



Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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What's in an Experience?

Experiential understanding is the understanding of truth anything else is apparent understanding. If I spend hours studying history I will may become a learned man. I will 'know' so much and yet I will not know the truth of any of the information because facts dates etc cannot give true experience of anything. What is experienced can be related to others but the experience cannot be given. If we want to give somebody an experience then all we can do is give guidelines that relate to our own experience. An example a friend wants to learn to swim but is a little frightened. I am keen to help, I tell them how wonderful it is to glide though the water and that there is nothing to fear

I want to give them the experience of swimming. I introduce them to water and then demonstrate how to swim. Whilst learning to swim my friend will experience a similar experience that I had while learning but it will not be the same experience and my experience whilst teaching my friend to swim is very different from my friend's experience of learning. I am relaxed and confident of my ability and safety, my friend is entering into a scary activity he has to put his trust in me and he will also feel self conscious and at times frustrated when he can't do it. With practice he improves and learns to swim he will develop his

own way of swimming that suits him. If he becomes very keen on swimming he may go to a coach who will teach him how to improve his technique. My friend has learnt something of the truth of swimming. Another friend becomes very interested in swimming and having watched a swimming gala goes to the library and finds a book on Olympic swimming champions he reads it and becomes fascinated by the whole subject of swimming history.

He furthers his reading learning all the secrets of the great coaches of swimming. He becomes an expert on swimming he knows so much about swimming. The three of us sit watching a swimming race on TV my first friend and I are astounded by our friends knowledge we feel humbled as he explains how the winning swimmer has used a particular variation of a stroke to win the race. My first friend is eager to try this technique and asks our expert who confidently demonstrates the intricacies of the movement how the wrist and elbow turn with the hip etc. We suggest going swimming the next day so that we can test it in the water our friend the expert cannot make it, it seems he's allergic to water. We can all become knowing without experience.

I know the form because I learnt how to do somebody else's movements and copied them I received verbal instruction in order to understand what I should be feeling and I read books on the subject to further my understanding. My experience and exposure to different teachings has taught me to discriminate more clearly, to feel whether a position is physiologically correct rather than taking other peoples word for it. In push hands our experience of the activity can only be the truth of the moment however the

nature of pushing hands means that while we may be practising the activity we are not really present with the truth of feeling. If we are to really gain insight into our sensitivity then we have to access a subtler level of truth. This truth is that how we react in push hands may not be the truth in terms of developing martial ability. An example I push hands with a smaller lighter partner they start to push and I start to turn the waist to neutralize, my partners push is partially deflected he is now in a weaker position I then use a small amount of effort to complete the deflection and my partner is uprooted. I have failed to listen and invest in loss I have 'won'. I take this ability into a sparring situation and find I get hit a lot and can't work out why. The reason is that I am not prepared to experience being moved I cannot let my ego rest I have to find some immediate gain in what I am doing.

In order to gain self defence skills from Tai Chi that is taught with the emphasis on developing these skills in push hands then you have change your perception of success. In a pushing hands competition two competitor's go hell for leather we see some spectacular skills one man seems on the brink of defeat about to be pushed out but with great determination and a strong root he stops and then uses his opponents desperate lunge to put him off balance the man flies through the air and their is great applause. We have seen a champion of pushing hands at work. The same man enters a fighting competition he is punched senseless and cannot work out why. The skill that enabled him to root and manipulate his opponent out of an area had taught him to defend positions that cannot be defended when the dynamic of the activity changes, an arm that is

trying to push you has a very different dynamic than one that is trying to punch you. This man's pushing hands did not inform his self defence skill.

If we want to develop self defence skills from pushing hands then we must not manipulate our partner in order to stop them moving our centre we must develop the sensitivity to know (experience) when to enter and gain the upper hand through good structure and when to concede ground and withdraw in order to gain a better position. This knowledge alone would not prepare someone for a fighting competition. But if studied and practised honestly then a person will have developed some physical intelligence, which will enable them to avoid using brute strength.

At this subtler level of truth one must continually ask the question am I truly feeling and responding to my partner or are other factors influencing my response.

Is my status in the class such that I must win, at the other end of the spectrum of ego is my self esteem so low that I lose my structure and never gain the advantage, or I do I pride myself on some aspect of pushing hands such as yielding and so look only for opportunities to use this skill. While evolving in the activity we may find that there are all sorts of reasons why we fail to pay proper attention and it is important not to become despondent about this or to judge yourself, this is self-cultivation, realising how your ego works not trying to suppress or ignore it.

Practised correctly the practise of pushing hands can lead to a heightened understanding of and sensitivity to force, practised incorrectly it will lead to self delusion and the use of excessive force. Not only must you experience the activity but also you must be aware of how you achieved the result, if you cause your partner to be put off balance then be aware of whether you had to use force to achieve the result, when you use structure and a relaxed non-striving approach the feeling is very different.



Teacher power

As we are now running our instructor training program this year we thought we'd share with you the requirements for Senior Instructor grade:

- Ability to spell Thai Chi Chuan correctly
- Legs resembling tree trunks
- waist must exceed inside leg measurement by at least 16"
- An advantage to have thin or receding hair (makes Mark feel Better)
- Obsessive to the extent that your partner has left you (you will then be more available to run errands for us)
- Paid excessively for private lessons with a chief instructor, even though most of it was spent in standing post while he watched Kung Fu movies.
- Must have been slammed into the floor (like a good 'en) by a chief instructor and heard to cry "God he's fast, I didn't even see that coming".
- Must never have pushed a chief instructor over as it may show them up for the fraud they are.
- Gaze in awe daily at your framed photo of Mark, hung over your bed.
- Never question anything he says; if you do not understand, presume you're stupid.
- Must own at least 50 Tai Chi related books (brought from the club)
- Must have sold at least 1 copy of each Kai Ming video to every student in your class. Better still, 2 copies (1 for spare).
- Oh yes, and know the whole syllabus so you could be tested on 'You Bet'

Alternatively, a limited number of grades could be purchased with a significant bribe....

HANDY HINTS

How to remove wine stains from a cushion. Don't sprinkle salt, this will actually set the stain.

If the cover is removable take it off and spray the stain with hairspray.

Leave it for a few minutes then wash at the highest temperature for the fabric.

Leave to dry fully before replacing the cover and the stain should be gone.

For a sparkling Microwave —

Squeeze the juice of half a lemon into a bowl with some water and zap for 3 minutes

Leave to stand for 5 mins, remove the bowl and wipe down the microwave



One moment of patience may ward off great disaster.

One moment of impatience may ruin a whole life.

Patience is quiet hope and trust that things will turn out right. You wait without complaining.

You are tolerant and accepting of difficulties and mistakes. You picture the end in the beginning and persevere to meet your goals.

Patience is a commitment to the future.

This character contains the ideas for both patience, perseverance and endurance.

This single character can be a bit ambiguous or flexible as it can also mean to endure, to bear, to put up.

Tai Chi Chuan, Principles Over Techniques

There is no real excellence in this world which can be separated from right living.

David Starr Jordan

I have been meaning to write this for a long time, but never seemed to get started. I think it was a combination of Jenny nagging me and recently rereading a book by Stephen Covey titled "The seven habits of highly effective people". I expect you have realised from the title that this isn't a book about martial arts at all, but one of a myriad of 'power management' books that seem to endlessly flood the market. I borrowed this book from my managing director initially in an attempt to find out what made him tick (he's got shelves full of this stuff) but after dipping into a few pages, I soon realised it put in words what Tai Chi Chuan aims to put into action.

Whether people come to Tai Chi for health and relaxation or to learn a self defence they invariably want a series of quick fix techniques for a fast result. Although techniques are easily learnt, they are just as easily forgotten. To be effective in the long term they have to become natural and instinctive, but by their sheer nature techniques are static, it is the underlying principles that give them life. Virtually everybody knows to bend your knees not your back when lifting a heavy package, and we all say it makes common sense. This is not just a technique but a principle of proper body mechanics. Where Tai Chi differs from external muscular based martial arts is not just due to its focus on the mystical energy called CHI but due to its awareness of the principles of proper body mechanics. A large proportion of those first attending Tai Chi are suffering from stress, poor circulation, joint damage, cardio-vascular problems etc. The art has become renowned for its health giving qualities more so than its martial prowess; why is this?.....

It is because of its core focus on correct body function. The principles that underlie Tai Chi Chuan are the principles

by which our mental and physical systems are designed to operate efficiently. That which is natural happens without effort, that which is forced has its limitations.

Through correct body alignment strain is taken from the joints and the load is placed in the muscles and tendons, providing the function they were designed for. The knee is one of the most frequently damaged joints, whether by martial training or bad luck, but this one joint is supported by a series of muscles and tendons that are designed to articulate it and absorb any shock. Use this joint correctly and it will give you a lifetime of trouble free use; abuse it by not adhering to the principles of proper function and see what happens. The Tai Chi classics are like a rule book for proper body function, follow their principles closely and you will not only stave off injury but improve the body's efficiency. One principle Professor Cheng Man Ching put great store in was "Make your spine upright". Apart from the effect it has on your skeletal structure and organ alignment, it also aids the effect of 'rotating like a wheel', with your spine aiding the creation of an axis. This is explored in great depth in Cheng Tzu's 13 Treatises on Tai Chi Chuan. My intention here is only to reinforce the need for proper body alignment and function, as we have covered this issue before, so keep this in the back of your mind when we consider the importance of principle over technique.



Jan Diepersloot said, "EXTERNAL MARTIAL ARTS ARE BASED ON THE ENERGY OF MOVEMENT, WHEREAS INTERNAL MARTIAL ARTS ARE BASED ON THE MOVEMENT OF

ENERGY". We can consider this in terms of the effort taken (both mental and physical) to apply techniques compared to free flow when applying correct principles. I am constantly asked by students for applications for Tai Chi Chuan forms; these are usually ex-students of external arts who are used to drilling applications. Here comes the difficulty; learning applications to the form helps you have an intent when practising, helps you remember the postures, allows you to check body alignment etc., what they are not is wholly practical. The core concept is 'from Wuji to Taiji' or more clearly, from non-action to action. This means that an input is required to create a reaction thereby making Tai Chi a defensive (or better still reactive) art rather than an offensive one (unless of course you swear at your attacker as well!!!). Reacting doesn't allow for time delay while deciding which technique to choose nor does it allow time to switch to a backup if the first fails. Unfortunately techniques are quicker to learn and seemingly easier to grasp than principles; how do you convince a student that it is better to blend with an attack than to block it, to allow the body to 'stand like a balance and rotate like a wheel' thereby receiving and redirecting the energy instead of just smashing it out of the way. This is what Professor Cheng called 'Investing in loss'.

Self-defence is not just about physical attack, it is about mental attack as well; the stresses and strains of everyday life: traffic queues, over-baring bosses, missing Coronation Street, being late for my class. In terms of personal interaction, referring back to Covey, he named these two areas personality and character ethic. He stated that Character ethics included integrity, humility, patience, simplicity and modesty which were the basic principles for effective living, whereas personality ethics included public image, skills and techniques designed to lubricate the process of human interaction i.e. being manipulative and even deceptive. He believed that our Character ethics are in our nature and only need to be nurtured where as personality ethics are only superficial tricks to gain a 'quick fix' and

would soon fail or be found out. We have all at sometime or other seen both ethics in action but it has only been more recently that I have considered them in terms of martial development. Principles for proper living and principles for effective fighting are invariably the same; they are non-confrontational and follow the Tao.

Techniques covering locking, throwing and striking are taught to understand their function but they are limited by what ifs. To properly apply any methods, the underlying principles are what makes them real. People don't attack in the same way with a nice clean straight punch or a grab to your right wrist. Sitting loosely into your hips so that the body feels buoyant and allowing the waist to move freely, strictly adheres to the principles of this wondrous art. An input of energy will cause a natural reaction in the Tai-Chi'ist, subduing or throwing out the attacker. No techniques are considered only the principles of adhering, redirecting and releasing. As soon as a forced technique is applied, the attacker has something to resist against thereby giving them an opportunity to counter. Principles are simple and therefore know no bounds, techniques are just that and limited by their nature. When students ask what would you do if I hit you, I have to reply "I have no idea but it is likely to hurt". Apart from the obvious intended discouragement (well I don't really want them to hit me!!), this statement is true because without the energy input of an attack I can not move from Wuji to taiji.

Consider the principle of borrowing your opponent's strength; If we look at the body as a seesaw in balance (Zhong Ding) and the fulcrum as our centre (Dan Tien) then an input to one side (a strike) will cause an equal and opposite output (counter-attack) on the other side. A technique would be a strike and counter whereas the function of the seesaw allows this principle to be used against any input and more importantly, the greater the input the greater the output; this is the only martial art where attackers beat themselves up!! Another example which may be clearer to other martial

artists is the intercepting fist. This is applied by punching across the attackers striking arm, directly at their centre; it intercepts their strike rather than blocking it and allows you strike to land. The technique is called intercepting fist but the underlying principle allows you to strike, brake the limb, throw etc. [see photo's]. If too much force is used the attacker will have a chance to counter; using Professor Cheng's theory of 'never put more than four ounces on them and never let them put more than four ounces on you', (as an extension of deflect 1000 pounds with four ounces) allows you to move your body to a better position if the attackers strike is too powerful. The shortest distance between two points is not always the straightest; technique alone does not allow for this.



Tai Chi Chuan is famous for ROOTING but how does it work. There are many pictures of great masters absorbing a push from a whole bunch of people at once [see photo]; this is not done by just wedging themselves between the pushers and the floor because if the pushers moved, the master would fall over. The principle of seek the straight within the curve allows the force to be directed to the ground through a seemingly straight line, while the curve generated by soft (buoyant) joints allows the master to absorb and release at will. Rooting is a feeling of connection to the ground, though the whole body, and can be just as easily felt when sitting wei tso (with upright spine), standing on tip toe or moving around. The principle of go backwards to go forwards, go down to go up etc. allow you to sever your opponents root or rather their feeling of stable connection to the ground; the effortless throws of Aikido work in the

same way. Rooting allows you to use the strength of the ground to defend and attack in the same instant; simply put if you punch an opponent with a feeling of connection from the ground to your hand, the ground can not move therefore the opponent will. I always tell people the key to self-defence is to take your opponents balance while maintaining your own; balance is both mental and physical therefore by feeling rooted, balanced and calm you will eventually be able to deal with all the stresses of life and see them coming a mile away. In terms of physical attack, you can move as necessary, counter (effect their physical balance) and disorientate them putting them at the disadvantage (effect their mental balance). [see photo's]

I hope I haven't waffled on too much in my attempt to get the point across. The best way forward is patience and a good teacher (or just pay me!!).

PLEASE NOTE:
Please send your Newsletter contributions for future issues to markpeters@kaiming.co.uk

Advanced classes / instructor training

Venue: Weoley Hill Village Hall, Weoley Hill, Bournville.

Sunday: 9.30-12.30 advanced classes (£30), 1-3pm trainee classes (£10)

June 30th

August 3rd & 4th - Tai Chi weekend

Sept 8th

Holiday in Cornwall?



If any club members are interested in a holiday near Bude, Cornwall, we have a two bedroom bungalow (sleeps 6) and can offer a great price out of season. Please contact Jenny and Mark on **0121 251 6172** for details.