighting and more advanced training, they tense up, thinking that it is natural to do this as they are now 'fighting'!

As we progress, the forms we learn are more balanced with an even number of 'soft' and 'explosive' movements. Even when doing forms at a very fast pace, there must always be that distinction between Yin and Yang so that even if we are only 'soft' for a split second, it is enough to get that balance. The old masters always

stressed that we must distinguish between Yin and Yang. But they never told us what they actually meant because you cannot tell a stark beginner about things that are only accessible at an advanced level. And this aspect only becomes apparent when one begins more advanced forms and training methods.

Practicing your internal arts in the above manner while practicing the explosive forms, gives you everything you will ever need to have in order to have a healthy and balanced mind and body and once you begin to practice this way, you will have a feeling of greatness or internal balance and all will be well even in the face of adversity.

Suspended From Above

Erle Montaigue

The classic saying of “Perform Tai Chi like you are suspended above by a string” is possibly one of the most misunderstood of all the classics. Most students tend to try to think about a string holding them from above, lifting them up while they perform their Tai Chi. However, this in itself creates tension as it is still a conscious thought process. And we are told that we must not think about anything at all, allowing our inner mind to control everything as we make the movements.

Tai Chi is so perfect that all we rely upon are the postures and the way we make the movements. All of the classic sayings are useless unless we actually know how to move correctly as this is the inbuilt way that the old masters had of showing us the classics. It is my idea that some of them did more harm than good in writing those classics down as we in the West tend to TRY too hard and THINK about the classics while we perform the movements. This in turn makes for tension, thus lessening the effect of our Tai Chi movements. So obviously the WAY we do Tai Chi, is the way that we learn about the classics internally. And the Way we do it, is the way we should learn it. Sadly not many even know the correct way of Tai Chi movement nowadays. All of the Classics are shown to us in the movement and Tai Chi is so perfect that that is all we have to do, the movement!

So when we come to the classic saying of “Suspended From

Above by a Thread” we should never try to think about being held from above or anything like that. All we must be concerned with is doing the movements correctly and this difficult Classic saying will just come.

Having said that there are some things to remember during practice in order to have the classics work. This saying in particular needs some work on the waist and upper body, but still, this body position is also told to us from within the classics.

“The torso must not lean to and fro” And “The backbone must be plumb and erect.”

These two tell us how to move to activate the “suspended from above” classic.

It is very important where you place your weight during practice. For the most part, the weight is placed so that if you draw a line from the crown in a vertical line to the ground, where that line meets the ground, it will cut through where your shin meets the foot, placing that “sweet spot” just after where the front of your heel is on the base of your foot. This is optimum weight placement unless of course you are making one of the postures that requires you to change your weight from heel to ball and back such as “Stork Spreads Wings”, “Fishes In 8 Diagram” etc. We are also told in the classics that there must be weight change with every movement we make. Moves like the aforementioned postures seem like we move without weight change.

However, there is indeed a weight change, brought about by the nature of the self defence application.

So in order to activate the “Suspended” classic all we must do is to hold the upper body correct in that we must ‘go in at the waist’ slightly causing the weight to be placed firmly over that sweet spot just before the heel toward the middle of the foot but not quite.

Once you understand this, you will then FEEL not that you are being lifted up from above but rather that something is pulling on your crown at the GV20 point. The GV20 point or “Bahui” (100 Meetings) is on the mid line of your skull and where a line crosses the mid line from the tip of both ears when you draw a line over your head. You will actually have some kind of feeling at this point and the closest that anyone can get to explaining that feeling is to say that something is pulling up from above. But this is not quite correct, in the same way that many of the translations are incorrect in having no real translation into English, so we have to rely upon our own experiences and feeling when doing the form. And MY feeling could be totally different to yours! All I am able to do is to teach my students correct body positioning from the beginning and that is why my classes are quite pedantic, and rightly so!

Advanced Mind Power – 13 Steps and the 8 Circuit Model

'As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you must be.
Prepare my friends to follow me.'
Megadeth

By *Gavin Mitchell*

The illuminated who have learned the secrets of active mind power have, throughout the centuries, come up against the same pitfalls in their attempt to pass on these secrets to their fellow human beings. On the one hand it is a side effect of being aware that you are master of your own reality, and that you have the choice not to be miserable, self destructive and ineffective, to want passionately to help everyone else to be content, self enhancing and empowered. On the other hand it is impossible to actually fully comprehend any of the truisms of this state unless you are actually there (and, as has been observed by M R James, the state is sadly transitory and fleeting for all but the highly adept). The mind is aware that it yearns for something but it usually knows not what. The first Buddhists were urged not to mistake the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself (modern parlance holds that you shouldn't mistake the map for the territory); or told a story that, if you had an arrow poking through your guts, you'd probably not want to know who forged the arrowhead, who fletched the feathers, who carved the shaft, etc., in preference to yanking the arrow out and patching up the wound (or, in happier modern times, going to the A&E department so they could do it under X-ray and avoid tearing your internals up any further.) It's said that the secrets of the illuminated

do not need to be guarded because they could be shouted in the most crowded marketplaces in the world and nobody would hear them, listen to them, or recognize them for what they were. It has therefore been necessary to bring human beings to awakening almost by trickery, indirectly.

Various meditative and martial techniques have been used and are known for the purpose of becoming enlightened, and they follow the general principle in accordance with the concept of 'fire and water' paths;

Various meditative and martial techniques have been used and are known for the purpose of becoming enlightened, and they follow the general principle in accordance with the concept of 'fire and water' paths; fast dangerous paths are available which can take, it's said, between thirty and ninety days to become enlightened (this does however involve having a very great deal of time available to meditate; this particular approach was patented in modern times in an academic environment during the summer holiday) whereas slow safe paths are available which can take up to twenty years. An average figure is cited for standard, basic meditative practices of between three to eight years. However, a late master of this territory commented with characteristic bite that saying you were enlightened and that the journey was finished was like saying that you'd graduated from high school and you were edu-

cated. Instead, the question usually asked of those who have made the breakthrough, either by their instructors of them or they of themselves is; where do you go from here?

It can be argued that the power of the mind is all that has raised humans up from the mud, brought them down from the trees, stopped them being at the mercy of woolly mammoths, sabre toothed tigers, the occasional anachronistic dinosaur, etc., and usually those who have realized that they control their own reality and have a glimpse of the abilities that active mind power can give them have been loathe to stand still. One question that has always led philosophers and their modern descendants to wonder, with no avail, is what *is* mind. How does the mess of fatty tissue making up the central nervous system translate into consciousness. Do other primates have a mind, a consciousness as humans would recognise it; do other mammals; other vertebrates. (A Zen monk once asked the roshi, or teacher, whether a dog had a Buddha nature. 'Mu!' was the barked answer, which has been variously translated as 'no' 'undefined' or 'don't ask stupid questions'). According to the model of consciousness which will be discussed later on in this article, even the lowest form of self-mobilizing animal life, the worms (it's worth noting that two layer flatworms, living in the sea, can be con-

sidered a far lower degree of evolution than the kind of worms living in the soil which humans usually dig up and look at; these have three entire layers between their skin surface and their digestive system, several more layers of complexity than flatworms or tiny, single layered roundworms) have a mind comparable to the very lowest levels of human functioning. Note therefore that the presence of mind does not depend on possessing a central nervous system. That which even remotely resembles a human's CNS does not begin to appear in evolutionary terms until the first vertebrates, long after the worms.

It is this first level mind which allows the worm or simple creature to move forward towards food or pleasurable stimulus or backwards away from enemy or painful stimulus. It could be argued that the strength or otherwise of this first level mind is what therefore enables survival of the fittest, or evolution; creatures which are quicker to move towards food and away from enemy obviously survive better and live to reproduce more often than those who do not. Thus the power of the mind really is what has enabled humans to evolve from tiny worms burrowing in the muck. And it can be seen that even a worm has great power. What if a worm were suddenly to have the power of a human?

It is argued by the most advanced practitioners of active mind power that this comparative level of power, to be as far beyond a human as a human is beyond a worm, is available to everyone, but is blocked to them due to their lack of enlightenment; also, they are so blinded by their own barred

reality that they don't even know what they're missing. Even modern science holds that far more of the brain is available for use than is ever utilised by the vast majority of people. In attempting to explore and exploit these unused areas of the brain, practitioners of advanced mind power have set out to map the territory. While no chart can ever fully reflect any true geography, these prometheans have done their best to codify their findings in ways that other humans can readily understand and put into practise. These codices have needed to be altered and re stated to be comprehensible for each successive culture, but as modern anthropology holds all humans and their cultures are in essence the same; and what is said has always been known but has needed to be repeated, again and again, for another body of people in another time.

It is this first level mind which allows the worm or simple creature to move forward towards food or pleasurable stimulus or backwards away from enemy or painful stimulus.

One model that is likely to be most readily apprehended to modern inhabitants of a Western industrialised society, particularly those who also study the martial arts and the meditative practises associated with them, draws on both basic maths and recent scientific models of the central nervous system. The overarching framework can be called the *thirteen steps*. It will be readily apparent that thirteen is the total of five plus eight, a set of figures which will be quite familiar to

practitioners of xingyi, bagua and taiji – or those who've read the article on thirteen postures further up the page. In the same way as the thirteen postures can be divided into the eight trigrams and the five elements, the thirteen steps can be divided into the *thirteen keys* and the *thirteen gates*. The thirteen keys are essentially, the secrets of advanced mind power – those which, when their truth is realised, will enable the individual to know that they are in control of their own reality; they will be discussed briefly further on. The thirteen gates can be further subdivided into five *operations* and eight *procedures*, and five *levels* and eight *circuits*. While the operations, procedures and levels all warrant thorough and exhaustive study, it is the thirteen keys and the eight circuits which will form the basis of this article.

The first few of the thirteen keys are quite simple. The first merely invites the aspirant to realise that Sense their personality is only a role that they play, then their personality is in fact an illusion and infinitely mutable; therefore, if you can *be* anything you can *do* anything. The second states that you must realise that you are a character in a story and you write not only the middle, but the beginning and then end. Those who would doubt the notion of writing the beginning of the story, thinking that it's already been written for them, would do well to think carefully about how they have sometimes realised that their memory of events is starkly at

variance with concrete evidence as to what actually happened. This can be shocking enough when it is simple events, but the aspirant must expand their consciousness to the whole of the story they've created for their lives, their self perception of how they came to be, and how this tallies with what actually happened in verifiable facts (who, what, when, how, why, where, and so on and so forth). They will soon find that literally any story can be made up around any events, and thus they really do write both the beginning, and the end, of their self created tale, and are doing so at this very moment. (The notion that different accounts can be constructed of the same events but all accounts reinforce the essential truth has been used both in the Japanese classic story Rashomon and the Gospels.) It is this viewpoint which has been taken as the therapeutic model for the school of psychotherapy known as transactional analysis, in which the counsellor helps the client to realise that by writing their own story to their detriment they have led themselves into a self defeating situation, and assists them to change their own story to give a more positive outcome. Transactional analysis, particularly as it is done by trained accredited personnel (hopefully) under supervision, is far gentler and more safe than the method outlined here; beginning students must be careful.

Another means of stating the same truth is simply that advanced mind power is realising that you are free; or conversely, that you are in a self created prison, a prison created by your beliefs, your opinions, your self perceptions, and ultimately your

senses. This is a therapeutic model used by the cognitive-behavioural model of psychotherapy, and the attempt is made by the therapist to help the client realise that the core beliefs they've created for themselves, the prison, are holding them back and limiting them to self limiting or self destructive behaviour. The goal of cognitive behavioural therapy is to help the client realise this and help them create a more light and airy prison for them to move around in, whereas the goal of advanced mind power is to shatter the prison altogether and drag the aspirant into the wild four winds, the wide open space and the blinding light of day. Needless to say, one approach is more dangerous than the other and needs to be treated with appropriate care.

it's said that any separation between yourself and external reality is an illusion and all things are essentially one, or interlinked.

A couple of other keys have been used as mottoes of groups that have attempted to teach advanced mind power to their initiates. A recent variant on an old theme has been that nothing is true and everything is permitted, that everything holding you back from realising your full potential and genius is a self created illusion. This was a reworking of a prior motto which stated that the only law you should have was that you should do what you willed. Will was however here used in the special context of being true to your own essential nature, also known as the way of the Tao in that philosophy; rather than an excuse for wanton licentiousness and anarchy. It was held that if

everyone followed their own essential nature chaos, evil and depravity would not in fact be the result but universal harmony, peace and love. This is naturally a goal as likely as universal enlightenment, but it is still useful for the aspirant to consider the concepts.

A couple more keys have been used as mental exercises that have been given to those who have reached various stages in organisations that have set out to teach advanced mind power. One being the notion that everything that happens to you and everything you are aware of is your own responsibility; this naturally follows on from the notion that Sense the only reality you have is your own perceptions, and you are responsible for creating your own perceptions, therefore you control your own reality. Another, similar exercise holds that every action you take is an interaction between yourself and the whole of the manifest universe. There are two possible interpretations for this; one being that Sense the only universe, the only reality, that you can have is what you perceive, and the more you understand the more control you can have over it, then to possess more understanding, more perception, is to possess more reality. Conversely, it's said that any separation between yourself and external reality is an illusion and all things are essentially one, or interlinked. Zen Buddhism describes this as *tatvam asi*, or 'that thou art' and describes it as a realisation that can be brought about by the cessation of all physical, mental and emotional activity

– the Za Zen system of seated meditation which can be said to take three to eight years to achieve enlightenment.

Other keys are perhaps more confusing. One holds that it is reality that is the lie; because your apprehension of the outside world is fundamentally distorted by your own perceptions, beliefs, views of it and so forth, it is untrue and always will be untrue, unless by realising this you can break through to the underlying essential truth. A corollary to this is the notion that anything anyone ever tells you is a lie, because they can never fully know your reality; they will always view their own as implicitly true. (This is usually one of the first points made in any communication course, that what one party sees as a self evident truth, so obvious it may never be questioned or indeed brought into consciousness, may be totally untrue for the other party, and again never questioned or brought into consciousness. It is what enables books such as *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* to make such a colossal fortune). A logical conclusion is that therefore, nobody can ever step outside their own reality as it is never questioned – at least those who do not know the secrets of active mind power. One inference from this is that if people are imprisoned by their own reality, then manipulating it can be used to manipulate them. Naturally, Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism, with roots in India and Tibet and adopted by the legendary ninja, has it that if you use this key to do anything other than help bring people to enlightenment you will go mad. Hopefully this is a caveat that still works on the unscrupulous; but the student

should still be careful who they choose to trust.

Some further keys become progressively more disturbing and the student is urged to view them with caution. One states, quite baldly, that the end of all hope is the birth of all freedom, a concept that should be considered with care. Another idea to be applied with discretion is that to truly vary your reality you have to hallucinate on command; obviously you need to be able to stop hallucinating and return to consensus reality as required as well. Perhaps most dangerous of all is the notion that Sense people are completely immersed in their culture, their mythos, to the point that they can never question its assumptions or even bring them into conscious awareness, the only way to make any real progress is to go insane, to exterminate all rational thought. It goes without saying that prior to this, the student must take care that they can find their way back again lest they might never benefit from their insights, or anything else besides.

if people are imprisoned by their own reality, then manipulating it can be used to manipulate them.

One a lighter note, the final key that will be presented is an amusing little anecdote that was told by possibly the greatest master of advanced mind power of all time and the one who has done the most recent and voluminous work on the subject. During the time of Queen Victoria, two extremely posh young gentlemen were travelling in their excoats from Cambridge University (for such was the milieu in which the master ex-

isted at the time) in the same carriage on a train. The one youthful aristocrat noticed that his travelling companion was carrying a shoe box with holes punched around the lid. He pursed his lips and uttered, without a trace of self referential, post modern irony such as might possess the modern raconteur, 'I say old chap,' he said, 'whatever are you carrying in that shoe box?'

'That would be a mongoose, old bean,' said the other cavalier, taking a snifter of the finest brandy and puffing out a dense cloud of smoke from an extraordinarily expensive cigar.

'Why ever would you be carrying a mongoose? Seems a dashed rum affair,' exhorted the other gallant, taking a pinch of the best snuff and offering it to his companion, who graciously accepted and followed up the gift with the response of a cigar and a balloon of cognac.

'Well, my good fellow,' exclaimed the bearer of the mongoose, 'it is a very sad business. My good friend, with whom I was at Charterhouse, has sadly had the misfortune of his family being reduced to the poorhouse thanks to pater's gambling debts. My chum might have been able to salvage his own situation had he not had the most overwhelming fondness for the tippie. Sadly his dire straits did not motivate him to better things, but sadly to drown his brain, and drink every remaining drop of the family wealth, in gin. Unfortunately he now resides in Bedlam, and has entered the

final stages of delirium tremens. He now cannot shake the notion that his body is crawling entirely with snakes at every passing moment, and his body is so ravaged by the demon drink that he is not long for this world. I have brought him the gift of this mongoose in order to ease the long, painful hours before his final passage from this mortal coil.’

‘But, my good fellow, surely you can see that a ruddy mongoose won’t help with the vapours?’ exclaimed the first gentleman, tapping his cigar ash vigorously into the proper receptacle. ‘It’s merely bally unfair to the poor blighter to get his hopes up.’

‘But ah well, you see, my good man,’ smiled the second gentleman; and paused to relight his cigar which had gone out, and then blow a succession of expanding smoke rings, each through the middle of the one before. ‘This is an *imaginary* mongoose.’

The remaining keys are left as an exercise for the reader to find.

The eight circuit model of consciousness is one which should be readily comprehensible to the modern person, particularly if they have studied martial arts. On the one hand it bears at least a nodding acquaintance with modern scientific models of the brain, and on the other hand the ultimate goal of all the combative disciplines is to correctly utilise in its correct function circuit 1, which is associated with the reptile brain; and many martial arts do explicitly state this and attempt to overtly train it.

Circuit 1 is more formally called however the *bio survival circuit* and is present in all multi celled animals. Note that calling it the

reptile brain is actually the result of cross-correlating the eight circuit model with the triune model, which is an attempt to divide up the human brain into three parts based on its resemblance to the brains of other orders of animal. Thus, the human brain can be said to be made up of the reptile brain, which resembles that of reptiles; the paleo-mammalian brain, which resembles that of other mammals; and the neo-mammalian, which is unique to humans. The mapping of each of these brains to the first four circuits will be discussed in turn. However, the reader should be aware that the mapping is an attempt to draw a comparison between a conceptual model and a physical one – both of which are in themselves approximations of reality which can never totally reflect reality (like all models.) It is a useful conception only and should not be taken as dogma. It is for this reason that ‘the reptile brain’ can be seen in operation in all creatures from reptiles on down to roundworms. Circuit 1 is a function of ‘mind’ (which is a term to be used with caution as will be explained) and not a function of physical structure.

The eight circuit model of consciousness is one which should be readily comprehensible to the modern person, particularly if they have studied martial arts.

Circuit 1, put simply, allows the multi celled organism to move productively along one dimension – *forwards*, towards favourable conditions, like food, a welcoming environment, and so forth – and *backwards*, away from unfavourable conditions, like an enemy, a

disagreeable environment, and so on. Circuit 1 relates simply and only to survival and, when the organism’s life is threatened, circuit 1 operates first and shuts down all other circuits. In particular it shuts down all sense of time and – unless trained by the various methods that will be outlined – consciousness as well, so that threatened with deadly danger humans will react completely without thought, and note time dilation effects after the event – assuming they survive. It is for this reason that the function of all martial arts is to train circuit 1, or the reptile brain as it is usually called in this context. This is because humans have not usually learned the best reactions on this circuit (modern living does not tend to present it with appropriate stimuli) and when danger threatens and circuit 1 kicks in, it is not particularly useful to the human organism to cower or freeze. Therefore the goal is to retrain the circuit to carry out more useful and life preserving techniques when it is activated. Chi kungs exist to strengthen the reptile brain, and the various disciplines like push hands and applications exist to drill more useful reactions into this bio survival circuit.

Humans who are primarily motivated by **circuit 1**, seeking out immediately pleasurable conditions or experiences and with no other reaction to unpleasant ones than to move away again tend to be *viscerotonic*, and tend to resemble grown up babies to lesser or greater degree. They tend to be overweight and

have underdeveloped muscular structures. However, this is not to say that the circuit is a bad one in moderation; all need to be exercised in balanced proportion with the others, thus those who are primarily motivated by other circuits should indulge in mindless pleasures every once in a while. Persons with poorly adapted bio survival circuits tend to have a lot of chronic symptoms which are associated with stress, as a result of the circuit 1 flight or fight syndrome being too often activated in response to non life threatening artefacts of the Western world such as paychecks and redundancy. Therefore they are usually more susceptible to disease. In particular these individuals tend to have non-efficient breathing and it is for this reason that the martial arts, in their quest to retrain this circuit, almost always have breathing discipline as an essential component. This misplaced stress also manifests as chronic muscular contractions in inappropriate places (usually all over the body) which is often referred to as *armouring*. Most martial arts, of course, attempt to retrain the muscular reactions as well. According to various psychological theories Circuit 1 is called the *natural child* and is associated with *sensation* or the *id*. How well circuit 1 functions determines how much people exhibit of anxiety or self-confidence, rootedness or explorativeness, dependency or independence.

Circuit 2 is formally called the *emotional territorial circuit* and maps to the paleo-mammalian brain in the triune brain model. It is worth noting that it is considered to map this way because it is primarily associated with the al-

pha-led pack structures primarily evidenced by higher mammals such as wolves, mercats, gorillas and so on. While circuit 1 can be said to be possessed by everything below mammals, it is worth noting that crocodiles, snakes and so forth are rarely the subjects of the soap-style nature documentaries which give names and personalities to all the monkeys, desert dwelling rodents and so on and explains their interactions in terms of circuit 2 led behaviour. The reptiles and their ilk are not so fascinating as they lack this circuit, and its concomitant social hierarchies. It is for this reason that circuits 1 and 2 have been called the reptilian and paleo-mammalian brains; bear in mind that there is little other cause, however.

The emotional territorial circuit introduces the dimensions of *up* and *down*, in two senses; the first being the simple distinction of vertical displacement first learned when the infant starts to stand up, and the second being in terms of superiority and inferiority in terms of hierarchies and power politics – the typical pack structures of the alpha led, more evolved mammals. It is this circuit which is associated with such behaviour as making oneself look bigger, beating the chest, roaring, flinging excreta at the object of contempt, etc., to indicate dominance – and this behaviour is all too obvious in human beings to those who look. It is also associated with hunching up to look smaller, lowering the head, and cringing and cowering away, to indicate submission to the superior force. The superior individual builds themselves *up* while the inferior individual shrinks themselves *down*. In these behaviours, the differences between hu-

mans and other mammals are non existent; only the next circuits up introduce differences. Persons who are primarily active on this circuit tend to be musculatonic – they look like typical alpha types, male or female, with muscular physical structures, rippling abs, bulging pecs, mirrorshades, and the other characteristics of the typical 80s action movie hero.

It is at this point that the two-dimensional interaction of the first two circuits – forward and backward, up and down – leads to the four types of person which have been the simplest means of dividing people up in terms of personality Sense ancient times. If forward and backward correspond to friendliness and hostility, and up and down correspond to strength and weakness, then the four classical characteristics can be seen as Sanguine (friendly strength) Bilious (hostile strength) Phlegmatic (friendly weakness) and Choleric (hostile weakness). These can also be identified respectively with fire, air, water, and earth, and the lion, eagle, human and bull, conceptions which recur in all cultures. In terms of transactional analysis, they translate into 'I'm OK, You're OK' 'I'm OK, You're Not OK' 'I'm Not OK, You're OK' and 'I'm Not OK, You're Not OK'. Naturally, these four divisions are extremely basic, but that they have survived from classical times indicates that perhaps after all there is never smoke without fire.

Note that blind, unquestioning obedience to any of these extremes is neurosis and poor

functioning. It is most efficient to exist the majority of the time somewhere in the middle of the two axes and move out into one of the four points or corners as the situation demands. However, those who have received a poor mental programming are incapable of conceiving of being any other way than they are. The purpose of both transactional analysis and mandala therapy (a form of Buddhist meditation concentrating on a four-fold geometrical figure, whose resemblance to the two way axis is clear) is to correct these imbalances and try to produce a more rounded human being. In various psychological theories Circuit 2 is associated with the *adapted child* and the faculty of *feeling* or the *ego*. How well this circuit functions determines how much people display dominance or submission, self confidence or self doubt, strong ego or weak ego, high pack status or low pack status, giving orders or taking orders. Approximately 50% of people are primarily active on the first or second circuits.

Circuit 3 is called the *time binding semantic circuit* or *symbolic circuit* and is the first which can be called uniquely human. Along with Circuit 4, it is associated with the neo-mammalian brain, which is again uniquely human. (And again, there is little other reason for mapping the two concepts this way; note that the neo-mammalian brain is associated with two circuits whereas the previous brains were associated with just one, which should indicate that no system will ever map completely to another; which should *then* indicate that all models are only imperfect approximations of reality.) The third circuit enables humans

to use *symbols*, which leads to the possibility of the transmission and replication of human culture with first the spoken and then the written word. The symbolic capacity enables humans to make abstractions, which in turn leads to mathematics, musical notation, pictures, blueprints, maps, artefacts, and so on. It is this circuit which is most commonly associated with the human mind, and at this point the reader can wonder whether or not any animal other than man has a consciousness as they can comprehend it. Fluency with this circuit is most commonly associated with intelligence as almost all means of measuring or judging intelligence in contemporary society depend on human beings' ability to comprehend and manipulate symbols – at the most basic level, words and numbers – whereas colloquial means of measuring intelligence, such as communication and persuasion skills, mechanical, electronic or IT aptitude, artistic skill, etc. *also* all depend on the semantic circuit. In psychological theory Circuit 3 is called the *adult* or *computer* and is associated with *reason*. People in general are more usually controlled by the lower two circuits, so that Circuit 3 is often drawn into producing bizarre pseudo-logic to justify bio-survivalist or emotional-territorial goals. The semantic circuit rarely operates purely save on abstract issues with no emotional response, those that are not perceived to affect the person's survival or territory. Conversely, it is also usually easy to manipulate people by appealing to the lower circuits, and not to their reason; a fact known to orators and demagogues Sense time immemorial.

In terms of the previously introduced axes the semantic circuit now adds a third dimension, that of left and right where circuit 1 is forward and back and circuit 2 is up and down. It is these three dimensions which humans find most readily imaginable and which led to the first developments of geometry by the ancient mathematicians. Persons primarily active on the third circuit tend to be cerebrotonic, and look like stereotypical eggheads, poindexters, nerds, Goths and the tall, skinny teenagers who, having painted their bedroom ceiling black, lie on their bed listening to the Smiths. They are often hostile to their lower circuit functions, confused and resentful of the overpowering of their rationality. Time only begins to be experienced on the second circuit (when a person is ruled by circuit 1, they have no concept of time) but is conceptualised on the third circuit. The third circuit is also the first which shows any sign of progress in human endeavour – the second two do nothing other than maintain the status quo. It is the third which allows conscious evolution or development. How well the human functions on the third circuit depends how much they display fluency or inarticulateness, dexterity or clumsiness, cleverness or stupidity.

Circuit 4 is called the *social sexual circuit* or *domestic circuit* and is primarily associated with *morality*. It is, along with Circuit 3, associated with the neo-mammalian brain. It is by programming of the fourth cir-

cuit during puberty and adolescence that the human acquires a social sexual role. In psychological theory, it is associated with the *parent* and the *superego*. It is due to this circuit's operation that sexual taboos and morality – and by extension, taboos and morality regarding all behaviour – arise and are enforced by the social machine. This morality has generally been the result of attempting to exercise control over a very difficult, frightening, unpredictable and uncontrollable area of human life. Arbitrary and bizarre as many, if not most or all, taboos and morals can be perceived to be, they have all been an attempt to control the uncontrollable in the hope of producing a better result, however the prevailing society might have worked this out at the time. The primary function of this circuit is to produce a responsible parent – it is worth noting that reptiles are typically indifferent to their young, mammals care for their young for a limited period, but humans care for their young for the greatest period of time, up to and including forever. Those who are primarily active on this circuit are always physically attractive, as they are always generating the appropriate signals. The morality defined by this circuit attempts to make human society stable and place checks on the otherwise unfettered progress of circuit 3 – those who pay attention to the media will note that all but the most innocuous of scientific discoveries is always accompanied by an absolute paroxysm of moral outrage in the press, usually based on an extremely limited understanding of the innovation in question which the press does little to discourage, their ultimate goal being to sell papers or advertising time. Faced with this clam-

our the government then usually regulate the possible progress inherent from the discovery to a crawl, so that circuit 4 is satisfied.

At this point it is possible once more to divide persons into another four types; which can be combined with the previous four to give sixteen. For instance, those who are viscerotonic and active mainly on the first circuit can be considered to be the element of earth. Those who are musculatonic and active mainly on the second circuit can be associated with water. The cerebrotonic and rational who are active primarily on circuit 3 can be associated with air and those who are active primarily on circuit 4 can be associated with fire. The combinations are therefore air/air, air/water, water/fire etc. Acute consciousness of time now appears in this circuit, giving the final fourth dimension, as the parent's primary concern begins to be for the future of their children – or the moralist's primary concern begins to be for the future of their society's way of life. How well a person functions on the fourth circuit determines whether they appear moral or immoral, obedient or disobedient, citizen or outlaw, parent or anarchist. Most communication breakdowns occur when someone primarily acting from the pressures of one circuit attempts to convey something of importance to someone acting on another and the priorities, context and meaning are completely missed. Transactional analysis, by considering the typical roles of each circuit, attempts to fix this. Around 20% of people are primarily active on the third or fourth circuits.

Circuit 5 is called the *holistic neurosomatic circuit* and it is the first which starts to give the possibilities of evolution in this lifetime into the post- or meta-human arena. In the martial and meditative disciplines it is most accurately described by the concept known as Kundalini, and it is worked upon by the disciplines of chikung and pranayama (which are essentially the same with different practises and terminology.) It can also be called *psychosomatic*, which while being less accurate does convey in the colloquial sense the recognition associated with fifth circuit activation that most if not all diseases are self-created and can be got rid of in the same fashion; the circuit also allows the healing of one's own injuries and diseases that have been incontrovertibly caused by outside agents, and is thus also associated with the disciplines of Reiki and energy healing. Unlike the first four circuits, it does not activate in all human beings, and in accordance with the old practise of only teaching the internal martial arts or the esoteric elements of religion to those who had survived into their forties, it most often starts functioning around this age group (but can be self-induced at a younger age.) Circuit 5 activation typically removes most minor mental and physical health problems and greatly assists with more serious ones. It also produces a sense of personal joy, delight or happiness which is worth the price of admission alone (of course, this happiness is realistic and does not prevent the person being dis-

comfited or vexed by inauspicious circumstances and dealing with them appropriately.) It is possible to have negative effects from activating the circuit incorrectly (as with all the other circuits) such as from unsupervised chi kung or pranayama exercises (or those taught by the incompetent, unscrupulous or irresponsible) or from forcing excessive quantities of chi energy into a person (often in misguided attempts to induce activation of this circuit or over ambitious goals in healing) but these negative effects do usually work themselves out in time and allow the person to reap all the benefits of the correctly activated circuit. (This should not encourage the student to not exercise due care in selecting teachers or performing disciplines unsupervised though.) Many who have awakened circuit 5 in themselves or had spontaneous activation have been through significant periods of negative experience, to the point that this common occurrence of reaching circuit 5 the hard way has come to be called passing through the dark night of the soul or the abyss. In most cases these persons have battled through the negative and reached the positive, being left with all the benefits outlined above, hugely enhanced personal abilities and glimpses of the possibilities inherent in the higher circuits (usually circuit 5 activation is an extreme encounter with energy which temporarily blasts through circuits 6-8 as well, letting the individual know that there are yet more heights to reach.) A fortunate few manage to miss out the difficulties on their own, and negative experiences can be avoided altogether by judiciously following the safety tips of competent chi kung and pranayama teachers and manuals. Keeping

the tongue on the roof of the mouth is particularly important in most practices as it allows the energy to form a correct, closed circuit rather than 'shorting' through an open, broken one.

The enhanced good mood of the circuit 5 active person causes them to be pleased by most situations (except those which are obviously seriously unpleasant). With this circuit's activation most of the pointless and inappropriate drives of the lower four circuits (adrenaline stress in the wrong situations, pack-predator jockeying for position, rationalist disbelief and disgust at one's own drives, and excessive sexual desire and frustration or moral outrage) can be seen for what they are and their functions redirected more appropriately. It also gives them considerably heightened energies which can be felt by those around them (often translated as charisma, which is also held to come from above-normal reserves of chi energy). In many cases this increased energy can be felt by nearby people resulting in similar, lesser circuit 5 experiences often translating to physical or mental healing (the student is warned to be exceedingly careful about seeking out this kind of experience, or attempting to create it, as charlatans and manipulators are plentiful and disturbed people looking for the perfect guru on whom to hang their mental problems still more so.) Currently, around 20% of the human population are circuit 5 active, though it is not often permanently in operation. Enhanced intuition and creativity are also benefits associated with this circuit, as is seeing the 'big picture' and the connections between events. It also gives one the ability to think outside the box of the

usual four dimensions and think multi-dimensionally. Bear in mind however that being automatically able to communicate these experiences is not necessarily a part of them, and in most cases any attempt to do so results in the whole thing sounding nonsensical; which leads to one of the problems people find on attempting to teach others which, wanting to share their bliss, they almost inevitably do. Great skill on the third circuit is also required to convey the material in a way that it will be comprehensible to those who have not activated the fifth circuit. The progression from the fourth circuit to the fifth circuit is often referred to as utilising the sexual energy to think with, and indeed one is no longer troubled by the excessive drives of the fourth circuit, or the previous three. The problems of fourth circuit guilt, third circuit perplexity, second circuit bullying and cowardice and first circuit body symptoms are wiped out by the fifth circuit.

It is possible to tell if someone has successfully activated the fifth circuit by whether they appear in glowing good health, and rarely have to visit a doctor. Most primitive tribes depend on their 'witch doctor' or shaman; someone who is fifth circuit active and skilled in using these energies to heal others. Those who have spontaneous openings of the fifth circuit have often had prolonged serious illnesses, have come close to dying, or have had sudden, shocking brushes with death; resulting in one of the benefits of fifth circuit activation being the complete loss

of the fear of mortality (which is often described as immortality; this is then often mistranslated from East to West as literal invincibility of the body or soul, which is not originally quite what was meant). One of the most famous examples of this is the Russian author Dostoyevsky, who lived in the years of political turmoil coming up to the last gasps of the Czars. Found to be involved in a plot to blow up the royal ruler of Russia, he was sentenced to death and got as far as having the guns trained on him before a last-minute pardon (commuted to incarceration and hard labour in Siberia). This experience activated his fifth circuit leading to a huge enhancement in his writing and universal fame both during and after his lifetime. In the modern day, free fall can also induce fifth circuit activation so long as the recipient is ready. Note however that circuit 5 can only be permanently activated by a great deal of time, practise and adeptship at the meditative and martial disciplines, while those at a lower level must be sustained with glimpses. Fortunately, these are usually enough.

Circuit 6 is called the *collective neurogenetic circuit* or *morphogenetic circuit* and hinges on the brain being able to interrogate the person's own DNA. If evolution is believed, then human DNA has come all the way from single celled organisms. It is not generally known that human DNA strands are many hundreds of times longer than those of the simplest creatures, and the length of the strands and the number of the chromosomes are in proportion to the size and complexity of the organism; also, at least 99% of this DNA is useless in humans

and is called 'junk' DNA. Conversely, the evolutionary divergences between humans and their closest neighbours have been determined by finding how many genes differ; in humanity's closest neighbour the number is one alone. As creatures diverge further from humanity the numbers of genes differing still increase by only single figures, with all the rest of the DNA remaining in common. It is not therefore too much of a stretch to conclude that the human genome still contains all the genetic codes of all the creatures humanity has been Sense it crawled from the primordial soup, hidden in the junk DNA that is never activated; and that therefore, the knowledge of the last four point five billion years is held in human body chemistry.

Those experiencing circuit 6 activation usually speak of memories of past lives coming to the fore, or of speaking with angels. It is worth nothing though that this is only their own experience which is coloured by their own beliefs and expectations, and possibly the abstract nature of communicating with DNA is such that it has to be dressed in such apparel; the archetypes of the collective unconscious, the recurring characteristics of myth and legend. It is not usually possible to deliberately activate circuit 6 other than through very prolonged practise of the circuit 5 activation techniques, once already stable on the level of the fifth circuit. It is occasional accidental flashes or indirect access that enable the experiences to be believed to be past life memories, angelic visions, contact with universal archetypes, synchronicity of coincidence or reprisal of ancient mythic or legendary themes. Hold-

ing all this information within it, it is possible to conceptualise the DNA macro-molecule as having its own intelligence and continuity of (un)consciousness and experience, within which the life and death of individual organisms are merely minute waves on an endless sinusoidal graph. Contact with this existence would be interpreted by each person according to their own beliefs and desires, leading to the variety of accounts with a few common themes. By accessing this hidden knowledge that is billions of years old and making sense of it with the lower circuits, the human can reap great benefits, however occasional they might be. Perhaps around 5% of people are stable on the sixth circuit.

Circuit 7 is called the *metaprogramming circuit* or the *neuroelectric circuit* and is associated with the mind being able to become aware of itself being made up of the first six circuits and being able to step outside itself. It is known as the 'no mind' or *mushin* state in the meditative arts, where the conditioned self is essentially lost and one realises that one is merely wearing an infinite sequence of masks, playing an endless series of roles, or being manipulated by the drives of the lower circuits. It is the realisation that the mind and its contents are functionally identical. Once the mind has stepped outside of itself and is aware of itself, it becomes possible for the mind to *reprogram* itself. This can then be used to enhance one's own abilities, bring back to the surface long forgotten knowledge,

or induce interesting new points of view. This circuit can be used to reprogram and overrule all of the earlier circuits. It is possible to activate and program this circuit by visiting Da Mo's cave in the article of the same name above, then utilising a super computer created in the cave which has been conceived to be able to do all of the above; or, one can use the methods of writing out sentences multiple times or turning sentences into abstract shapes from the previous article on active mind power further up the page to attempt to achieve the same goals. Two things are however important, particularly when starting off; the aspirant must have no doubts in their own mind at all when performing the techniques, otherwise they are automatically sabotaged (think of it as the computer picking up your doubts and interpreting them as a desire for failure) and concomitantly with this, the aspirant should start off *very* small as this circuit is very easy to self-sabotage. (There are unlikely to be any ill effects, it just will not work but may damage confidence for future attempts.) It is difficult to comprehend this circuit, as with all the higher ones, from a viewpoint that is much further down the chain, but it does work so long as the caveats are observed. Approximately 3% have really mastered the seventh circuit.

Circuit 8 is called the *non local quantum circuit*, the *psycho atomic circuit*, the *neuro atomic circuit* or the *metaphysiological circuit*. It is associated with experiences whereby the consciousness seems to step outside of the body and central nervous system entirely, access information and knowledge at a distance such as is

associated with ESP, or even create effects at these distances. This has been fairly well documented, with considerable research being done in the West on those who have had this experience while close to death, and into psionics in the East by the old Soviet empire. It is actually mathematically proven to be possible by a quantum mechanical formula called Bell's Theorem. This holds that every particle in the universe is in instantaneous communication with every other particle; that the whole makes up one single system. Bell's Theorem cannot be mathematically disproven and therefore must be true; experiments involving it have been replicated successfully several times. However, in order for Bell's Theorem to accord with Special Relativity, which also cannot be disproven and has considerable experimental support, what is transmitted instantaneously cannot be energy (which, as mass-energy, is bound by Special Relativity to be incapable of exceeding the speed of light) but can instead be consciousness or information; neither of which might necessarily need energy or mass. Perhaps only 2% of people, if that, are stable and active on the eighth circuit with goals and thoughts entirely beyond those of the rest of us.

Those who set out on the path of physical, mental and spiritual self improvement rarely realise where it will take them, or have the same goals at the middle of the road as when they started; however, to those struggling with the most basic of forms, katas or mind-quieting techniques at the start of their journey it can be reassuring to know it is possible to go anywhere at all. To those at the

beginning of the path the advanced keys of mind power or the higher circuits of human consciousness can seem attainments that are impossibly far off, and yet the mind does not want to stop when it has started on the route and will likely continue on despite all the doubts and fears of the student. (Which does not mean they can just give up practising). The road can seem difficult, troubling, disturbing and dangerous and can have many pitfalls, particularly if the student lacks access to one who has gone before (the exact translation of 'sensei' in Japanese tradition) but in all cases it is possible to come through the fire or darkness, and realise as one great practitioner said that every man and woman is a star, and as another great explorer said, when the doors of perception are cleansed, all will appear as it truly is, infinite.

7 Layer Taoist Bean Salad Training

Kurt Levens

When one first enters the world of the Tao it can be very confusing. Whether it is through the classical study of Taoism or the more popular means of studying a Taoist based art such as Tai Ji, it can be a world full of confusing and apparently contradictory information.

If you are a beginner, do not become frustrated at this. Just know this, wherever you are right now, whatever you are learning, whatever move you are struggling with is right for you at the moment. Oh boy, you think, some more confusing stuff. Yes you are right, for the Tao that can be seen, is not the Tao.

In a recent seniors class (senior means older folks not senior student) one very nice lady grew frustrated and was insulted by something I told her. She claimed to be having a bad day and could not get anything right. I told her to stop thinking and talking like that and just do the small portion of the form that she knew. She continued protesting in frustration.

At this point in her training she was not going to “get the form right.” She was still in a learning and not doing process. To use Taoist terms, she was still in “wu ji”- the potential stage. In a short period of time she would be moving into “tai ji.” Great more Chi-

nese psycho mumble. Yes and no. Even more confusing.

At that time, perhaps the most important aspect of tai ji that she could be learning was relaxation. Without this there is not even the potential for movement and we are really in “wu wei.” Preparing for the instance when possibilities arise or when the one become two. No not more of that stuff. Yes! More! Relaxation is the set up for tai ji. It is only in a relaxed state that true tai ji can be performed. That is what is meant by the potential for learning. Relaxation makes tai ji possible so that is the possibility. Hopefully this explains this portion a little.

Tai Ji is like a seven bean salad. With each level of different bean being layered upon the previous. As you eat through each level, you get a different taste.

For the experienced student of the Tao, they may have understood this. But trust me there is even deeper meaning that they do not grasp for that is the beauty of the Tao.

The Tao teaches to whatever level you are at that time.

Back to my seniors student. What I was trying to tell her was this. Just by being in class and concentrating on the form, she was allowing all other thoughts, troubles and worries to melt away from her

conscious mind. She was experiencing one of the first lessons of tai ji. One point meditation. By concentrating on a single idea, we allow all other thoughts and worries to disappear. When they are gone all of the destructive side effects of the stress they bring also leave. Thus allowing your physical body to relax.

Once this relaxation starts, it sets up a whole relaxation response with many more effects naturally occurring which make relaxation more efficient and easier to obtain. Okay now, well that makes sense but what about all of the other confusing stuff.

Now, here is something I learned from Erle Montaigne, sometimes great tai ji lessons occur in the kitchen. The hidden meaning to this is that tai ji learning does not stop at the door of the training school, but goes on through out the real world.

Tai Ji is like a seven bean salad. With each level of different bean being layered upon the previous. As you eat through each level, you get a different taste. Each previous and later layer adds to the resulting taste treat resulting in a sum that is greater than the total of its parts. But whatever level you are at is just right for you at the time.

Now when I read the classics of Taoism or Tai Ji, I do not get the same message that I did when I first read them. I can specifically remember reading a book on Taoist meditations at one time and thinking, "what in the name of whatever, is this about." Things like receiving the ching, the purple ching, knowing what is unknown. I would have gotten more from hitting myself in the head with the book (Good Iron Body Training) than from reading it.

Then after 10 years including several under the intense tutelage of a Taoist priest, I re-read the book. I literally understood everything, or so I thought. Don't think for one instant that the Tao is that easy to grasp. Well it really is easy to grasp. What the Tao is easy to grasp? Of course it is. I will tell you how to do it. To do so, go into a nice wooded area and find a flowing stream. Now stick your hand into the stream and grasp it. Pull out your hand, what have you grasped. You have grasped as much as was proper at that time, no more and no less. Oh, you wanted to grasp the entire Tao.

Not just the little drips that clung to you hand. I see, you want the whole enchilada. Well, the Tao that can be grasped, is not the Tao. But that Tao that you did grasp is the Tao. No No No, not more of that stuff that makes me want to bang my head into a wall. I hear what you are saying and I reply," put some good dit dow on that head after that Iron Head training," because that was what you needed at that time.

Back to the Taoist Book. Now even later, when I read the book I realize more understanding. You see I reach an even deeper level of the bean salad. Though had I not gone through all the other levels of bean salad, I would not have gotten the same "taste."

So the amazing Tao teaches you the lesson you need to learn at that place in time.

Oh no,"place in time." This could be the opportunity for another Taoist lesson on Quantum Physics, but no I won't do that to you. That's something for a discussion between Erle and I. No we are not better than anyone else, we've just eaten enough bean salad to be able to appreciate the taste at that level.

Not just the little drips that clung to you hand. I see, you want the whole enchilada. Well, the Tao that can be grasped, is not the Tao. But that Tao that you did grasp is the Tao.

Now the final lesson of the Taoist Seven Level Bean Salad. If you get greedy and try to gobble up too many levels of bean salad at once, you'll end up being nothing but a bag of gas.

CHOOSING NOT LOSING

Gavin Mitchell

There are those in the martial arts field, as in all others, who view the past through spectacles that are possibly too slightly rose tinted. According to the prevailing social demographic at the time, it was likely you lived in a small village and never stepped outside the boundaries from the day you were born until the day you died. One day you might be visited by a passing martial arts master, one of those who made it their life's work to teach and travel, and they might take you on as a student. You might then be shown san ti, or one zhuan zhong posture, or instructed to walk round in circles, after which the master moved on. They would most likely not visit for several years (during which time they would travel to other students in other villages) and for the next several years you would stand in that posture or walk around in that circle, particularly because you didn't know what the next part of the martial art was. In several years' time, when the martial arts master came back, if they found you hadn't practised they'd just move on to the next village; of course if you were a diligent student they would teach you the next piece. However it was most unfortunate if the Manchurians or the Golden Horde or some time lost band of Vikings attacked the village inside of those several years in which your art had little combative application, and it was due to this fact that villages evolved their own homegrown styles. All the inhabitants for generation on gen-

eration would have compulsory daily training in this indigenous style, and usually only scholars were let off. It was such a village style that legend has it Yang Lu Chan learned when he gained entry to the Chen village, subsequently to adapt it to his own family style.

In these days people are not usually content to stand in san ti or zhuan zhong or walk round in circles for several years because they can go on Youtube or Wikipedia, watch the video or read the article, and then want to learn whatever they've just seen or read about.

Those who indeed view the days of yesteryear with perhaps an unrealistic shade of nostalgia and optimism usually also deplore many of the trends of the modern age. In these days people are not usually content to stand in san ti or zhuan zhong or walk round in circles for several years because they can go on Youtube or Wikipedia, watch the video or read the article, and then want to learn whatever they've just seen or read about. Conversely it is also the case that a fight is as much, if not more, likely to break out at the local boozery today (whether Shankill Road Belfast or Sutton Road Walsall) than in the northern part of China in the days of Ghengis Khan or Ragnar Lodbrok.

True Taoism which has its own martial arts in the modern world (as do most other cultures) considers instead that no time, place

or given situation is any worse or better than any other because all have their advantages and disadvantages. One can choose to be Leipzig, Nietzsche or Schopenhauer, one can choose to be Eeyore, Jack or Pollyanna. Choosing is an act of will. However, to choose effectively and efficiently, the will needs intelligence. It might perhaps be true above all other statements that the modern newcomer to martial arts is faced with more choice than ever before. Any adult education service of any town or county will offer large numbers of martial arts, any street anywhere in the world can offer at least one, and major cities can offer a full gamut running into the triple figures. And so, to make their way through this bewildering labyrinth, the beginner might ask themselves one question: what do they want?

The first group of questions leading to choice should perhaps be purely administrative. For instance, what time does it start. Some arts and teachers are stickier on this point than others; some will allow students to come in when they can while otherwise will impose militaristic punishments such as pushups per minute late, or perhaps even seconds. The beginner should carefully consider their other time commitments and see what they have available. Some may prefer morning, afternoons or evenings of weekdays and some may prefer weekends.

The arts are meant to be an enhancement to, not a subtraction from, human lives. The beginner should also consider how long it lasts. As well as whether the classes will eat into their other time commitments their physical fitness and endurance may be called into question (some arts may challenge this more than others) as well as their boredom threshold or their ability to absorb information.

Cost should also be a consideration to the beginner. As a start they should consider their disposable income but also they should consider how much they are prepared to spend; perhaps if they are spending more than they actually make they should seriously consider the value of what they are actually learning. They should take care to note any other costs; insurances might be considered sensible, but regular level hikes might not be. Above all else in this article the aspirant will be most earnestly warned against those whose ultimate goal is not to teach martial arts but to defraud the public of money; beginning students especially must be careful.

What most usually signifies the practise of the martial arts above all else to the uninitiated is apparel, and what usually symbolises the martial arts above all other things for the uninitiated is uniform. It is not however the case that all martial arts require uniform; in some uniforms are indeed de rigeur but in others they are anathema. Why each martial art should go one way or another is a difficult matter based partly in tradition, partly in culture and partly in psychology but ultimately, the beginner will have to

consider whether they want to wear a uniform or not and how much this is likely to influence their decision. Some will not want to get their regular clothes dirty or damaged and find that getting suited up focuses their minds on learning and the task at hand while others will not want to defray the cost of a special suit, or find that spouses, parents, carers or significant others complain about why they have to have their 'karate suit' washed so often (or might not want to do it themselves.) Most people will however want to 'fit in' and not be seen to stand out, whether wearing uniforms where no uniforms are normally worn, or vice versa. The beginner should however beware of the club or organisation which specifically makes them buy a given quantity of their own clothing prominently emblazoned with brands, names and logos – particularly if the gear can be brought from no where else, and especially if the price hike is significantly greater than similar (or in many cases identical) clothing which can be bought from high street sports shops, open markets or the web. This is a cynical money making exercise and is to be avoided at all cost (however, if gear with logos is available but is *not* compulsory but simply there for people to purchase, this is a different matter as students might just want this to remind them of their yearly course away, or whatever). It is worth noting that uniforms in most martial arts are traditional only and as such are quite simplistic. In most cases, coloured white the same suit, available in a generic product from innumerable companies, is suitable for karate, judo, jujitsu, aikido and various others. The same suit coloured black is suitable for ninjutsu, kobudo and vari-

ous others again. In most cases wearing a store bought basic variety will not be objected to, and the student should be encouraged to wonder why they might be being harassed into buying 'our' gear. On a final note it is worth being aware of an unwritten rule not to wear one school's uniform to another's classes; unless it is one of the generic variety which doesn't have a logo, it is considered disrespectful to the masters.

The beginner should also consider whether they have to be at a particular standard of health. While in most martial arts there is a progression as to the physical difficulty of the exercises carried out, it is indeed the case that some arts are more demanding than others. While most people in reasonable fitness can study most martial arts successfully (at least after the last twenty pints or five packs of cigarettes have been coughed up) it is when individuals have a physical infirmity or a serious, long standing injury that care needs to be taken in choosing the art. It is worth noting that some arts have an emphasis on physical therapy and gentle healing techniques, while others are going to have a large proportion of rigorous fitness training and all out combat. Someone with a serious injury or infirmity had better take care to choose the former, as attempting to get on with the latter is likely to lead to a bad experience all round. Conversely, someone whose taste is for circuits and punching and kicking things is likely to be bored and frustrated with hand

waving and chi gung. It is also important to be aware that some arts will specifically devote time to attempting to treat or help people with injuries and infirmities and consider it part of everyone's training and development to do so, whereas others will simply not know what to do in these cases as it's outside everyone's experience; or worse, consider such a person a liability or inconvenience. Someone specifically looking for specialist help and physical therapy should carefully consider how they are reacted to, and treated when they walk through the door.

A prosaic piece of information that may seem too obvious to even mention is where's the class. However, the student should carefully consider their journey time. Most beginners will not want to travel too far on a regular basis and for basic skills they should not have to. Aspirants attacking the higher levels should seriously be considering travelling all around the world in search of the highest levels of instruction, but such considerations are outside the scope of this current article; in any case, even they are going to be concentrating on practising (and likely at that level, teaching) the basic skills the majority of the time and long journeys are likely to be less frequent in number. Beginners who will be regularly practising the entry level disciplines should be able to find frequent instruction close to home. It is not unusual for people to travel for a time equalling the entire length of the class or even longer to get there, then whereas some might get digs and attend another class the next day or travel back in a leisurely fashion some even go all the way back again right afterwards. However, the beginner may want to

consider that doing this on a regular basis is likely to detract from the entry level skills early on; and the martial arts are not so rare at the beginning position that they should have to.

Another artefact of the martial arts that perhaps can seem daunting to the uninitiated if the majority of their experience has come from the television is etiquette. It is however worth noting that those who have just walked through the door are unlikely to be expected to know arcane facts and modes of behaviour that only a complete cultural immersion is likely to give. In more traditional martial arts where weight is indeed placed on such considerations, then as well as not being held to them right off the bat beginners are also likely to be readily directed to information whereby they can learn, particularly in the modern information technology era where frequently asked questions files can be readily downloaded, printed and copied. Indeed, where thorny points of etiquette are rigorously enforced and proliferate to the point where one might be expected to have a master's degree in the history of the originating land before one could be expected to remember them all or the rules seem frankly bizarre and arbitrary, the beginner is encouraged to question what need is being met by this or what purpose is being served. If they are led to the conclusion that the only need is to assert the otherwise phantasmical authority and stroke the ego of the sifu or sensei (or worse, sigung or master or shidoshi; given that such titles don't just come out of cornflake packets, the beginner should research their authenticity carefully) or put down the students and

keep them under the thumb then it's wise to go elsewhere.

One consideration that might be important is what standard are the other students at. It is often said that any class will die without beginners; conversely, if a class is entirely made up of beginners, if they are all at different levels then administration is likely to become rather difficult. However, most people would find it uncomfortable to be at a significantly lower level than everyone else present (unless they are on a seminar circuit, in which case they are probably not stark beginners to start with) and being the only white belt when everyone else wears black is a daunting prospect. In most cases though classes are usually anxious to attract beginners and will advertise themselves as such; in most cases they will be delighted to have new blood on board. The only time beginners are unlikely to be welcome is at particular advanced classes where a given skill set will be taught that would be impossible for the uninitiated to get anywhere with; however, these will also be advertised as such and will probably not be advertised to the public in any case, or at least anywhere that the beginner is likely to come across them. In these cases, the effort is usually made to keep all but senior students away, and elaborate entry requirements are laid out which may, or may not, be rigidly enforced.

The final question therefore following on from the above is are beginners welcome at all. As described above, it is most

likely that they will be in almost all classes, and those catering only to the higher levels are not likely to be in the milieu or geographical locations that the uninitiated are likely to come across; rather than local residents going to local sports centres, community centres or church halls, the closed door sessions are likely to include delegates from huge organisations usually coming from hundreds of miles away. Still, if it is a question that particularly troubles the beginner it cannot hurt to ask.

After the administrative considerations of choosing a martial arts class, it is also important to consider the type of martial art. Currently there is a bewildering plethora available for the beginner, and while they are indeed very adequately explained on Wikipedia and demonstrated on Youtube these mechanisms are perhaps most useful for those who know what they're looking for and are searching for additional information. For the stark beginner, the variety can be baffling.

A useful jumping off point is the geographical point of origin of the martial art in question. Currently martial arts are available from all over the world, with recent surges in popularity for those from Brazil, Korea and the Phillipines. However, the majority of martial arts in the public eye and those most readily available come from China and Japan. It is at this point that websites like Wikipedia and Martial Arts Register can become useful, as they often group descriptions by country as well as by the other characteristics that will be discussed further on. Often the geographical location is broken down further within the nations; for instance, hard style kung fu is said

to come from the Shaolin temple in China, xingyi, bagua and taiji are said to come from the Wudang hills (also in China) ninjutsu is reputed to originate from the Iga and Koga provinces of Japan, and Okinawan karate comes from that particular Japanese island. If a student has a particular interest in a specific country, especially if they are also studying the history, culture, anthropology or language, then they might consider immersing themselves in an indigenous martial art as well. However, for the serious student the technical aspects of the martial art are likely to overwhelm its geographical origins as a consideration. It is worth noting that there are many indigenous European martial arts which are studied to this day, though admittedly they are in the minority. The reason for this is that once firearms were invented the populace of Europe converted all out to their mass manufacture and started gleefully shooting each other and abandoned beating each other up. It is often archly and pretentiously said that this didn't happen in the East because they had too much respect for each other to merely gun each other down at a distance, thus they carried on with their noble martial arts traditions and expressed a preference for killing each other with bare hands instead. It is however more likely that the fact that firearms grade steel is far more plentiful in Europe than in the East has more to do with this particular social development.

Another basic differentiation between the martial arts, one which is generally considered more of a ground level difference than geographical origin (as all nations have variations of both forms, to

greater or less degree) is whether they are hard and soft. These are terms which are more difficult to pin down, but one consideration is that hard style martial arts tend to be more offensive in intent, whereas soft styles tend to be more defensive. In accordance with this hard style arts tend to concentrate more on striking, punching and kicking while soft styles focus on throws, locks and holds. Whether a style is hard or soft does not depend on its geographical origin, nor does it depend on whether it is internal or external (which will be explained below).

What is generally considered the most basic dividing line for all martial arts is whether they are internal or external, and it is probably the most difficult of all considerations to pin down. The simplest explanation is that external arts rely on external, muscular strength, speed and power whereas the internal arts rely on developing the same amount of power, strength and speed internally. It is how this is done which becomes difficult to explain, as some then rely on an account of the building up of chi energy which is a thoroughly arcane concept for the beginner; or by generating energy through the tendons, fascia and internal areas of the body rather than from the gross muscular-skeletal system which is scarcely less confusing. It is perhaps better for the beginner to consider the practical differences between the two approaches and make a judgement on those rather than on relying on concepts it can take years to grasp. It is generally consid-

ered a truism that the internal arts take longer to learn and certainly much longer to gain enough skill to rely upon in combat (though hopefully in the modern world the need should not arise). It is also usually the case that external arts will rely more heavily on physical fitness, so that classes will spend a lot of time training this (by contrast, internal classes will spend more time training forms, abstract sequences intended to drill fighting applications into the subconscious brain. Another difference is allegedly that internal martial arts rely on training the subconscious brain whereas external arts rely on training the conscious one.) The exponents of either then go on to state that it is eventually possible to gain a higher level of power in one and not the other, or that in one approach it's easy to become an intermediate but hard to go any further but in the other approach the opposite is the case; however, these are arcane arguments which are unlikely to be of interest, or ready comprehension, to the beginner. It is however worth noting that the internal arts are supposed to start internal but progress to the external, whereas the external arts go the opposite way. At their top level all arts are considered to be both internal and external equally, at least in theory.

Perhaps the last of the obvious considerations is whether the art is modern or ancient. Beginners, particularly if their sole point of contact is the television, books or comics, are likely to assume that all martial arts were invented thousands of years ago. This is not necessarily the case; while it is true that human beings have been learning to fight since their evolution and have been passing on these skills from the dawn of

time, martial arts are generally considered to originate from the time that they were named or founded, usually by an attributed individual (Bruce Lee being the most recent, and famous, with Chuck Norris having carried out a similar, if perhaps slightly less well recognised, achievement). Most do have ancient roots (if only due to biomechanics; since there are only just over two hundred bones in the human body and there are limited ways they can all move relative to one another, and basic considerations of anatomy, pressure points, and weak points are still the same) but many also include modern sports coaching or psychological techniques. In particular a modern trend is to blend martial arts, leading to the rise of one tradition called simply mixed martial arts, or others grouping a particular geographical area. This is likely due to increased communication and travel technology, in the past the arts would likely have been more isolated and such mixing would not have been possible. Opinions are divided as to whether this has been to their benefit or detriment. In any case the beginner will therefore have to choose whether they wish to study an ancient or a modern art. Many prefer the idea of studying something hundreds or thousands of years old, considering it gives greater authenticity and proof of efficacy through longevity, whereas others might consider something that was invented only decades ago to have more modern application and less useless cultural artefacts which are not relevant in today's era. It is usually at this point that the notion of lineage also arises. While most students are justifiably proud of their lineage, beginners should be careful that being fewer generations away from the master

or the founder is not as important a guarantee of quality as, say, how much a person has practised the material, or how many people they can attract to a class and hold on to.

It is at this point that the beginner, having considered the aspects of geographical origin, hard and soft, internal and external, and modern and ancient, in the martial arts, should move on to several cultural considerations which are likely to critically affect how they get along with them. Another common assumption in the martial arts is that they all have belts, with the legendary black belt equating in the public eye with the rank of master. This is not in fact the case as many martial arts not only do not have belts but also do not have what the belts actually signify, rank being awarded on passing a test. It is also not true that black belt conveys the rank of master, it is more akin to an initiation – stating that the student has proven their worth and is ready to get on with the real work. Belts should not be an excuse for the students to throw their weight about or boss people around – if this is observed it is a clear indicator to progress rapidly to the exit. It is however a sign that the student has gone through another in a progressive series of tests and, by passing the tests have proven that their skills have increased. Many schools have the same progressive series of tests but do not use belts, going by certification or some other method instead; functionally, however, the system is still the same. Belts and certifi-

cates are usually also a sign that the student should be taking on increasing amounts of teaching responsibility; there is an automatic progression into teaching in the martial arts. While many wax lyrical about the mystical transmission of *giri* from teacher to student and how students are then obliged to teach because of this magical debt which has transformed their lives which can never be repaid, etc., it is perhaps more prosaic to state that nobody can truly be sure as to whether they can do something unless they can in fact teach someone else to do it. It is also not true that belts are an ancient tradition in the martial arts, whatever may be believed (or disseminated) in fact this is a tradition going back only a little over a century, and was introduced only to make the teaching of the arts easier in a modern sporting and school environment. There were originally only two colours allegedly, black and white, while a black belt was awarded with time rather than through gradings. Indeed the proliferation of colours, and stripes and tags between colours, has led to the exercise being more to make money, one of many unscrupulous practises which will be discussed in greater depth later. A more fanciful legend has it that the belts were never actually washed and someone was a black belt once it was dirty enough to become black. One is led to wonder whether this was very hygienic, whether anyone would want such a smelly, greasy item next to their pristine white suit, and what clinches it is experiments carried out by people where they've actually found that the belt never does become very dirty at all. Many have also dragged their belts behind their cars to give them that authentic

distressed look, leading them to conclude that other distressed belts they've seen are for lineage holders (or other guys who spent their youths tying their belts to the backs of their cars). In any case, the beginner should consider whether it suits their particular learning preference to have tests at regular intervals of what they've learned; in most cases there are both advantages and disadvantages to this. Some people like to have clear goals or ends in sight, or like to know what they have to achieve next; others find this merely annoying and demoralising and resent the exercise of being tested. Conversely where there are no tests or grades it's possible to plateau or become completely lost; with no direction or discipline having any advantage over any other, there is no point doing anything at all unless the student acquires some other reason to reach a particular goal or point – which they might anyway.

Ranks are conveyed by belts and so logically, it's possible to conclude that where there are no belts there are no ranks either. This is not always the case, and in most cases it is usually obvious what kind of pecking order exists in any given room (due both to the progressive nature of the arts and humans having evolved as predatory pack animals with alpha led structures) but the weight which ranks, and their attendant titles are accorded is another cultural consideration which may become important to the beginner. In some arts ranks and titles are taken extremely seriously while in others they are actively avoided and discouraged; others still are entirely indifferent. In many cases the ranks can proliferate so greatly a dictionary of the native

tongue is required to understand them all. In many cases the ranks are left in their native tongue, and usually these have no cultural connotations in Western lands – note however that this may not be true when the terms are translated into English. After decades of the kung fu turtles being on television most people have no problem calling someone sensei, but calling someone master implies a degree of servility in the modern tongue, even though master is an authentic rank in most martial arts. In any case the beginner should carefully consider how they feel about all this, and what degree of importance it strikes them with. In most cases the terms are indeed sprinkled only occasionally as cultural colouring, but if they are proliferated or are insisted upon the student should consider again what need is being met; if it is to make the leader look big then again it's time to question what's going on. The beginner should also consider whether the cultural mores and considerations which were appropriate in twelfth century Japan, or sixteenth century China, are culturally appropriate in twenty first century Britain, Canada or USA, and what should be considered to be appropriate standards of behaviour and propriety in modern nations.

A final consideration is the extent to which competitions are given prominence in the art. Some arts consider their whole *raison d'être* to be competitions whereas others actively avoid and discourage them, whereas in different environ-

ments competitions are available but it is a matter of choice whether or not to participate. The beginner must then decide whether they have any great desire to take part in competitions or not. Some arguments for competitions include that it gives people the opportunity to try out their skills and see if they work, and gives them a benchmark to see how they have progressed. The counter argument to this however is that given the number of rules and safeguards that exist in competitions to prevent the participants killing each other, it is never going to have any relevance to a real life or street battle; and if someone feels the need to prove themselves by competing then it points to a misguided and rather neurotic ego need that the individual should look at curing in themselves, rather than encouraging. It is also argued that once competitions are introduced the exercise becomes more like a sport than a martial art. It follows on from this that youth and strength are automatically rewarded and give a considerable advantage, and if the notion of talent is believed in then it can be argued that your placing in competition is likely to be a foregone conclusion anyway, so why bother. It is certainly the case the people do have natural advantages of height, strength, dexterity, speed, agility, suppleness and so on, all of which will come to the fore in competitions; and if the beginner possesses these, or not, then a realistic weighing up of their own abilities may influence their decision (and they may decide to compete anyway even if they feel they are wanting in such characteristics.) Another argument in favour of competitions is that they build character and spirit, conversely the non competitive

arts emphasise that they too are practised for the individual's personal development and self defence. The choice is down to the student.

It is also worth noting that there are many other disciplines available for study which offer many of the same practises and subsequently, benefits of the martial arts. These can include self defence, yoga, energy healing, meditation, and so on. These skills are all perfectly valid if they are taught properly (though the same potential exists to defraud the public as described below) but fall outside the scope of this article. It is instructive though to describe some differences between self defence and martial arts. Typically, the main difference is that self defence courses are brief, often only lasting weeks, while any martial art that is seriously pursued is a lifetime commitment. This automatically wipes out any notion of belts, titles, gradings, certification or progression; the time simply isn't available. Also, martial arts usually have considerable background and cultural artefacts from their native land; serious students usually have at least some degree of interest in the milieu in question. This is also usually excised from self defence. If this sounds like it appeals to the beginner, they are of course welcome to participate.

The student must however be most earnestly warned against a trend which is perhaps modern, or perhaps has existed for all time; the type of school where the goal is not to teach martial arts of any stripe, but to defraud the public of money. In modern parlance this has been named the *McDojo*. In olden times, it is said, schools

were only allowed to open with the prior permission of a well known martial arts master, and the school was enabled to stay open through their patronage. However, if a school opened which was not known to anyone, they would then be challenged by every other martial arts school in the borough. Only if the school was victorious through all these challenges would it be allowed to remain open – it had proven its authenticity and efficacy. In the modern times, perhaps fortunately, law enforcement prevents such full scale battles. However, it leaves the way open for the dubious practises of the *McDojo*.

Fortunately, there are a number of tell tale ways to spot that any given school has such tendencies. The most glaringly obvious is that the student has to sign a contract with the school for a given length of time, measured in the several months or over (many legitimate schools charge by the month solely for accounting purposes); it's clear that this guarantees the *McDojo* a given income for a given period of time. The reason for the time period is as follows; during that time the student can't just leave because they've realised that what's on offer is of egregious quality, meanwhile it may well be the case that cash is being extracted directly from their bank account or credit card by direct debit. The obvious refutation to this practise is that students should be sufficiently impressed and pleased with the service that's being provided that they should want to keep turning up and paying

of their own accord. The fraudulent contracts can also be spotted by the fact that there is practically no way to get out of them other than by dying.

Belts are also used by McDojos as a means of making easy revenue (as opposed to legitimate schools, where they should be used as a teaching aid only). For instance, one of the tell tale clauses of the fraudulent contract is that it guarantees a black belt within a given length of time. This is not possible as whether baseline talent exists or not, if the student does no work then it will not happen; or at least if the rank is granted then it has no meaning. In most traditional arts black belts take between five and ten years to acquire, and the student should think carefully about any time scale that is significantly less than this. Another hallmark of fraudulent schools is that there is a proliferation of belt colours, often with stripes or tags in between the colours as well. All this means is that the increasingly regular tests make more money for the school. Legitimate and traditional schools usually only have five or ten junior belts and senior belts, with very occasionally the senior belts going up to fifteen. When there are significantly more than this the student should consider what is being achieved here (and go through their contract with a magnifying glass). The belt fees should also offer a flat fee structure with no level hikes, though the junior grades may cost less than the senior grades. If the price starts to increase significantly then the student needs to do some math, as the only way the costs can be justified is if they cover administrative fees, the cost of the belt itself, the time of the teaching and grading staff plus

their reasonable travelling expenses. If it starts looking like a vast profit is being made on top of these then the beginner should look elsewhere.

Another tell tale example of McDojos is fraudulent claims. One very transparent claim is for elevated rank; beginners should be aware that advanced ranks in traditional martial arts are granted only to people who have been studying most of their adult lives. Other, similar claims are training with semi-mythical figures who can't be found by the most basic of internet search engines, or having a background in military special forces. Conversely, proponents of chicanery can claim to have trained with famous figures of the martial arts world, who may have no knowledge of them, or may have spent far less time with them than is being claimed. It is also worth noting that the dead can't speak out and say that they have nothing to do with this person; at one time, having trained with Bruce Lee was a common assertion (those who authentically trained with him are well documented and have their own system). Fake schools are often unrealistic about rank; high level (legitimate) black belts are rarely under thirty, and if there are large numbers of black belts still in their early teens or younger then the student should consider this questionable (this does not apply however where children are being taught separately to adults. Where children and adults are taught together though there should be some acknowledgement that they are junior.) A possibly very obvious claim is being able to perform supernatural feats, the most common one being able to move or affect someone without touching

them. It is usually the case that the student is told that they too can learn to do such things. Such claims are almost immediately followed by a refusal to demonstrate them, or an explanation that any given failure of a demonstration is due to spurious reasons (one recent TV documentary contained the assertion that a chi powered knock down at a distance failed because the presenter's toes were misaligned.) The student is left to wonder for themselves how useful such questionable powers would be down the boozier when a fight kicks off. Another fraudulent claim is to be the repository of secret, hidden knowledge that is millennia old and has been handed down to themselves alone – usually the deadliest hidden techniques of KUNG FU (pronounced *kung fu*) Conversely most martial arts claim that there are no skills that cannot eventually learned by anyone if they practise hard enough. The beginner is left to decide whether they will put their faith in such assertions.

Another tendency which has already been described is the compulsory purchase of the school's own uniforms; this can also extend to equipment. Note that while this may be required by insurance companies, it should not be substantially more expensive than similar equipment available elsewhere.

It is at this point however that what are obviously fraudulent practises even to a beginner start shading into questionable practises that may only become clear, or relevant, to an

intermediate. Intermediate students have their own choices to make as well and, at their level, they must start making hard decisions about the culture and the psychology of what is on offer; in the full knowledge that when you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas, and who they associate with is likely to affect their own personalities, their entire lives, and the type of teacher they will eventually become.

Perhaps the most important consideration for the intermediate is the calibre of the instructor. This includes not just their martial skills, their understanding of and the ability to communicate them – which will eventually be seen to be of secondary importance – but their good moral character. This is likely to affect the entire culture of their organisation in every possible aspect, and eventually the intermediate will learn to take account of this. It is said that students end up with the teachers they deserve, and that teachers end up with the students they deserve; the intermediate will come to find this as a truism as they naturally gravitate to teachers who suit their own personality and their moral compass and walk away from those who do not.

Following on from this is that the intermediate should judge the organisation also by the calibre of its senior students. As they have selected the teacher and vice versa and in most cases both parties have spent years or decades with one another, it's clear that the senior students will come to reflect the instructor and, by trickle down theory, the organisation as a whole. How they appear, seem or actually are is therefore a measure of the whole gestalt entity. In

external arts their appearing physically fit is held in great store; however, even when physical fitness is not essential they should at least look like they know what they're doing. Their own good moral character is as critical as the teacher's, as the teacher should be taking pains to ascertain that how they are and the way they present themselves is how they would want, in the full knowledge that they will be judged by these students. Indeed an interesting barometer, in the unlikely event that the intermediate from outside ever gets to see it (at least in environments where disciplinary matters are considered correct to be carried out behind closed doors; the intermediate can judge for themselves what it might mean if they do not) is how the instructor keeps the senior students in line when they perform actions deemed to be unacceptable. From a purely prosaic level, the intermediate is likely to be spending the majority of their time being taught by a senior student as the chief instructor moves on to other people; in the question of whether they are someone the intermediate would want to be taught by, all the criteria for an instructor apply.

The character of the instructor and the senior students plays a large part in making up the *organizational culture*, which the intermediate should also observe and consider carefully. This is likely to be created in classes run by the instructor and the senior students, and their dedicated followers will comply with and reinforce it; often, the higher levels find they do not have to do anything as the rank and file react to enforce the status quo. There are many important aspects of organisational

culture which the intermediate should consider, perhaps most important being to what extent they are expected to comply with it. This can extend to such apparently irrelevant considerations as are all parties expected to eat and take breaks in the same places, eat the organisational sponsored food rather than anything people might have brought in (often regardless of expense) and stop at each other's houses. In some cases violating such unwritten, corporate sponsored rules can result in opprobrium being expressed all over the outsider.

Following on from this the outsider should look at whether they are welcomed or treated as an outsider indefinitely. The most extreme example of this is the existence of an inner circle, usually formed around the instructor and senior students. This inner circle may be evidenced simply by body language and close association, but it can be indicated by the wearing of uniforms, organisational regalia where uniform is not otherwise compulsory or even worn by the majority of people there. If such an inner circle exists, is it inclusive or exclusive, is it clear that the inner circle are superior to all those outside. Assuming this behaviour does not put the intermediate off, to what extent is it obvious how one would go about joining the inner circle; is it a matter of reaching a certain rank (which could be by passing tests, or could be through something more nebulous) or is it a matter of paying a given sum of money.

Subsequently to this, how does the organisational culture reflect upon the classes and the teaching style. Are they militaristic or relaxed, for example. Are the standards of respect and adherence to ritual appropriate for the 21st century industrialised West. Is the confidence of the students built or undermined, are they browbeaten or encouraged. Most important is the attitude towards violence; no matter what some people may try to disseminate, at one time the martial arts had the sole purpose of sudden violence, to preserve life in a lawless world. This can go so far as some classes banning any mention that their practise was ever once a martial art, but less obviously, does it seem that violence is condoned, encouraged, glamourised or discouraged. Which environment would the intermediate prefer to be in.

Given the possibility of violence and physical injury, are the standards of safety that are observed sufficient that everyone will be able to go home and return to their day jobs. Of importance here is whether a competitive spirit is fostered or not even in a supposedly non competitive art. Also, during combative exercises, when it looks like the participants are getting too far into it and may actually degenerate into fighting, how does the instructor or senior student in charge react to this. Do they move immediately to stop the proceedings, watch what happens or actively encourage what's going on. Some even have the attitude whereby if they observe anyone trying to actually hurt anyone else, they will join the fight themselves and hurt the miscreant badly, who will be entirely unable to defend themselves due to the

instructor's likely vastly superior skill.

There was once an old tradition in the martial arts that you could only ever study under one master at any given time. This was of course easier to enforce in the days where communication and travel between parts of a huge country were virtually nil. In any case, the argument for this was that it prevented any dilution of style or, perhaps, introduction of material for which the student was unready. At the point they were ready to move on then there would be an elaborate exchanging of permissions on all sides. In the modern world in which several martial art schools are likely to be found in any given street, it is unlikely that dedicated individuals will limit themselves to one class or organisation; they are more probable to use their time available to its maximum advantage. However, it is worth noting how any given organisation might react to cross training to that extent, or to having someone else's student walk through the door. In many cases this is not welcome, with organisations going so far as to hold everyone else's methods in great disregard or having prejudice or even enmity against one or several specific masters. The intermediate will have to decide whether they want to be in that environment, what it might signify, and whether or not they should keep quiet about their background in a strange environment.

On a final note from the negative, are communications from the officials of the organisation conducted in a professional manner. If not, the intermediate should decide how they might feel about having inflammatory material dropped

into their inbox or letterbox on a regular basis. But on a less negative note, the intermediate should consider what progression any given organisation can offer in the art. There are some that are able to offer up to the very highest levels of teaching (usually in classes run by the top level) and some whose experience of the discipline is confined to a week or a weekend's training, or watching videos. Fortunately, this is usually obvious from the start. More disturbing however is where the enhanced skills are available only to the aforementioned 'inner circle'. The difficulty does not arise when eligibility for the advanced training is based on time served, demonstration of commitment, or ability to function at the required level; but when it is determined simply and only by the student's ability to pay a large sum of money to join the higher level. It is down to the intermediate whether this suits their sense of fair play or their bank balance.

A multitude of choices face the individual in the game of choosing not losing, but there is always another choice available to them; the choice to do nothing at all, and sit around eating pies and watching TV. This is of course an option that is open. They might even live to be thirty-seven.

My Chang Sang Feng Moment

Don Morgan

A couple of years ago as I was going through my form I would think “How can I synchronise the movement of my legs, body then arms to give the maximum power (energy release?). The old texts talk about energy going from the Tiantien down the legs to the feet, then back up to the arms and hands, then finally back to the Tiantien.

As time passed and I stopped trying too hard, I realised that my body was starting to do this by itself. But why? I began to realise that this is something in our evolution when we travelled on four legs. So it must come from walk, trot, canter and gallop, as this is how four legged animals travel.

I recently started to teach tai chi and this has concentrated my mind “How can I describe the movement of the form so that my students can find the harmony of tai chi?”

Then came my Chang Sang Feng Moment: I looked at a horse galloping in my mind instead of a snake and a crane.

The movement into gallop is to arch the back then straighten it, this pushes the back legs backwards with a bit of a bounce. The front legs are lifted off the ground, the body is pushed forward then the front legs stretch out (Ji). This is all yang and the

power is all coming not from the leg muscles but the core body muscles.

Then the front legs land and pull back and the rear legs lift off the ground and the front ones pull forward (Yin of An). This is all yin and the power is still coming from the core body muscles.

As the rear legs touch down again the front legs are lifting off, the body is pushed forward and the front legs are pushed forward (Yang of An). Clearly full power is generated by a horse when galloping and it is using both yin and yang energy.

As time passed and I stopped trying too hard, I realised that my body was starting to do this by itself.

If you consider that we keep our rear legs firmly on the ground and our front legs in the air. This follows the movement of Ji followed by the yin of An then the yang of An. It works for me as I gallop through my form.

The only way to check this out is to get down to the races and watch the horses. I had a long discussion with one of my teachers about whether you could pick winners by looking for the horses with the best chi. Certainly the horse and rider that move the smoothest must have an advantage as they are not wasting any energy.

The other consideration is comparing the athletic thoroughbred with its spindly legs and muscular body which is bred to gallop as fast as possible using core body muscles. The heavy horse with its stocky legs is bred to pull heavy loads at a walk. Clearly for galloping it is the core body muscles that are required.

The other thing that we could learn from horses which are flight animals is that a bit of speed to run away is the safer option compared to standing and fighting.

BURDOCK: annoying and beneficial.

Igor Serenkov (Russia)

A Russian word “lopuh”, which is burdock in English (lat. *Arctium Lappa*), denotes also a short sided, a defenseless man (although not a foolish one). It is a very strange fact, as this plant really is very strong in the fight for it's life. It's awful fruits - “balls” with a lot of hook-like needles, cling into your pants when you make your way through the grass or on a narrow track. In Russia we call such a ball “repey” and it is a symbol of somebody intruding... And you doom this “creature of hell”, trying to detach it's hooks off... Wrongfully!

Let us think: maybe it grows so close to men not only to outspread it's barbed seeds? - So!
It may be a great physician!

LEAVES.

Leaves from a young plant (1 year old, without any flowering stems, a leaf is about 30 cm. length, 20 cm. width) quell all kinds of inflammation. You may take it internally or externally (in the last case they suppress pains: rheumatic, arthritis, arthrosis etc.) It is wide known by Russian people; but inexperienced “healers” constantly dispute: what side of the leaf must you put on the sick place? For men experienced in healing it is not a problem:

The inner side, a lightly green one - when take place those symptoms which in TCM usually entitled YIN (cold, ashtenic or incompetence syndrome); The outer side, a

dark green one - for YANG (heat, sthenic or abundance syndrome). However, there is no strictly defined YIN/YANG concept in traditional Russian medicine (later we call it TRM, like as TCM); but...

Make these applications during the night, in case of “cold” sometimes with a teaspoon of honey... they are GREAT!

In the modern time popularity of burdock leaves in Russia decreases, the reason is they try large leaves of old plants...

Young burdock leaves are of great benefit in a sultry day: put a leaf into your cap, dark-green side to the head. No overheating, no sunstroke. Especially it is important for people with heart problems, high blood pressure etc.

Young burdock leaves are of great benefit in a sultry day: put a leaf into your cap, dark-green side to the head. No overheating, no sunstroke. Especially it is important for people with heart problems, high blood pressure etc.

Another benefit is fresh juice or water tincture (mild decoction like tea) from young leaves (not only fresh but dried, too; fresh leaves is a cholagogue, in a case of spleen and pancreas problem be careful!).

External use: against wounds, ulcers, eczema, furuncle, scrofuloderma (skin tuberculosis), all kinds of mucous mem-

branes inflammation, including reproductive organs.

Inner use: edema (dropsy) as a diuretic (do not forget a teaspoon of dried sweet flag (*Acorus Calamus*), another famous plant of TRM, and a root of parsnip to prevent potassium/magnesium escape!); hematomas or hemorrhage bleedings; snake bite or insect sting.

A single dose of decoction is about 10-15 milliliters. But in no case an overdose intoxication is possible, as burdock is an edible plant (for example in Japan they grow young leaves and roots especially for salads!)/ It contains vitamins, such as A, carotene & C, ascorbic acid.

ROOTS.

Internally: they cure gout; anti-carcinogenic, depress tumours grow ; furuncle, rash, rachitis; tuberculosis (heals even ulcers within the lungs!); as an antidote and blood-cleansing medicine; kidney, urogenital and reproductive system diseases. It is also a diuretic. Stimulate liver and pancreas.

In that cases we use root decoction: 50 grams\1 liter of water, boil on the water bath, drink fresh during 15 minutes, not store!

If you will add into that drink about 20 dry haricot bean membranes and 3 dinner spoons of bilberry leaves, it works great against diabetes.

A single dose is a half of a teacup twice a day, before meal.

Gastritis, stomach ulcer, kidney and bladder stones: a teaspoon of grinded root with the same dose of honey, add 300 milliliters of good vodka (may 150ml spirit\150 water), make a tincture in a dark place during a week. Take a spoon of that mixture 30 minutes before a meal.

To clean intoxicants from your blood, take 50 milliliters of the decoction 3 times a day.

Externally: throat and mouth diseases, rinse out with a decoction.

Most suitable for outer use is an oil preparation of roots, it can't influence polysacharydes. Old physicians of TRM used almond oil, but now it is expensive... (I hardly can believe, almond was so cheap in Russia before the last revolution, that even men of average drunk almond mixture instead of milk during the Great Fast! I would never decline, too!)

So, I have to use olive or sunflower oil. 1 part of grinded root, 3 parts of oil. It must to stay in warm dark place for about two weeks. This oil is also excellent for hair growth and condition.

(Other oils I am fond of, are of wormwood (*Artemisia Officinalis*), salvia and "St. John's wort" (*Hypericum perforatum*)).

Store up leaves from June till September, roots (also of young plants only!) in September. But: it is impossible to wash roots with water, it will make them quite useless (I have read they contain glycosides, especially inulin, about

45% , water shall destroy their valuable non-glucose part in a half of an hour!). You may clean roots with a dry hard brush only!

You may not dig roots near highways: they collect "heavy" metal salts. But, if you want to make your ground ecologically safe, saw the burdock (But it is a question, how will you get rid it off ;)). - No, it is only a joke, digging young burdock roots is not a hard task! Only not allow them to become older to saw its seeds and deepen its roots.

And yet, roots from a good place will help clean your body from those harmful salts!

But even old burdock plants are not something useless! They have:

SEEDS.

The same annoying thorny balls from the tail of your dog ;). They must be mature enough.

Good spirit tincture may be prepared: a 0,5 liter jar full of seeds, fill in with vodka or water\spirit 1:1 mix and it must stay in a dark place for 3 weeks. Be very, very careful, filter it thoroughly! If you will try to EAT those seeds... never! Apart from outer hooks they have a lot of micro-hooks, sharp like harpoons.

This tincture is magic, nevertheless. It normalizes cell metabolism, blood circulation, removes every kind of poisons or toxins, cures ignitions, menstrual pains. One spoon a day, the best is before going to bed.

Water decoction acts quite different, as a purgative in case of constipation. Two fistfuls of seeds

with two cups of water must be boiled on the water bath during 2 hours. Drink all the liquid rest in one dose (once only!). Don't forget to filter, too!

GOOD HEALTH!

WTBA NEWS

Erle Montaigne Over Holland

Well over 50 students attended the first workshop in Holland by Erle Montaigne. In fact, it was booked out with many on a waiting list long before the event. In fact, the next workshop in Holland in October 2008 is also booked out with 2009 filling up fast!

Jos Horst hosted the workshop as he has been teaching for over 20 years all over the South of The Netherlands and is also the WTBA's newest registered instructor. Jerry Shaw was also involved in taking the bookings and helping the whole even to run smoothly. See our web site for details of when Erle will be in Holland next.

WTBA Clothing

Our WTBA representative for the North (England) is now making available WTBA T Shirts. Nasser Butt will have these very nice shirts available at Erle's next Leicester Class in April 2008. If you would like one, please contact Nasser on neru@ntlworld.com

WTBA Gatherings in Llangadog

Erle Montaigne's Invitational classes for instructors and advanced students are continuing in the Welsh village of Llangadog. These are well attended by WTBA instructors and are mandatory at least once per year for those wishing to



The World Taiji Boxing Association
Chinese Boxing Schools

keep their WTBA Instructorship status. Those who live far away in other countries for instance, must attend at least one of Erle's workshops each year either in their own country or a country nearby. This is essential is getting a uniform WTBA teaching criteria and also so that we can be assured that our instructors haven't gone upon their own paths TOO much in the absence of corrections from "Head Office". We are in fact in the process of taking those WTBA "Instructors" that have never attended another class, off the WTBA listing on the official web site.

Peter Smith In India

Pete continues his excellent work in India, paying his own fare and accommodation while there in order to teach abused children. They all look forward to each visit and Pete tells us that we will have a couple of really good WTBA instructors from these classes soon.

Most of these children have been abused in ways that would make any normal human being ashamed to be called "Human"! And it is a never ending task for the group over there to search out and save these children only to have some of them taken again on some trumped up excuse. They end up back on the streets selling their bodies so that others can make money! Even girls and boys as young as 4 are taught to do things that are abhorrent to normal balanced humans!

WTBA Workshops

Either Erle or Eli Montaigne are again traveling to other countries this year to teach. Malta, Austria, France, Italy, USA, Norway, Australia, Japan and Germany are but a few of the destinations in 2008. And for the first time, Erle will be teaching in Berlin City. See our web site www.taijiworld.com for all class details.

Annual WTBA Bash

The Christmas party was held on the Saturday evening during Erle's Llangadog class for instructors. Many awards and

grading certificates were handed out at the Red Lion Hotel in Llangadog. A great time was had by all but it was a little difficult to do training the next day for some! ...Hmmm?

Ben Montaigne Teaching

Ben Montaigne is again teaching a class in Llandoverly, Wales which is well attended. It is mainly geared to those who are suffering from Arthritis and Diabetes etc. Ben plays some nice music of his own composition and recording on his piano and gives some Qigong exercises to begin with then he teaches only one movement per class as this is the only way most of them will ever learn and keep it in their mind.

WTBA Instructors

If you are reading this and you are a WTBA instructor who hasn't been in touch with "Head Office" for some time, maybe now is the time to make contact. We will be doing some serious culling over the next few months, weeding out those who use the WTBA only for their own gain and never put anything back or even bother to make contact once in a blue moon. I am not one of those head instructors who insists that those who teach under his name make payments on a regular basis like the majority of others do. Nor do I ask for payment for any grading as most others do. In fact, I have never asked for any payment form anyone to be able to use the WTBA name for gaining students into their own schools etc.

Every WTBA instructor is judged on his or her own merit and never has to bow down to the Chief instructor and that has always been my way.

So, come on, if we haven't heard from you in some time, like Years! Get in touch and let us know that you are still alive at least as many of us ARE getting much older!

What is so good about the Tai Chi form?

Jerry Shaw

We know matter is made of molecules, which comprise of atoms linked together, which in turn are made up of electrons, protons & neutrons (well most of them anyway). In fact if you were to take an atom and weigh all of these components separately their sum in weight would be ever so slightly less than the weight of the atom. The difference in weight is called the “mass defect” which we’ll call “m”. When an atom is actually split this mass is actually released in the form of energy “E” according to Einstein’s equation $E = mc^2$ (c being the speed of light). So although m is very very small, c is very very large, & c multiplied by c is extremely large. Hence a lot of energy E is released when we split the atom.

Clearly the taichi form is made up of moves. At a higher level there are moves within moves, so what started out in the opening move as an up-down arm movement at its most basic level turns out to be far more complex involving yin – yang hands, waist movement, a weight shift all coordinated together. There are even soft fa-jing like moves (waist shakes) which we usually do softly at this point.

We say that Tai Chi is an internal martial art and that the form is an abstract training method which teaches us to fight. Well that’s nice, but what the heck does it mean and how are all those fancy

movements going to help me defend myself?

Well the Tai Chi form is not a series of martial applications all joined together, but a series of what I term “generic movements”. In other words each movement forms the basis of a series of real applications. Perhaps another way of saying the same thing is that the form is a series of “implied applications”. In fact the whole form is really ONE movement from beginning to end as it all flows together. This in itself teaches us to stop thinking about individual movements/ applications.

Well the Tai Chi form is not a series of martial applications all joined together, but a series of what I term “generic movements”.

So why do it this way, why not just do the applications in an obvious way? Well let’s forget the secrecy aspect of old China where martial skills were hidden from all but family members and even if an outsider did get a glimpse he would have to be a genius (like Yang Lu Chan) to figure out what the moves meant. This is not really a very positive reason after all, plus it doesn’t really answer the question.

Let’s go back to the atom. Imagine you could use the building blocks of the atom to influence matter (remember the electrons, protons, & neutrons). You could

make new matter that does not exist naturally (this has been done by the way – for example Americium is a synthetic element which was obtained in 1944 by bombarding plutonium with neutrons). Well in my mind that’s what we are doing in our form. Every time we do it the form will be a little different, because at a high level it is not fixed, not defined, there are no defined applications, even the movements look a bit hazy to someone used to a basic form. So we create something unique from basic principles every time we do our form. Isn’t that what artists do, with clay, paint, stone, wood or whatever? The same can be done with music. The amorphous, small circles, spirals, and shakes which are characteristics of the form enable us to release huge amounts of energy (remember E in the Einstein’s equation).

Well OK I might be pushing the analogy a little far here but my point is that in Tai Chi we are working at a very fundamental level and we are able to manifest large amounts of power from small movements at short distances. We are learning to fight not with the conscious mind but directly at the subconscious level. We don’t think about fighting when we are doing the form, we just move. All the subtlety in the form enables us to gain this power from the small movements. Each move has many possible applications; by

over defining applications to moves we would limit those possibilities.

Erle has often said that in a fight if you are doing “applications” you will lose if the opponent knows his stuff as you will be too slow.

Here are some observations:

- When a student asks me what comes after such & such a move I invariably have trouble recalling “the next move” & have to go through a series of moves to recall it. Other teachers have admitted the same thing to me.
- When watching Erle doing a high level move from the form I’m sometimes gripped with the idea that I never knew the particular move he is explaining, then I wonder if I’m a bit thick. Then I do the move as I usually do and notice I was in fact making that move but was unaware of it.
- When someone asks me to demonstrate an application I may not know it & will make one up & usually it works (or I will make it work so as not to look like I do not know it, not that this bothers me, but sometimes students have certain expectations & it’s ok to go along with these. They can find out you are human when they know you better).

Conclusion

One conclusion from the above could be that I am forgetful & don’t know my applications. However I take the above as an

indication that I must be doing something right and I am sticking to this.

I think the following example illustrates a mental attitude which is totally the opposite to that of the internal martial arts:

One of my students who used to study Karate told me that a Japanese guy he met could do many of their forms not just forwards but backwards (i.e. in reverse order). So I said that would be a bit like me being able to quote one of Shakespeare’s beautiful sonnets backwards. Admittedly this takes patience & perseverance to learn but in my mind ultimately pointless. Hey why not play Beethoven backwards?

in Tai Chi we are working at a very fundamental level and we are able to manifest large amounts of power from small movements at short distances.

From this one might arrogantly conclude that all the so external martial methods, like Karate, Tae Kwon Do, Wing Chun, etc are not as effective as the aptly named Tai Chi Chuan (Grand Ultimate Fist). Well I’m not brave and would not shout this too loudly. I think all martial arts are basically good. Before I came to Tai Chi I did an Indonesian art called Pencak Silaat and remain impressed with it still. An experienced Karate guy who has been training all his life finds the internal in the external; unfortunately he may not possess the training methods to pass them on.

So the next time you are doing the form just think about those subatomic particles, maybe it helps.

Another WTBA workshop

Jerry Walker

I thought it was about time someone (I guess that's me) sang the praises of one of Erle's instructors. Someone who has been learning the Erle Montaigne system for Nearly 20 years. Someone I believe to be one of the most knowledgeable people in the WTBA with a skill set to match. Someone who we can all learn from no matter what level you are at providing the Ego allows.

You see I recently attended a workshop in Wales.

A quiet affair with a wide variety of students with different Martial backgrounds, all incredibly eager to learn and waving their rubber knives around menacingly.

No I'm not talking about Llangadog, but Cardiff, where we spent a day trying to learn how to survive a knife. I say trying, because as was pointed out the chances of getting hurt are high if, you come up against someone who has knife skills.

This as was pointed out by our instructor, does not apply to 8 years olds or Hobbits as a good swift kick in the head should be all that's necessary.

So our instructor went through the prerequisite principles of defending against a knife attack with the enthusiasm and gusto which is normally associated with the man himself.

It quickly became evident that the first strike was never going to happen if you had 4 inches of steel stuck in your brain and that evasion was the key.

The whole day was spent working on the three principles of knife survival ;

Evade, Bump and Strike.

I feel that this has really sunk in and now, all I have to do is practice for 30 years or so.

Now that's what I call great value for money!!!

So thank-you very much for a fun and enlightening day and you will see me and who ever I can cram in the car (hum..thinking of getting a roof rack) at the next Cardiff workshop in March.

So, go on Eli take a bow.



Kai energy (six Sense)

Zardok

Note : sorry for my language I am not an English

What I am taking about?

Kai or what people like to call (six Sense) that give advantage felling with (danger, people, events)

In this paper I will concern on (felling with other people) as it's the main way that kai express it self.

Note:

Six Sense is not up normal situation it's just natural and all people can use it.

I found that sex Sense call [kai] in some Japanese paper and really I don't found any one else talk about.

All what will be written below is my own thought so I will talk freely [you have the right to agree or disagree with].

Introduction:

First let us look deep on our self we are flesh and soul .is that right?

As theories says that our flesh is made from earth, and our soul comes from sky [or from another world] and that flesh and soul work together [yin and yang sign].

Just think about how you work. Your body become stronger when your soul is in good situation for examples when you have a reason to fight you body become stronger [this called you have yang energy in china]. Also when your soul is in bad situation it's appear in your body some times as disease [that why people say your mind can make you ill].

SO body can make effect the soul and so does the soul to body

More deep in relation between soul and body. How soul communicate with body?

Soul is not physical and body is physical .how they can work together?

To answer this question lets begin with this example:

A computer made from hardware (body) and software(emotion and felling) need an operation system (soul) or it's doesn't work (in human situation we will die) . To start using this

computer we must let the electricity fellow (in human it's the viral energy or 'chi' in china thought) actually all software save in binary mode or what we called machine language [0,1] .hardware just can understand the machine language so that operating system [soul] can communicate with hardware [body] using machine language [chi energy]. Now when we



move the mouse pointer the operating system get the value send by mouse to the port [where the mouse connect to the mother bored COM or USB]and express this value as result in the user interface. Actually human body have the same things , it have listener point that is secretive to current information comes as an energy [for more about this search for 'emotional point' Chinese theory] .

SO body listen to soul when it send energy using sensitive point for that energy

What happen when we use the six Sense?

When kai or sex Sense is used an energy from another soul rather than ours , communicate with our body using our energy [actually our energy's meridians and body hallow] as bus

All this steps depends on chi fellow which depends on soul situation .(people with corrupted soul can't feel) .



Now let's talk about kai applications

Kai is developed naturally with human drown it's not up normal . it's just listening to you inner . now a day in modern life people learn ignoring there felling . for examples stop care about whose looking for you, it's alright in this case but it made you ignoring other's fell. [it may seems strange and hard to understand]. Try taking about a girl walking front of you definitely it will turn. Adult says eyes talk. if you asked a girl how you knew that boy love you she will say's his eyes said or some thing like that [I will explain later why girl have clear vision] .

So we use it in our normal life

According to what said before there is tree type of kai:

Get information/felling from person in front of you [someone that can be seen now] .

Get information/felling from far person [in other place and have seen before]

Get information/felling from far person that you have never seen before

I will start with the fist type as other type is aright level of.

Think about this:

Sensitive guard [guard fell when you try to get close to them]

Lovers in there start of relation [they talk with eyes until one comes to the other]

We can see that the natural way that people is sensitive to specific type of feeling [the feeling that they care about]

how sex sense can be developed?

Stop ignoring your self feeling
Become aware about people feeling [but not curiosities]
Try to help people[get shan energy]
Try not to lay and become pure with your self [get ren energy]
Finally (think with your hart). There is point locate in the middle of chest [I don't now the word en English] it just near to heart . to use it concentrate with your mind on this point and imagine that you think with it [it's like to concentrate chi in out brief].
In this level you will start get feeling with others as kind of nervous and fast hart pitting . just concentrate on this feeling [say to your self I need to know more] it's will become more pure and you can get more information about that feeling [e.g. that guy hate me for this reasons and you will knew the reasons].

Note :

In this level you may become unconscious in the time you read mind [half eyes open mode]
You should never force kai to work in specific time it just work by it self
Don't talk about your ability cause it will never work by force .actually your brine will function as it's kai, and you will get wrong information
You can't read mind for people who know you are trying to read him
You can practice kai by asking your nearly friend [e.g. said hay you want to do ... and when he said OHH! How you did this that means you get it]
As you use kai it will grow and you will find that you now how to use it by your self. [no teacher needs]
Kai become more pure by practicing chi gong [thanks erle ☺]
Kai can't be use if you had mental tensions [I can't used it in exam time]

Level two: Get reading person from far [in other place and have seen before]

In this level all people means current feeling to you as lover the call other

when one of then need the other one, as twins.

What happen is as first level you get the information [in this case you can't search mind you just get what he need you to knew e.g. he want you to call him]

In the early begin of this level you will get the information and trying to figure the person then it will become more clearly and you the names [it's very important not to force this happened]. Just practice you daily chi gong .then the names become more easy to figure in this level you can concentrate the kai on specific person, place .. ect.

To practice this level get girlfriend [in our county they just friends] from your college for examples concentrate on her and try to figure when she need to talk with you and what she want to say, when she enter the college door or even is she alone now. Practicing this will develop your kai and you get some picture [you see her]. Seen people for distance is not like that they are in the same room it just like dreams you see what you concentrate on [e.g. just see the face , body with out face nothing in detail].as you using it and trust on your self you will develop to the third level and you can feel with people that searching for you even if you had never see them before.

Remember:

People sometimes do things that opposite to there feeling [I hate my Bose but I smile to him]
People change so it's use lest to use kai to now who love or hate you
Using kai made you less aware to you environment
It's not good to feel your friend is lay to you
Sometimes your mind act like kai [that way you should never force kai at the begging]
The most you get pure with your self the more you can use kai clearly
I don't knew how to stop kai after it start using. it just work even if you neglect it
Chi have tow type yin chi and yang chi
People with a lot of yang chi can't use kai
Kai need more yin that why most mind reader are girls
Chi gong make the balance between yin and yang

Note : I am note sure if kai use what Chinese called client [second body it's demon or devil] in it's height level . also I may change so of my thought written in this papers in the future so using this paper on your won risk.

I have test most of this level by my self so I write from my own experience

I am not doctor .. I am note acupuncture... I ma not gong fu teacher

Hope I did well

...

Meeting Chuang Tzu

Robert W. Mann

While working in Rural Georgia several miles west of Savannah in the early spring of 2008. I took some time off to enjoy a walk through a bird sanctuary located in the Savannah Ogeechee Canal and Nature Center.

After completing my walk I began to work my way back to my car not far from the park office I noticed a Monarch Butterfly and thought of the Taoist Sage Chuang Tzu and his immortal poem from the Equality of all things from the Inner Chapters.

“Once upon a time I Chuang Tzu dreamed I was a butterfly flying happily here and there, enjoying life without knowing who I was. Suddenly I woke up and I was indeed Chuang Tzu.”

A Moment in Time

The air was cool the sky was blue and new life appeared in on the trees. A butterfly settled upon a twig. White Crane Spreads Wings, enter Wu Chi behold Chuang Tzu.

A grounds keeper shuts down her leaf blower.

Gentle breeze flutters Chuang Tzu's wings, Chuang Tzu roots to a twig a mosquito buzzes about Chang Tzu and flies away.

White Crane Drops wings, Chuang Tzu soars circles around White Crane and flies off to the North East.

The grounds keeper returns to work.

In Search of Chang San Feng

By Paul Brecher

Chang San Feng is always said to be the originator of the martial art of Tai Chi but he did not create Tai Chi rather he created the Twelve Wudang Chi Disruption Forms and Twelve Wudang Hand Weapons. These were learnt many centuries later by Yang Lu Chan who then created his own style from them that we now call Tai Chi.

The proof that the Yang family Tai Chi came from the Wudang Chi Disruption System is that both styles use the same moves. Very simply Yang Lu Chan's Old Yang Style Long Form has a little bit of each of the The Twelve Wudang Chi Disruption Forms in it as if Yang Lu Chan was making a thirteenth form that was a way of summing them all up. Also the Yang Family Large San Sau as well as their Single and Double Pushing Hands are all variations on the Twelve Wudang Hand Weapons.

The Old Yang Style looks exactly like the Wudang System, not like any other style. It is the same moves just in a different order. Like the same letters used to write different words. So it is clear that Old Yang Tai Chi comes from the Wudang system.

Chang San Feng was a famous Taoist who lived about 750 years ago. There may have been another person who also used the

same name after he died so giving the impression that he lived longer than he actually did.

Also there are two very different sets of writings that are attributed to him. If there were actually two different people who used the same name then we have an explanation for this.

One set of writings are about the martial arts, the other about Taoist meditation. It is possible that it is the same person, maybe he wrote the martial stuff when he was young and the more sublime spiritual stuff when he was older ?

When I was in China I showed the Wudang Forms to many top Tai Chi instructors and researchers and they all said what I was doing was Nei Jia Chuan - Inner School Boxing.

The martial writings of Chang San feng are wonderfully poetic and talk about the best Way of Moving.

Here is my translation

Flow like snake
Move like tiger
Agile like monkey
Body like moonlight

Breath understood
Mind calm
Chi flowing
Spirit concentrated

Yin Yang balanced
Understand tactics

Express power
Flow like water

The meditative writings of Chang San feng are wonderfully poetic as well and talk about how to Be The Way. Here is my translation

Chi in silence
Mind not
Know the source
Be Wu Chi

People talk
Maintain clarity
Avoid confusion
Natural life

Water and fire
True elixir
Clouds on summit
Dew on mountain

Sweet taste
Longevity wine
Ocean belly
Straight to heaven

Know true self
Listen to silence
Understand creation
Follow truth

I went to Wudang mountain in 2005 and visited the Lang Mei Temple within which is a statue of Chang Sang Fen. On the wall is a large bronze plaque which says that Chang Sang Fen created the Wudang School of Taoism and that he created the Wudang Style of Martial Arts based on the principles of the interaction of Yin and Yang.

In the book called Wudang Mountain published by the Museum of Hubei in 1991, it says Chang Sang Fen cre-

ated the Wudang Shan Nei Jia Chuan -Wudang Mountain Internal School of Boxing, which is characterized by the use of internal force. It says that the martial art of Tai Chi is derived from the Wudang Shan Nei Jia Chuan of Chang Sang Fen.

When I was in China I showed the Wudang Forms to many top Tai Chi instructors and researchers and they all said what I was doing was Nei Jia Chuan - Inner School Boxing.

When I showed him the Wudang Forms without saying what I was doing, he said they were Wudang Style, it turns out that he had also trained on Wudang Shan.

I also went to Emei Shan (Emei Mountain) and was introduced to Mr. Shen, the head of the Emei Mountain Martial Arts School. When I showed him the Wudang Forms without saying what I was doing, he said they were Wudang Style, it turns out that he had also trained on Wudang Shan.

There is also a statue of Chang Sang Fen on Emei Shan. Before the Buddhists took over, Emei Shan used to be a Taoist mountain so it is not unexpected that Chang Sang Fen visited there as well.

So I first learnt Old Yang Tai Chi and then the Wudang System however on reflection because Tai Chi comes from the Wudang system it really makes more

sense to learn the Wudang System first.

So now when new students come to me and say teach me but you decide what's best I say Wudang first then Old Yang makes more sense.

So we have a glimpse of Chang San Feng, he created one of the first maybe even the very first internal martial arts styles. He spent time on both Wudang and Emei mountains and he was both martial and spiritual.

To me he is someone worth holding up in high regard, a man of great skill, a genius. The Wudang System is outstanding for fighting and healing and so is the Old Yang Style of Tai Chi that derives from it.

To me Chang San Feng is a Great Sage from olden times and a Martial Hero. I wish for you great success in your training and that you achieve all the martial skill and healing.

Paul Brecher is the Senior London Instructor for Erle Montaigne's World Tai Chi Boxing Association in London. He can be contacted at www.taiji.net

The Bagua Wooden Man

Paul Brecher

For me the Bagua Wooden Man Form is the most meaningful and powerful

of all the forms that I know. It is really the ultimate in martial arts training. I do not say this lightly, there are many great forms that each have their own benefits but from a martial arts point of view nothing else comes close to The Bagua Wooden Man Form.

Like 90% of everything I do this form comes from Erle Montaigue, to my mind he is without question not just an outstanding martial artist and a great teacher/communicator but also one of the very few people to have inherited traditional martial arts. I have met and seen many great martial artists both in the west and in China but to me what makes Erle unique is that he has been amazingly fortunate in searching out and finding rare traditional Chinese martial arts styles that are now almost extinct. The Bagua Wooden Man Form being one of them.

I have been training and teaching for decades and accumulated many different forms and training methods and they all come together in The Bagua Wooden Man Form.

The Bagua Wooden Man Form is how to apply all the different components of the martial art of Bagua for fighting.

I now train in the martial arts because I train in the martial arts, I used to train in the martial arts because I gravitated towards fighting and conflict. But now it is all about the training however the training has to still be based around fighting.....even though its not about fighting !

So in my training I have empty hand forms that contain all the movements and techniques and tactics and strategies and fa jin and dim mak also I have two person full contact pre arranged fight sequences that are the application of the moves on the person however I cannot land the blows with full power on my students because it would cause very serious possibly fatal injury to them. I also practice iron palm and iron body training as separate individual skills.

Now all these different and essential components are brought together in The Bagua Wooden Man Form. So this is why The Bagua Wooden Man Form is really the ultimate expression of ones training.

Now all these different and essential components are brought together in The Bagua Wooden Man Form. So this is why The Bagua Wooden Man Form is really the ultimate expression of ones training.

When I practice The Bagua Wooden Man Form I am using

the movements of the Chinese Internal Martial Arts with their most extreme applications with full power dim mak - fa jin whilst also training iron body and iron palm using all the techniques and tactics and strategies of Chinese Internal



Martial Arts, it really is the ultimate form.

So now to go into some details.

Here is a picture of my bagua wooden man as you can see it has four arms at right angles.

The Bagua Wooden Man Form has eight parts.

Each part is practiced in each of the four quadrants both clockwise and anti clockwise, so each part is practised eight times and there are eight parts $8 \times 8 = 64$.

So we get the eight tri-grams and sixty four hexagrams of the I Ching Book of Changes which is the Taoist philosophical framework that the martial arts system of Bagua is built upon.

Each of the eight parts is a series of pre arranged movements that are a response to being attacked. The arms of the wooden man represent the arms of the attacker, so we begin by striking the arms, we then strike the body/neck/head which is the tree trunk central section.

Each of the eight parts has a variation on this basic idea, for example..... a different way of attacking the arms, striking them or breaking them or dislocating them etc a different way to attack to the opponents body, a type of kick, all eight bagua kicks are used, or a body check or a leg sweep or a low elbow or palm strike etc. a different way of attacking the neck, striking, chop, palm striking, breaking, elbowing etc. a different way of attacking the head, striking, chopping, fire palm striking, elbowing, cobra strike, earth palm strike, dragon claw etc. Also each of the eight parts has a variation on the strategy used to defeat the opponent, some times it is a direct attack with the Hammer Palm concept of bagua, other times an emphasis on evasion using the coiling and uncoiling unexpected maneuvering of the Bagua Dragon.

The many different angles that can be employed for a counterattack are also explored. Bagua being famous for its skillful and fast footwork takes this idea further than

any other martial art. Some sections are so brilliantly and masterfully put together that one imagines the minds of the great masters from the past who created them must have been highly advanced to be able to create such a deadly and beautiful form.

All the moves are done with both the right and left side of the body in both the clockwise and anti clockwise directions so we are getting perfect balance and coordination for both sides of the body and both halves of the brain. We are training ourselves to fight equally as effectively with any part of our body in any direction....a very comprehensive approach to practical combat.

This form also has the most amazing and surprising benefit of creating vast amounts of qi / chi / energy in the body. It is very strange, you hit the wooden man with great force but instead of becoming drained by this experience you become charged up, the whole body feels powerful and robust, sturdy and positive, you feel as if you are filled with confidence and optimism, quite wonderful !

So which moves are in this form, well obviously all the bagua moves!

All the eight palms, Heaven Palm, Earth Palm, Fire Palm, Thunder Palm, Wind Palm, Water Palm, Mountain Palm and Cloud Palm. All the Eight Bagua Animal Forms, the Bear, Monkey, Phoenix, Snake, Unicorn, Hawk, Lion and Dragon and also all the moves in The Jiang Rong Qiao / Chiang

Jiung-chiao Bagua Eight Palm Changes Circular Form and the Two Person Bagua Circle Walking Free Fighting.

Now for me what is also very fulfilling and satisfying is that also all the moves in the Old Yang Style of Tai Chi system and the Wu Dang Shan Qi Disruption system are also represented here. This is because these three systems are all using the same basic letters but they have just been put together in a different way to write different words to tell different stories. So I get to be practicing the applications of all three systems that I train even though it is officially a Bagua form.

I only teach this form to students of mine who I think are at a high enough level to be able to actually do it. If a student does not have the ability to fa jin and does not know how to strike with the loose heavy power of the whole body whilst maintaining the internal connectivity of the body structure then they will just severely injure themselves and not get any benefit.

So I teach this form but am very selective as to who I will teach it to:

1. The student has to be at a level where they are able to actually do the form, this is only possible if they have already covered the basics.

2.

This form gives the practitioner immense martial arts power, the power to break bones and defeat the opponent with one crushing blow, so I

must be sure that the student has a good moral and ethical character.

Paul Brecher is the Senior Instructor in London for Erle Montaigue's World Taiji Boxing Association. He can be contacted at <http://www.taiji.net> or paul@taiji.net

The Bagua Wooden Man in Two Volumes are available from Moontagu Books Ltd.

MTG169 & MTG176

[Www.taijiworld.com](http://www.taijiworld.com)

So What is “Real” Tai Chi?

Jerry Shaw

Iwonder if you can be open-minded whilst you read this article? After all isn't that the only way to read something that might be a little challenging to one's views?

My name is Jerry Shaw; I've been practicing Yang style Tai Chi for almost 20 years. I started off with Chen Man Ching & Yang Cheng Fu forms like most people. I've also practiced Judo, Karate, Pencak Silaat, and I am a qualified Yoga teacher. I've been teaching Tai Chi and Yoga for about 9 years. My first Tai Chi teacher (as I lived in Holland back then) was Jos Horst. Now Jos is a good martial artist, he taught me Pencak & he can punch as hard as hell. As someone who had done other martial arts he knew there was more to Tai Chi.

We all know that the real name of Tai Chi is Tai Chi Chuan or Grand Ultimate Fist or Supreme Ultimate Boxing. Back when I started Tai Chi I often wondered why the Chinese call Tai Chi this lofty title as frankly I had never met any Tai Chi people who could defend themselves using Tai Chi.

Having a background in hard martial arts I know what it is like to be attacked by someone who is powerful and fast. Many of the so called attack-defence methods used in most Tai Chi schools (if these are taught at all) are in real-

ity far removed from the real world of the street. As a result if you speak to other martial artists they will generally have a very dim view of Tai Chi as a legitimate self defence system. And honestly, who can blame them?

OK, I am a scientist by training. I know full well that if you want to understand something then there's no point focusing on just the aspect that suits or interests you the most. So I wanted the whole cake, not just a slice.

OK, I am a scientist by training. I know full well that if you want to understand something then there's no point focusing on just the aspect that suits or interests you the most. So I wanted the whole cake, not just a slice.

Bored with what I was doing I considered giving up Yang style Tai Chi as I could not find anyone who could use it as a complete self defence art. Even worse, most teachers I met were not even interested in self defence. So I turned to Chen style for a while, unfortunately I found the same story. The teacher I met was again not really interested in the fighting art side. Only the birth of my son Justin took my mind off giving Tai Chi up completely and moving to something like Wing- Chun Kung Fu.

I was fortunate about 4 years ago (I'd moved back to the UK) to

meet a teacher from Bristol called Steve Cooling. Now he'd only been doing Tai Chi for about 5 years at the time, against my 14. But boy could this guy move, fast wasn't the word, powerful for sure. He'd never done any other fighting art, just Tai Chi.

Frankly after seeing what Steve could do I felt as though I had wasted all those years learning nothing. This was the negative kick-back, a bruise to my big ego. Then I thought, well isn't Tai Chi about self knowledge, and isn't such knowledge about recognizing that our ego is just our own view of ourselves, aren't we taught to empty our minds, & ourselves.

It became clear and obvious to us both that as he taught me his system that I was learning incredibly fast, after a couple of years he told me there wasn't much difference between us. So my training in Tai Chi prior to this had definitely NOT been a waste of time at all! All the soft movements were clearly an integral part of what I was learning with Steve.

So what is this system I'm writing so passionately about but not letting you know the name of? Do you promise not to stop reading, to keep an open mind?

The Tai Chi system is the Old Yang style system, the most vo-

cal advocate of which is undoubtedly Erle Montague. After a year with Steve I met Erle, a big bear of a bloke who frankly scared the heck out of me the first time I laid my eyes on him. I accidentally bumped into him on the way to the toilets at the start of his first workshop in Swansea after coming over to live in Wales. I quickly recognized who he was, wanted to introduce myself, get out of his way, and apologise for being in his way, all in one go. I just ended up with a muffled “sorry” to which he replied in his broad Australian accent; “No problem mate”, he then he walked past with a smile. Not exactly a great start I thought.... I'm sure Erle does not even remember this incident which is so vivid in my mind. It seems so funny now.

Many of you may have heard of Erle, his uncompromising views on martial arts really do go before him. No doubt he has upset many in the Tai Chi & martial arts world. He has however written more than a dozen books and made more than 300 DVD's, is a recognized master of Tai Chi and Bagua Chuan in China, and has students all over the world. My view is that he only upsets people who wish to hang onto their illusions. If you went to Erle and challenged his point of view, and could demonstrate practically why it was wrong, fine, no problem.

My view of Erle is that he is one of the kindest, sensitive, and most generous men I have met. He wants his students to learn and cares about them and their progress. He is fiercely passionate about what he teaches, is very pa-

tient, and he explains his system with such an incredible level of detail, I would defy any serious Tai Chi or martial arts person not to find him interesting. Erle has a great (I would say boyish) sense of humour, and is very approachable. Like many of his students I always give him a hug when I see him. In short he's a great guy and a truly great teacher. Erle's self defence is impeccable; he is incredibly fast, powerful, and fierce. In short he is the “real-deal”. When I see people deride Erle in the martial arts literature or more often on the internet it not only saddens me but I wonder if those doing so know him as I do, have ever even met him, or attended a single lesson of his. If they have not done at least one of these they should reserve judgment and remain silent.

You may have read other articles on this but in summary the Old Yang form is the form of Yang Lu Chan, both grandsons Yang Cheng Fu and his brother Yang Shou Hou knew this form but the former is the well known brother. Yang Shou Hou had few students because his form was more difficult to learn. His brother recognizing this took out many of the martial elements and popularized Tai Chi, the rest as they say is history. Successive generations have produced even simpler and shorter forms causing Taichi as it is practiced by the majority to be the most popular ineffective martial art in the world today. Sure if you are a martial artist by background you can take a short form you might make it effective, but why not learn the complete art in the first place? But do the modern forms alone your whole life and

think you can defend yourself in a real situation – don't go there!

So I have been training Erle's system for 4 years. Not only am I better at martial arts, but my health is better. My form has far more subtlety and softness than it ever had. Whereas before my form was predominantly soft (yin), now it combines both yin and yang. I can see that every posture has both elements and can explain those elements to my students. I can also explain why those elements are there and can use them martially. Erle also shows us how to use the postures to help heal others.

Here are some points that I would like to cover:

Fa-Jing & Dim Mak: Tai Chi Chuan uses Fa-Jing or explosive power which enables us to generate great power over short distances using multiple strikes. This coupled with knowledge of Dim-Mak (the art of striking vital points) makes it one of the most deadly of all martial arts.

Sparring: There is no sparring in Tai Chi because there is no sport element; it's a pure self defence system, that's it! Sparring implies rules, if one trains to obey rules; in the real world one becomes much less effective. For example if you train not to attack the genitals or neck for competitions, in the street your body will do what

you train it to do, and you will be less effective when you need it most. Real fights have no rules.

Pushing hands: Pushing hands is a fantastic training method which teaches the waist and limbs to move as a unity. It is actually a subconscious method for training to fight. It is therefore a means to an end, rather than being an end in itself. The concept of pushing hands competitions is therefore inconsistent with this. In a real fight what is the point of pushing? There are no pushes in Tai Chi, only strikes. Many schools push using deep stances to generate stability. In a fight no-one would stand like this as the groin is totally vulnerable and it becomes difficult to move fast in such a deep stance.

Being Double Weighted: Avoiding being double weighted in Tai Chi is a central concept that is only often applied to the weight distribution on the feet. At a higher level though, beyond basic form, it applies just as well to the hands, one hand is always yin, the other yang. For example many teachers teach Arn as a push, it has been mistranslated, it is a press (see picture). The whole movement incorporates a subtle fa-jing waist shake (when done slowly) so that the right palm strikes just before the left rather than with the two hands at the same time. As the right hand strikes it hardens to become Yang then relaxes immediately as the left hand hardens. This does far more damage to the opponent than a single strike with both hands together.

I have heard stories of other teachers telling their students not to go to Erle (perhaps they are afraid that they will lose them?). My own situation was similar, but I refused to behave this way. I was teaching Chen Man Ching & Yang Cheng Fu forms, I changed immediately I had a grasp of the Yang Lu Chan form. I even invited Erle and one of his most senior students (Pete Smith) several times to do workshops for my students to my training hall near Bath. Guess what, I did not lose any students because of this, in fact I have more students now than I ever had.

My teaching is far more in depth than it ever was (basically because there is more depth to teach), not only that but I am now offering a complete system of health, hand to hand self defence, and weapons training. I also teach Wudang Kung Fu which is the basis of all internal martial arts as well as elements of Bagua and Shing-I. However I still teach elderly people and those who do not wish to learn Taichi as a martial art. I also work for mental health charities, and the mentally ill.

There is nothing wrong with the therapeutic/ soft side of Tai Chi, but it's just that, a part, it isn't Tai Chi Chuan. Or to quote Mr T. Y. Pang, a really nice Chinese Tai Chi teacher who ran a workshop in Amsterdam;

“If you cannot fight with Tai Chi you do not know Tai Chi”.



The state of Tai Chi

I wonder if I am missing something sometimes. I see these Tai Chi events in China being advertised & wonder if I should get along to one. Maybe I should go and “compete”. The competition side appears to be either form competition or pushing hands. On the latter I can only underline what Erle says which is that pushing hands competitions are basically a waste of time. The practice of push hands is an abstract training method which should be done in a non competitive way. There are also open sparring competitions but the less said about these the better.

On form competition the idea seems to be to show ones form in front of judges who mark you as they do in ice skating & dance events on the telly. This is all fine, not much wrong with that in my book if that's what you want to do. However I know a guy who practices something like the Yang Lu Chan stuff we do & entered

a number of these competitions in Europe. The trouble was that none of the judges recognized what he was doing as Yang style Tai Chi because he was not doing Cheng Fu or Chen Man Ching. Add to this that he was not showing them the Lu Chan form at a high level of subtlety, I can only surmise therefore that if someone did show real Tai Chi at a high level one would get blank stares from such judges.

Maybe I'm in danger of becoming a grumpy old man of Tai Chi....

Another thing, have you ever seen those adverts for alternative holidays in places like Spain & Greece? They give Yoga, meditation, pottery etc, but also Tai Chi. I know one lady who gives Yoga workshops at these places & she is very professional & an excellent teacher (she also taught me Yoga & I met her at precisely one of these places). However when I look at what people are doing in the name of Tai Chi at these places it makes me cringe. Sure most people don't come to these places to learn how to punch but they don't come to be treated like arm waving idiots either. We all know in the WTBA that it is possible to give people quality Tai Chi without making people feel they have to be like Bruce Lee to get any of it. Yet I see teachers who haven't got a clue write books on Tai Chi & even provide teacher training courses...

So you know what, I'll save the air fares to China (along with the cost of buying a silk Tai Chi suit) & stick with performing my form in front of my cat on my patio. Which means I'll be able to keep coming to Erle's workshops in Wales & the event in Germany. China or Erle, no competition!