

Fighting for Life

By Ian Deavin

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Dedicated to Charlie Potter, 4th Dan

who would have understood

WARNING

This book contains descriptions of mental and physical exercises which may give rise to discomfort and indeed pain. These signals if heeded will help you find and extend your own limits.

It is unlikely that anyone used to martial arts training will be bothered by this.

Readers should take responsibility for their own pain - no one else can.

If you have a specific medical or psychological problem it would be wise to check with your practitioner if you are not already used to the sort of exercises described.

When your spirit is not in the least clouded, when the clouds of bewilderment clear away, there is the true void.

In the void is virtue, and no evil. Wisdom has existence, principle has existence, the Way has existence, spirit is nothingness.

Shinmen Musashi

INTRODUCTION

The martial arts are about brutal fighting, right? Well, yes and no.

Certainly alongside sex, fighting is probably the second oldest form of interpersonal relationship and as such provides the dark side of the human mirror. However, being so old a good deal of thought has gone into improving techniques. In the west this has evolved into a search for mechanistic solutions leading to more powerful weapons and with this has come a distancing of the combatants from the deaths they cause. Martial arts in the west on a one to one level have been modified into sports such as boxing, wrestling, fencing, or side-tracked completely into games such as football. They have largely become outlets for competitive energy, safe challenges or ways to keep a body fit and make it live longer. They are many other things too, to participants and spectators alike (not the least of which is being part of our growing leisure (sic) industry, but they have generally been rendered "safe". The element of life and death has been addressed and as far as possible removed.

In the east however (and elsewhere) it seems that for many cultural reasons a different path was followed. The adoption of technical solutions was relatively delayed and the idea of personal combat came to be seen in stark terms connected to and integral with all aspects of life. Not just a library of techniques or a physical solution to a problem but a way of being, of living and of becoming. In short, a path of personal development.

Once we look inward to ourselves in the martial arts we are on dangerous ground, for they are one of the few human activities which combine all our facets and require only our naked selves. We begin to use the intellect and the body in combination with the raw emotions of our spirituality.

It has been said that many roads lead to the top of the mountain of life. This is one road that often attracts with an outer show of external power, and for many this is enough, but once our needs for self defence have been met (and in modern society these are after all fairly minimal) then there is often a feeling of anticlimax, a gap. It is here that many stop.

There are many excellent books on technique and many varied styles to choose from, with most able instructors. Each in its own way provides an effective fighting system. I am concerned here to address those who would cross the gap of their own growth, as martial artists and as human beings. This book is not about the mechanics of technique, rather it is my own version of "the other stuff" that we seem to find so hard to talk about. However good we get at techniques that "stuff" goes on, we can either become aware of it or leave it where it is, either way it will still go on.

My own arts of Karate and Tai-Chi, are generally seen as representing the two extremes and yet they blend together philosophically and in the bodies of their practitioners. This occurs in ways that have appeared in the "inner game" concept of tennis, golf or squash and can be seen in the development of many psychotherapies.

Once men started to improve their abilities by studying how fighting worked as a relationship between antagonists, then ideas and concepts from existing spiritual world models - philosophies such as pagan spiritualism (Shinto), Taoism and Zen Buddhism - were used as tools in the understanding, description and development of martial arts. This powerful tripartite mix was well suited to the task as they provide an approach to life centered on personal existence and do not in any way allow us to put off responsibility for our lives in the way of deo-centric power - based religions. Focus on the personal meant that many spiritual concepts could transfer straight across to the physical level, thus providing a fully integrated mental physical and spiritual package, and a recognition that our most brutal adversary is - ourselves.

It is this very special adversary with whom we must make peace if we are to achieve our full potential and so the path of martial arts meets western theology when we learn to "Love Thine Enemy".

Perhaps it is this which is behind the observation that so many top martial artists are really nice people, quiet, fun-loving, gentle, caring and strong, - capable of seeming extraordinary things and yet still be simple ordinary people. When you love your enemy you can enjoy being with him/her and have fun together, and when martial arts become fun there are serious linkages to the other oldest form of interpersonal relationship.

For those then who are interested to find something else in martial arts beside effective techniques there is a well trodden path, not however an easy one. It involves taking responsibility for oneself in all aspects and where one is not happy with oneself then changing to literally become self-made. This takes great courage, for as with all personal development we do not know what we will find nor in the early stages can we envisage the finished and much changed version of ourselves. All we can say is that we hope to become ourselves - what we want to be, by our own efforts and happy with our creation.

Unfortunately, as with any path of learning, it is possible to be lured by the "glitter", to become attracted by the negative in a way that feeds the destructive personality. It might appear that this is potentially more dangerous to other people where the martial arts are concerned than with some other paths such as flower arranging. I suggest though that this is false and people who are connected to their dark side in this way will always find a destructive outlet somewhere. However, if they stay with martial arts, they can eventually learn to deal with this, since acceptance of all our elements is a necessary part of the integrative process. Within a disciplined environment it is likely that at least a measure of self-control and respect for others will be learnt.

Indeed, weapons of destruction are close to hand for anyone, from the motor car to a kitchen knife and no training is needed to wreak havoc with either.

Serious martial arts schools are in fact some of the few places where people can learn to deal with such destructive tendencies, and generally those who do not learn soon leave when they do not become all-powerful after a few weeks training. Personal development surely requires a certain amount of commitment and so do the martial arts, at whatever level. After all, however removed they may be from the threat of imminent death, martial arts at their core still deal with personal survival. We do well to remember this.

What follows then is not a great received teaching nor a "how to do it" manual. Rather it is one person's view picked up from many sources and put together with the hope that it may be helpful to others. Indeed, I am wary of adding yet more techniques, this time mental ones to the already exhaustive list of physical techniques, for there comes a time when they too must be left behind. We can then seek to transcend the rules and throw away the rule book so that we can truly become ourselves.

We in the west are just now pulling the threads of eastern thought together into our society, where martial artists have been taught "do not think, act". This works well no doubt where there is a connected and supportive psycho-culture of compatible belief systems. It does not seem to work so well with the mechanistic analytical western mind so that, when an instructor later says "You must understand your body - think about what you are doing", confusion enters.

The result is often a class of robots or students applying sporting ideas to a remnant of the most serious way of life possible for an individual - that of living with his own life and death.

It seems true that, with constant instruction from a master, just doing it is enough. The physical practice will pull you through, working on the mind via the body. However, we do not have a culture where this is often a practical possibility. We live so much in our heads that this aspect must also be addressed. Many of the ideas that follow may seem strange to some (or simplistic to others?). They are suggested not as an end in themselves but merely as tools to be used if useful and then discarded when no longer needed. I believe though that these or similar techniques are close to the so called "secret teachings" so often referred to in hushed tones in martial arts circles.

They do not seem to be either secret or magic, as is often suggested, but rather ways of using one's own mind and body, perhaps unconventionally but within the understanding of western science. To a conscious traveller there is no danger. All there is to fear is oneself.

There is a saying among soldiers:

I dare not make the first move but would rather play the guest

I dare not advance an inch but would rather withdraw a foot.

Lao Tsu

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Basic emotions - Fear, Anger, Love, Hate, Sexual drive - all powerful, raw, and so close to animal that the intellectual animal we call the modern human being often seeks to deny them. In various ways these emotions are contained or channelled, when they are not they tend to burst out in uncontrolled ways that are at least difficult to handle and at worst explosively destructive. This can happen from the lowering of inhibition resulting from alcohol intake or in the obsessive throws of a love affair.

Two rather extreme examples? Do they ring any bells gentle reader?

In these extremes we become aware of so much more than in "normal" daily life and there is a loss of control. For the individual losing this control there is excitement but also lack of understanding - "why do I do the same thing over and over?" For those who do not quite reach these extremes there is often a containment, generated from some unknown fear, of what might happen. But to talk of such behaviour as extreme is to view it like a light bulb either switched on or off, and this can be how it feels - the emotion is on us so quickly we have no chance to deal with it. Our body becomes taken over by emotion and for those, like the martial artist, who are concerned with conflict then fight/flight (or possibly freeze) is the inbuilt reaction system that we deal with.

Before we can control and make such a primeval system work for us day to day, or even just let us close to a particularly "dangerous" training partner then we need to become aware - Self-Aware i.e. learn to recognize what is going on within our own bodies. This means studying physical feelings and how they relate to emotions, especially anger and fear.

How can this be done? Well try an experiment sometime when you feel tense one day after work has been difficult, with argument and tension in the air building up perhaps to a headache -then try a stretching exercise like box splits. Do it cold with no warm up, and please be careful, but see just how far you can get before pain sets a limit. Compare this with a happy day and repeat the stretch after a nice relaxing period with say a meal, good company and so on. You may be surprised at how much further you can stretch (even with a full stomach)!

"Ah yes but the second time I'm relaxed", you may say.

Of course, but what created the difference? A different mental and emotional state. The link between mind and body is often talked about but how often can we see the mechanism. One way is by studying the emotions which form the third side of our internal triangle.

A first step to doing this is to sensitize our minds to our bodies. By feeling the tensions in separate muscle groups and learning to relax them we can learn to recognize bodily sensations in relation to our most basic emotions at an early stage.

If we recognize them before they become overwhelming then our conscious mind can deal more gradually with the situation.

A simple exercise at this point requires the help of a partner. Select a comfortable and quiet place to lie down, remove shoes and socks then lie on your back and close your eyes. Your partner should then place a finger on the outside ankle bone of one foot. Focus your attention on that contact. They should then move that finger across the skin over the top of the ankle to the inside ankle bone, as they do so follow the contact in your mind. Repeat this once or twice in either direction, then get your partner to hold one finger on the inside ankle bone and one on the outside while you recreate the feeling of contact moving across the skin from one to the other. Then do this without contact from your partner at all.

You should now be able to move this conscious sensation over the surface of your skin quite easily. Get your partner to replace one finger on one side of your ankle bone, focus on that contact very strongly so that they can then replace another finger on the opposite side of the same ankle without disturbing that focus. The second contact will probably feel hazy and not so firm so then move the focus of your attention along a straight line between the two finger contacts - gradually moving your attention inside your ankle.

Notice the feelings and pictures that came up as you traverse skin, muscle and bone, then stop in the middle of your ankle before moving on to the second finger contact. Repeat the exercise without your partner's contact.

Pretty soon you will be zipping the focus of your awareness all around your body, over the scalp (how tight is that?), down the arms etc. Some areas will be easy to sense; others difficult or impossible, these latter are referred to as blocks and on an emotional level are often worked with by body centered psychotherapies. On a physical level the blocked areas are generally areas of tension so that now by focusing into them or around them the muscles may be relaxed allowing greater mobility.

With practice you will find that this all-over body check can be done very quickly relaxing tensions where ever you will find yourself. A sort of DIY massage!

We have already learnt that physical tensions are created from the mind - might it not also be that in learning to relax the body we can calm the mind too? Indeed this proves to be the case. A little experiment here could well help also - next time you are in a heated argument, or paired up for a serious training session take a deep breath when you feel able and run your awareness around your body sensing tensions and relaxing them. I believe you will notice quite a difference.

So in aggressive situations we can begin to look at what happens to us mentally and emotionally, and how that affects us physically. In practising this inner focus many things happen, firstly we become wholly orientated to the present, our attention is physically attuned to this very moment and so we become "centered".

Secondly because we can only think one conscious thought at a time then the racing thoughts of the mind are calmed, we are unable to think about what our opponent may or may not be about to do,

and so are able to deal with what he actually is doing. Thirdly by stilling the mind and concentrating on our body we become more aware of the physical feelings associated with our emotions, and being aware we can deal with them.

The ability which we have to run a mental model, a prediction of if he does this, I will do so-and-so is a great asset in planning for business and other activities but it gets in the way on the level of a one to one relationship like a fight, it is simply too slow and unreal. So we train consciously, carefully, and in many arts slowly, so that when necessary we will react automatically allowing our subconscious training and our body to deal with a situation that consciously we cannot control.

What emotions then do we need to deal with - anger for one, fear for another. Isn't that too simplistic, what about aggression, power, control, determination? But these are all emotional expressions of our "spirit" seeking to overcome deeper inner feelings - feelings of fear.

Even anger, apparently hot, explosive, powerful, seems to be just another defence reaction, often a hair trigger defence against fear, a great energy blanket we throw over a frightened core.

Over the years we become used to fear and find ways to hide it. Consider when somebody shouts at a small child, the child cringes and hunches up with tension. So from childhood we literally put tension into our bodies as we seek to defend against the world.

Check out your own body, where do you keep your tension? In an aggressive situation we contact that fear again and re- create the tension. The result is that we slow down, the tensions interact to dissipate our efforts and in an extreme case the tension seizes the whole body - we freeze, like a rabbit in headlights.

Training in martial arts seeks to deal with this on a physical level, restricting the fear in a controlled environment and giving us a chance to remain operational, even become highly skilled in spite of our fear. Eventually the fear diminishes and the tensions ease. Some arts bring students closer to this fear than others, it depends too on the teacher and the student - the perception of danger may be quite high. Others play this down by taking a more gentle approach, but eventually any true martial art must deal with this aspect of danger. How we deal with these emotional aspects depends on us as individuals - on our fighting spirit.

It seems clear however that if we don't deal with our ego defence, our unreal fears, then we cannot separate them from real fears about real dangers. We develop a "hair trigger" reaction which attacks before being attacked or waits too long and then panics to put in a hurried response. In either case timing becomes a matter of on or off, there is no progression of timing, it is so critical that there is great sensitivity but no control.

What can happen is that our conscious mind holds such a tight control over us for fear of letting go and trusting our training, that it either pushes us into action too soon or works too slow and then panics. We are not truly open to reality in this case.

What is the secret of comedy? - timing. So it is of the martial arts, and distance - but this is a spacial equivalent of time. You cannot have correct distancing without the judgment and physical ability to be where you need, when you need to be there!

And how does timing work? - It works in reality as it happens. It does not work in our heads running neat little plans and strategies, although we can become very skilled at using these, they limit us. There is a saying - "If you think about it, you're too late". If then we can still the mind, empty it even, then we can become open to reality as it happens, not before and not after. Timing becomes real, and the subconscious spirit, that is the real inner person, can take over.

Amazingly by becoming open in this way to the reality of the confrontation life becomes much simpler as all the inbuilt reactions start to disappear and there starts to be more time to do things.

Why for example do some fighters pull back a fist before punching, or lift their front foot before moving forward? One explanation is that they have not been trained not to. But why do they do it at all. Why move back before you move forward? Why not just move forward and halve the time and effort? (and of course cease to telegraph your intentions to an opponent). Is it a mental flinching of anticipation, a sort of fear of what they are about to do? At some deep level it probably is, and why not? They are in fact preparing to close distance and engage in a potentially dangerous violent conflict. But it doesn't work. By allowing the fear of destruction to become physical they actually ensure that it is more likely to happen for real.

This need to desperately defend ourselves in an unreal way is to do with the ego. In this case perhaps most easily seen as the vulnerable model we have of ourselves, and how often do we hear or read that to fight well we should seek to eliminate our ego? By becoming more aware of ourselves physically the unreality of the ego can be removed and gradually a more realistic self image will emerge. Increasingly openness to the reality both of ourselves and our interactions with opponents permits us to act more progressively, more appropriately and more effectively. Indeed we begin to see that our power is increased.

This seems like magic - if I do something in my head, then I become more powerful? Well if you want to define magic as creating physical change from mental effort then perhaps it is, but there is a physical link through our own bodies, we are not talking about action at some remote distance. The process has two components; firstly by relaxing antagonistic muscle tensions we are able to maximize the potential of our muscle usage both individually and throughout the whole body, so that an integration of effort is possible. Secondly by relaxing hair trigger reactions we reduce our activity to a minimum necessary and thus create more time for the minimal actions to take place they can then be more powerful and appear much faster.

By doing less we can in this way achieve more - four ounces moves 1000lbs. Ultimately perhaps we can even achieve what we want without fighting - isn't that power?

- 1. Do not think dishonestly.**
- 2. The Way is in training**
- 3. Become acquainted with every art.**
- 4. Know the Ways of all professions.**
- 5. Distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters.**
- 6. Develop intuitive judgment and understanding for everything**
- 7. Perceive those things which cannot be seen.**
- 8. Pay attention even to trifles.**
- 9. Do nothing which is of no use.**

Miyamoto Musashi

CHAPTER 2

Basic Principles

In the west we have raised the art of mechanistic, logical, problem solving type thought to a high art and often this is the only area of personal development that is encouraged - it enables us to earn money!

Training the body to achieve its maximum potential seems to be an art most practised in the east and the variety of dance and martial art schools there are evidence of this in their philosophical linkage to the mental and emotional areas. Western ballet is perhaps a good parallel. In essence we seek to achieve conscious control over the way we use our bodies based on sound principles of change, truth, efficiency, relaxation and focus. By training the whole body in the way of Tai-Chi for example, it is possible to consciously programme the way it works and then to remove the conscious element so that automatic control takes over. The result is a body which operates much faster when needed and uses less energy than before to achieve the same physical results. In addition, because a mental/emotional element is involved rather than just a training to win e.g. in sports, the bodywork is tied in to the other elements to produce a cohesive whole - the principles of the body are the same as those of the mind and the emotions.

One major advantage of this kind of training over some other areas is the ability to test it out; an independent objective test is possible - trial by combat! i.e. does the system work, does it deliver what it offers and what else does it ask that gets in the way of our training objectives?

On an emotional level we can work toward awareness of our feelings through awareness of the sensations in our bodies and by using our logical mind can determine the validity and appropriateness of these physical/emotional responses. Again schools that work with emotions are often charismatic in nature and it seems important to find one e.g. based on Gestalt theory that operates with a clearly formulated structure of principles. It seems clear that these principles should also be appropriate to the mental and physical processes running alongside.

Self development work that operates as an integrated base with common principles across the mind, body, emotion interfaces is likely to be more effective if only because work in one area reinforces work in the other two. Integration of approach allows for consistent, simple development by applying our learning focus in 3 similar ways rather than trying to understand 3 different messages in 3 different ways, thus internal conflict is avoided.

We are taught to think through the academic system in a logical, analytical, problem solving way - should we not also be taught how to use our bodies effectively and to understand our own emotions so that we can behave more appropriately and release our full potential as balanced and integrated human beings?

So what common principles might we look for, what have others found?

For myself they all start from a base of truth, verifiable truth. Whether it be logically provable, physically demonstrable or emotionally repeatable there is truth in the reality of the moment at all levels. This then leads to a variety of other principles.

Truth

1. Mental (mind) truth.

This is traditional western logical, provable truth which can be directly handled in our heads and for which there is a widely recognised symbology - it is no accident that English is the computer programming language base of the world.

2. Physical (body) truth

This can be found in the full and efficient use of the body, such areas as martial arts which involve an intimate relationship of two bodies, provide a forum for the understanding of truth between two bodies - lovemaking of course in its fullest sense also depends on this. In activities such as Tai Chi pushing hands it is possible to use the senses to feel ones partners tensions and balance - where they are in the relationship - and to prove it (verify the truth) by the action of unbalancing them with minimal force. In lovemaking this becomes a matter of sensing the ebb and flow of touch, of sounds etc. in the various areas of each other's bodies, the truth of the situation arises from the response, pleasure and involvement that results. Physical truth is what works, sensing it and carrying it out - at the ultimate extreme of a fight situation you either get hit or you don't.

3. Emotional (spiritual) truth

This is more subjective but can perhaps be dealt with in conjunction with identifiable feelings in our bodies. It is for example possible to know when we are angry what our body feels like, and consequently to recognize that if our body feels a certain way that it relates to a specific sensation e.g. if our legs are cold and shaking then we are probably afraid.

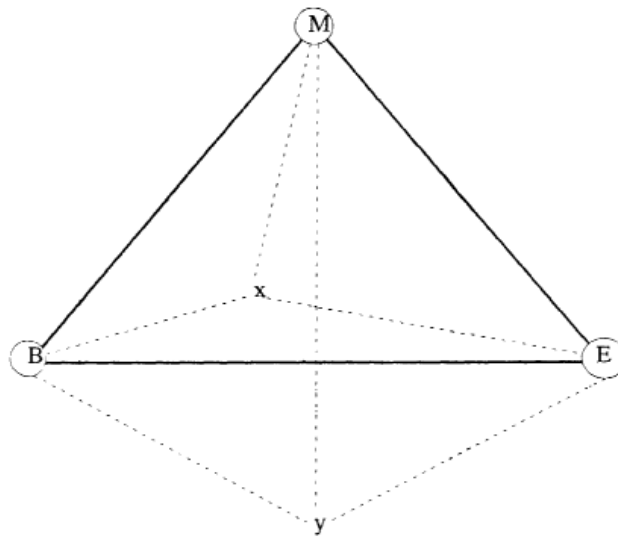
The kind of truth sought here has nothing to do with beliefs in some external spiritual being, that is something arising out of our need to make sense of the world and our inability to do so from within - if we are able to make sense from within then our need for religious spirituality seems to disappear at least in terms of a need for an omnipotent deity.

When we learn to identify our own feelings from our bodies in a way that is repeatable, and allows us to be honest about our internal experience then we can have honest relationships with others and find truth between people.

This becomes important because only by being honest about where we are can we have true interactions, and we are such complex bio-computers that we cannot do this on a purely mental level - our conscious mind simply cannot control everything at once all the time, our subconscious and automatic subsystems must be allowed to run on their own. In this way we can truly "be there" as ourselves rather than as a mental construct trying to put forward the presentation we think is most suitable.

When we are in this state of honest reality then fantasy fears do not impinge and we can control ourselves. In a fight situation this corresponds to letting the training take over so that our conscious mind gives direction only, but releases control to our subconscious which is able to operate much faster and over a wider range of our senses. By getting our conscious mind out of our body we become much more capable, each part of us doing that to which it is best suited.

In a mind, body, emotion net we can be anywhere at any one time.

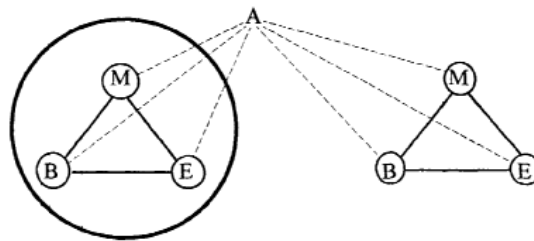


x - a point within the net, an introspective, “safe” condition

y - a point outside the net, an outreaching and vulnerable position

Now when two people come together their joint centre is constantly changing and the relationship depends on each being able to stay close to the other - or an agreement to pull away.

A - joint centre

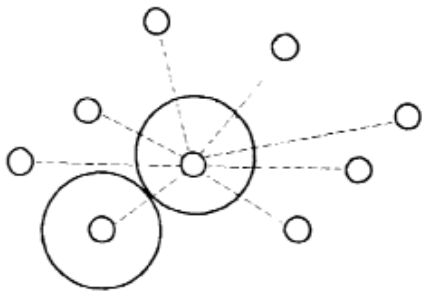


When two people interact in this way it is possible for each to be anywhere in the joint network - unless one creates a “no-go” zone into which the other is not allowed entrance.

A barrier of this sort may let a partner close but not within the personal net of the one creating the barrier. Similarly moving together or apart increases intimacy or creates individual space.

A fight situation of course is all about putting up barriers and protecting them energetically, but how does this work? Are not the barriers we create against an opponent just unreal constructs that take aggressive energy to maintain? It seems likely that in creating either an aggressive or a defensive stance (powered by the fear of our barriers being penetrated) that we actually imprison ourselves and restrict our own access to the outer reality of the fight. Similar to the science fiction energy shield concept, missiles cannot get in but we cannot fire out either, without temporarily at least letting down the shields!

Where a group is concerned, then it seems possible for each individual to be at any point within the group net. What tends to happen is that an individual can only relate to one other at any one time - while keeping alert to the group, much like a spider in a web senses with its legs while focusing on its immediate meal, we interact one to one but are alert to the many. We are simply too complicated to have a conscious in-depth interaction with more than one other person at a time.



Here the net is monitored but an interaction is taking place with one other. This can change swiftly with practice but needs the understanding of each group member otherwise a fragmented and incomplete relationship results.

In a group fight we are taught to take control, focus on one opponent and be aware of the others. The most highly skilled can indeed deal with more than one opponent at a time, for example punching one and kicking another, clearly this takes a high level of mastery.

So what common principles arise from these three types of truth, I suggest the following.

1. Acceptance - we must first accept the truth if we are to live with it.
2. Flexibility - to deal with the truth of the here and now i.e. the reality of life, rather than the inflexibility that demands things be different.
3. Openness - a desire for the truth however uncomfortable it may be in the knowledge that being closed to the truth will ultimately hurt more.
4. Choice - by allowing ourselves choice we empower ourselves to use the truth to create what we desire.
5. Non-attachment - if we do not invest in the rightness of something then we can be open and flexible to the possibility that we were wrong and thus regain our choice. Truth becomes a working hypothesis - useful until proved untrue - when we change to the new truth in turn.
6. Centering - the concept that all proceeds out from the true self e.g. individual scientific observation or, personal experience, and returns to the self. In this way is a unification of mind, body and emotion that each may still be separate but linked in harmony. We can thus express who we are - our true self without conflicting signals.
7. Balance - here we achieve truth in developing the ability to maintain a balance i.e. a true position in our lives. The scientifically balanced equation, or the spinning ballerina exemplify this as does the balance of emotion displayed by a mature human being resulting from recognising fantasy and thus being able to live in reality.
8. Dynamic change - in all aspects of life the most difficult points seem to be in dealing with change. The truth of this reality and of how we deal with it either in a factory production process or in a lover leaving a relationship. It is a major step from our attachment to the static status quo or some other desired fantasy, to our ability to deal appropriately with real situations.
9. A tendency toward those actions which allow one to feel "good" i.e. search for positive factors, coupled with an understanding and acceptance of the "bad" or negative ones. This is a truth about ourselves and external reality that allows us to deal with guilt, accept reality as neutral and stay open without a need to blame (negatively) any particular agency. In this way the objective truth may be revealed and dealt with.
10. Flow, i.e. movement along the scale between our extremes. Gentle transitions rather than instantaneous switches from one to another. Movement of this type can be very fast and powerful because the rate of flow is accelerating.

By developing basic principles such as these in our training and our lives generally we can use technique as a tool, to reach our own goals. Techniques cease then to be routine sets of moves to be learnt and can become ways of learning to use our bodies. When in a fight did you ever see a textbook technique. Never? Well not often anyway, but not because the basic technique is wrong,

quite the opposite. Only by training in those basic, simple techniques are we able effectively to apply them in a form modified by the immediate needs of the fight. By setting technique in the context of principles such as those outlined here we can then transcend the techniques themselves and let our own "fighting spirit" produce whatever is needed at the time.

Why do great masters seem to have something special, even and perhaps especially, in their basic techniques? They bring to a simple move great balance, power, control and beauty, there is something there which is difficult to understand, difficult even to see. Is it part of themselves they show to us? Perhaps their very soul made physical?

One Encounter, One chance.

CHAPTER 3

We have looked in chapter one at how awareness may be focused into any part of our bodies, and investigated the possibilities this opens up in terms of relaxation. Now let us consider what happens if this internal focus is applied in the course of an action - for example a punch.

In learning to punch there are generally a number of basic positions into which we put bits of our body. We use conscious control to force the arm as instructed and probably the feet, legs etc. as well. These parts are dealt with individually and somewhat mechanically on a go here, do this basis. When the punch is actually executed we see and feel the arm go out with a fist at the end, then distance runs out and it all comes to a shuddering halt. With practice we learn to tense at this point of apparent impact with an imaginary opponent. This serves to make us rigid so that our body can withstand the impact, also so that the impact is transferred through the body to a solid surface (the ground), and it also serves to arrest all movement. If the fist does not strike at exactly the right distance then power is not effectively transferred.

What happens is that unconsciously we aim for the end of our arm as if it were the buffers at the end of a railway line.

If we now use our internal focus and run this down the arm and out beyond the fist, a completely different experience develops. Try this very slowly at first as it will take time to co-ordinate your internal awareness with the external action. It is likely that you become more relaxed and that extension is increased. We have in a way removed the buffers from the end of the line, and with it both the anticipation of an instant stop (fear) and indeed the instant stop itself (a block to flow of movement).

The point of impact with an opponent has become irrelevant; it is no longer a **stopping** point rather just another point on the way somewhere else. This direction of our awareness beyond a punch may be described as projecting our "feeling". Internal projection in this way is a means of connecting conscious and subconscious within our bodies to co-ordinate intention and action. Without creating this co-ordination we still unconsciously project our feeling but in a scattered or uncontrolled way that may be used against us. Even when co-ordinated it may still be used against us, for if we project too far we overbalance, too little and there is no power indeed while punching forward it is perfectly possible to fall over backwards.

If we keep all the feeling within our own body then how can power be transferred outward to an opponent. Control of this feeling then becomes important and we can learn to keep this focus within our body or to project it and strike beyond the target.

So now in a way we are considering reaching outside our previous limits. But they are our own limits and were never real anyway - they are in our heads where they can be changed.

Practice in this way soon leads to more relaxed working and greater power as internal awareness subconsciously co-ordinates the body with conscious control gradually being removed. The result is more effect for less energy, and the thought that this may also apply in the outside world, where

focusing on where you want your energies to go also creates results. We often hear about 100% commitment in attack or in technique, how does this fit in? Well I suggest that commitment is not about how much energy you expend, it is more to do with not holding back. Letting go of the need for a safe fall-back position. It is about being 100% in the fight and not leaving a piece of yourself outside, so that the whole mind and body are focused on the interaction.

If this is achieved then past and future are irrelevant, only a very real present can exist and in that state only honesty is possible. In this situation it is as if two people are working soul to soul and can see each other for what they really are. Technique becomes irrelevant, the important part is what you are and all else is a reflection of this inner self.

In training then with a partner try to cultivate the use of feeling once technique is established. Learn to "give" projected feeling for them to work with even if it feels a little unsafe. Learn to trust your partner with some of your safety. The way you handle this projection exercise in training is a clear description of your part in that particular relationship and will have parallels in other non- martial arts relationships e.g. at work or with friends and lovers.

When you train in this way with someone you can learn about their fear and their courage, their love and their hate, very basic emotions. Emotions that power us all through our lives. You can also learn about their balance, their solidity, their flexibility and so on, the skill they have achieved in dealing with their inner self. This is especially clear in exercises such as pushing hands in Tai Chi, and touching in this way then becomes a very intimate experience whether in a training environment or between friends. With experience these same personality factors can eventually be seen by looking at someone perform a Kata, or even simply as they walk across a room.

Hold on a minute do I hear someone ask about Chi or Ki, isn't this just internal energy by another description? Perhaps it is, and if so fine, but the idea of consciously patterning the body and re-programming the subconscious is straight out of western psychology and neurophysiology - it all depends on your belief system. We don't have to deny Chi or believe in it; after all if a "blue spark" of Chi could be demonstrated between a practitioners hands there wouldn't be any question.

It is clear that our belief systems help us to achieve things we believe to be possible; however they also limit us by creating areas of non-belief by apparent exclusion. But a belief system is only that, a system, in this case a model in our heads. Our heads may hold many models, however if they conflict then great internal tension can be set up over these inconsistencies. It is advisable therefore to ensure that our belief systems are simple, mutually consistent, honest (true), and necessary. If we can do without one, or incorporate it into a general one then so much the better. The apparent gulf between western mechanistic reductionist analysis and eastern existentialism often seems to be such a conflict, but the conflict is illusory.

Pragmatic here-and-now existentialism is concerned with what works, a black box approach. By learning what inputs give rise to what outputs we understand the black box, in the way of a driver learning to drive a car. Western analytical methods could of course be employed to establish the exact mechanical operation inside the "black box" so that we could then begin to learn to drive the car. There are advantages to both systems but generally the symbolic system of language, and physical experience, get most of us through the very complex learning process quite quickly without resort to disassembly. The car ("black box") is the same, the belief systems appear different but are consistent, it is really only the perspectives that change.

So do our belief systems matter? Well first it is important to look carefully at what they are, and they may be very difficult to recognize, for many are deeply ingrained in our culture almost to the point of a joke e.g. the macho-man stereotype, or the dismissal of one type of music because of beliefs about the type of people who listen to it. Our belief systems are important often because we don't even know what they are.

Once they are recognised then we can work with them and change them. One old and apparently illogical test of logical thought is elegance, and elegant simplicity is a most prized achievement among scientists. There is beauty in $E=mc^2$. The search is on to link that with Quantum Mechanics through a Unified Field Theory and so again create an even more elegant simplicity, to remove the apparent conflicts. We now even have an elegant description of chaos! in Chaos Theory, where we find the most exquisitely beautiful pictures computer generated from factual mathematics.

So it is with personal belief systems, elegant simplicity and integrated consistency reduce our internal conflicts, which in turn reduce the conflicts we have externally with the world, for it is through internal models based on those belief systems that we experience the world. When our outward experience does not match our inward model we experience confusion and emotional pain, and in the case of martial arts physical pain and possibly even death. It seems vital therefore that our belief systems are as congruent to reality as we can make them. This is a long and difficult task, a lifetime's work - the model can never match reality 100% and wouldn't be any use if it did, as such a model would match reality point for point - far too big and cumbersome! So is there an alternative? Well of course we could stop trying to figure out how the black box of life works and "just live it".

Nice try, but figuring out the works can be fun, and it doesn't stop us just "living it" as well does it? No the two are not incompatible we just need to broaden our perspective. Like Alice walking through the looking glass we too can get a view from the other side.

To relate this to martial arts we can see that generations of beginners have trained successfully by constant practice and over a period a number became proficient, some masters. It is clear that just doing it, just practising, patterning the body and the subconscious in an unconscious way will achieve results where a good system is taught by a good teacher. However it is a common observation in martial arts that ability does not decline with age, as the physical body weakens then something else more than makes up for any loss. It is these older masters who encourage us to go through our mental blocks, to keep on training even when we don't want to. The training really will pull you through if you want "it" enough.

On this route though having passed through a few blocks we start to think deeply about it as well, and for each eventually a picture emerges, a philosophy, a model which we can experiment with as an aid to our training. In fact it starts as a subconscious process covering the mind, body and spirit. It is a very powerful process but being initially subconscious and apparently slow many give up seeing no return for considerable effort. However like pushing a heavy cart up a hill, once over the top (when the process becomes conscious) the cart runs down the other side accelerating all the way.

This awakening of consciousness in training allows us to remove many limits and more fully use the physical potential we have, it is this greater use of our potential that seems to balance the declining potential itself, like getting greater efficiency from a smaller engine. Even this of course has its limits and a crossover must occur eventually for there is no greater decline in potential than death itself - although some manage to push even this limit to its extreme!

I believe (sic!) that in western culture our belief systems and thought patterns are sufficiently established that few can make the total switch to the other side of the mirror, and why should we, we cannot unlearn. But we can learn anew and re-integrate, retaining the benefits of the old along with our gains of the new. Existentialism is right for our bodies; they after all cannot experience anything but the present. Concepts of Taoism and Zen work with our minds, bodies and emotions creating a consistent internal being.

Western externalism and time-shifted analytical modelling work in different ways. By integrating the internal and the external, the east and the west, we can remove barriers to our own development within the martial arts which are of course only a microcosmic reflection of our wider daily lives and relationships.

I teach my students only one corner. If they cannot find the other three, I do not teach them again.

Confucius

CHAPTER 4

"Dan grades should train more slowly than Kyu grades - they have more to think about." This from an arthritic 4th Dan whom I loved and respected, was an exhortation which was at first difficult to understand. However, since he could prove it in his body by his ability, despite considerable pain, it demanded recognition.

It is this thinking about what we are doing that starts to create more effective training and to give martial arts meaning in the wider context of life. By becoming more internally aware of our emotions and our bodies we can start to put thoughts into action. When learning technique it is natural to focus on the posture we are instructed on but what happens is that for example with a kick, the focus is on the foot we intend to kick with. This is then robotically and consciously lifted and put through the technique until reaching its target, less attention is often paid to the post "impact" placement.

The key point however, is the way all of this is under conscious control. Why?

The technique needs to be programmed in by slow practice, but now an awareness of the feeling of the kick can be developed as well. It is this generation of the feeling which takes so long to get anything like right and which requires slow practice. Each movement, each tiny change of posture, every tensing or relaxation of tension, the position of one's balance point and the direction of one's inner movement, all this and an awareness of fear, anger, love, hate-this takes time to co-ordinate and is a personal experience for each of us.

When this has been done slowly it is possible to trigger the move at speed without going through the process, so that to kick fast simply recreate (imagine) the feel of the kick as you project it through the opponent, and your subconscious and your body will do the rest. Don't think of the kick, think of the impact, this thought will act as a trigger to your careful training. The use of a trigger also gives the key to the importance of follow-through, for a trigger is fine for a gun where no one wants the bullet back, but the foot is directly attached to the rest of the body and has its own effect like the tail wagging a dog. Unless there is a complete technique that retains control of one's centre after the impact then the trigger is firing off an incomplete programme, and the point of impact is no longer just a point on the way somewhere else, it has become a point on the way to nowhere - the buffers have been reinstated at the end of the line!

Slow training then, with awareness, allows us to notice the unnecessary and ineffective in our technique. By reducing technique to its most simple and effective when a trigger is let off then the technique is faster and more powerful. This is why basic training is so important. Our basic techniques are the simplest, fastest and most powerful; if we can get them right do we "need" any others? Likewise if we cannot even get a basic technique right then what chance is there with a more complex one?

As awareness develops we become our own observer - perhaps you have noticed when looking at a fight (or an argument) how much easier it is to see what is going on and when the openings appear than when actually in that situation yourself. One of the things that outside observers notice is our automatic "reaction" in a fight, and even when we are told this it is difficult to deal with - don't lift your front foot, don't duck, don't pull back your fist, don't twitch when you attack. This is all good advice but the chances are you can't even tell when you are doing it. In learning to notice these things for yourself then it becomes much easier to stop doing them. When you eliminate "reaction" then you can create "action."

This means taking control of yourself at a very deep level. Elimination of the reaction prior to action roughly halves the amount of movement needed and removes the unbalancing effect of the reactive part, both mentally and physically. This gives more time for less action so that speed is increased and greater power generated. We have effectively given ourselves more time by simplifying the situation.

By simplifying situations to the level of action then subjective time is slowed down, as our mind becomes clearer and truly focused on our chosen action. Where before we were rushed and chaotic, panic ruled. Now we have more than enough time and can study the situation carefully using the conscious mind to make choices. In this way by trusting our subconscious and our bodies to follow, we can commit ourselves fully, this releases our conscious mind from the constraints of subjective time, we can "go" where in reality it is not possible to be. We can conceive of dancing between raindrops or walking in the cracks of paving stones. The idea of "playing in the cracks" is one musicians will be aware of - to do the unreal, the unbelievable, and make it work, to touch genius?

If we can slow time like this, when do we need to be afraid? If not afraid then why react? Without reaction then there is harmony and only action. There is time also for appreciation of the movement and joy in the present as each moment can last forever - if I have 30 seconds to do something that only takes one second then I have 29 seconds of nothing which I can fill with life, and that can be a pretty good experience of forever!

In studying our physical training with an internal "observer", we have given ourselves a means of self assessment. Since we become aware of how we do things we can remember them, like how far we can stretch, or twist or how good our balance is in a particular move. Over time we can see our own development as the edges are knocked off and our technique loses its joins. Similarly, it becomes possible to understand more clearly individual relationships with training partners as one day they are no problem to deal with and yet another you yourself get trampled on!

Observation of this and of your own internal state will generally provide the answer. Indeed a careful study of the trend of one's own performance in the martial arts is a good indicator of mental and emotional development - for the simple reason that beyond technique physical ability becomes a reflection of the other two. Thus we have a physical measure of our inner state that is why every time we do a Tai-Chi form or a favourite Kata, it is different. Each experience clearly shows to anyone watching, with the ability to see, exactly what sort of person is performing and what their inner state is at that time. Each experience also allows our own inner observer to do the same, if we are honest enough to recognize it.

This is clearly a tremendous advantage in cutting the cycle of repetitive negative behaviour. If our martial arts performance is poorer than usual then what are the contributing mental/emotional factors? Careful inner questioning may reveal the answer; if the same answers keep recurring then a pattern of negative habit has been identified and can be dealt with. Similarly, a steady trend of improvement in martial arts will probably reflect greater harmony of mind and spirit.

The observation itself being of great help as a physical measure of the internal state. It being particularly difficult to measure this directly - a bit like asking an orange to weigh itself!

So why do some martial arts have gradings and others not? And why do some very senior masters seem to pay little attention to them? Do these masters have a different perspective? Why in fact do gradings seem to be both very important and yet not important at all?

In a soft art like Tai-Chi it doesn't take long to find out that there is only one way to measure yourself against someone else - try it. You cannot run, hide, cheat, lie, bluff or bluster, there is always only one honest answer. It is not about winning or losing or even just about who pushes who over, it comes down to there and then at that moment what is the relationship between two people. You can be dishonest and deny it if you want, but that is your loss. There are times when only honesty will do, and this is one of them.

External arts like Karate are a little different; such tests while honest are somewhat destructive. Indeed the rational is different as an internal art is by its very nature self correcting and self limiting, a practitioner only learning when they are ready to. At the higher levels I believe this is true also of Karate where self awareness smoothes progress. However, in the early stages a Karate student does not have the direct personal experience of pushing hands and has only their own eyes and minimal experience to judge with, so a syllabus and a test provide a structured path.

I am sure that senior masters can tell just by looking at a student walking across the training hall exactly what is the level of their ability and development. In most cases the grading is irrelevant for the master since he can tell in seconds by looking. The grading itself then provides a process for the student to pass through, each one being likened to going through a wall or tunnel in order to come out the other side to a new horizon. Progress in this way becomes stepwise, each new breakthrough being consolidated before the next one is attempted. The grading process i.e. the training for the grading, being one where lessons are learnt internally and often only brought to conscious realisation some months after the grading event itself. Thus grading is a way of catalysing development, the process itself being a way of students learning about themselves.

Students tend to use gradings and coloured belts as a measure of ability, so why is there only one "black belt" when clearly there is a great difference between a 1st Dan and an 8th Dan. Perhaps because at that level the label is less important and practitioners are more able to judge for themselves, the need to know is less a matter of ego protection. At some point senior dan grades can pair up honestly and know their relationship, accept it and work together without the need to compete or prove it.

Gradually then by seeing how we have learnt and continue to learn we can set our own syllabus and our own gradings if we want, or just set ourselves directions and monitor the resulting progress. Gradings become less and less relevant - they were only ever for the individual anyway as a means to an end.

Pain

**If the pain were not bearable
It would not be given us to bear;
At finding excuses not to bear pain I am too plausible, trying to dissipate the angst by
chemicals into warm air.**

**Some degree of pain is synonymous with growing,
The real anguish is in the running
From what is ourselves and close as our own breathing;
Take pain into your heart and mind and it becomes more tolerable,
There is even joy in our becoming more mature.**

**Pain is woven into our workings here
And will continue to be so until
You and I with the immortals are
On the other side of the hill.**

Thomas Blackburn

CHAPTER 5

We have looked so far at some ideas and exercises that relate the mind and spirit (mental and emotional) to the physical world of martial arts. These have been aimed pragmatically at relating present experience to present training and back to the wider context of present day life. However, in order to fully take responsibility for who we are then radical change is often required and for this we need an understanding of how we human beings work. There are many ways of considering this, and for those wishing to go deeper there are a great variety of excellent books. What follows is a personal description which draws on the parallels between modern computers and the human biocomputer. This seems entirely reasonable in any age when man is seeking to recreate himself in the medium of computers.

When born we have a minimal set of instructions inbuilt, they cover the basis of moving our chemicals and electrical impulses around together with certain survival "instincts". The rest is available to be written on and however this is done, it programs us.

With a normal computer this is built up in ever increasing complexity but each lesson needs to be put in only once. Each function also occurs at a fixed and clearly attributed point; a memory location for example. This does not appear to be true in the same way for a biocomputer, or at least, may be considered otherwise for the level at which we are able to operate in reprogramming it. There seems to be more of a holistic and holographic process involved, where the programming depends on the intensity with which it is put in, the "openness" (sensitivity) of the body at the time and the extent to which it conflicts with other programs.

We are concerned on the one hand with programming in early days when combative factors are minimal, but perhaps more relevantly for those of us who can read this, we are concerned with reprogramming i.e. changing those programs that either do not work or produce results which we are not happy with.

Our inputs are our senses:

1. Sight
2. Sound
3. Touch
4. Smell
5. Taste

and one other.

These senses produce a pattern in our brains of the world around us. And our brain then uses its programming to output and effect exterior changes, in this process changes take place in our bodies - chemical and electrical changes. For example, we see a ferocious dog in front of us and the fight, flight or freeze reaction is instigated - also we feel fear - it is good and healthy that we do - our brain has told our body to make changes in order to deal with this threat and fear is one of them. Our physical inputs led to the creation of a scene in our brains (from previous programming) and this scene leads to bodily changes recognisable as fear.

What happens then if we are in a daily office environment and a situation occurs which is threatening, not to us in a physical bodily sense, but threatening to our inner self, perhaps even to our existence in a less direct way (e.g. being sacked). Then we seem to use the same system to generate the same bodily changes. There is no physical danger and fight, flight or freeze is a totally inappropriate response, but nonetheless, we use the same system of physical response - we allow the scene in our heads to take over - it becomes an input of its own. Without comprehensible inputs from the rest of our senses we generate our own - in our heads - with our imagination.

It is perfectly possible, for example, to relive in memory a frightening experience and feel new fear generated from the "input" of our memory. Once our body starts to experience the situation going on in our imagination, it then feeds the sensations back to the conscious mind as a "real" experience - a feedback loop is generated, and we feel the emotions thus created by our imagination. This is also true of other emotions, love, hate, anger etc.

We are also greatly more complex in our integration than an electronic computer, each nerve cell being connected to many others - there is thus no right path for a signal but a multitude of possible routes of staggering complexity. Each organ also has its own feedback control circuit whereby it inputs chemically and electrically to the biocomputer and receives control commands in the form of chemical or electronic signals.

As such an integrated part, it may be considered, within very narrow limits that each organ is individually alive and also connected to every other organ. There is an electrochemical link however tenuous therefore from any one part of the body to every other. And in the middle sits the brain with its imagination.

Since we clearly manipulate the world in our heads - our world map - before we attempt to do so in reality, we can see that this does not require a real (external) input to set off a manipulation.

It may be this interlinking complexity which gives rise to consciousness, intelligence etc., however, it may also be the means of reprogramming the Biocomputer. Much programming is done by physical patterning; job skills for example, dance steps, or martial arts techniques. Other programming is by intellectual patterning - going through many day to day interpersonal contacts and trying out different responses, we keep the ones that aid our survival, but unlike physically learned skills these intellectual ones are rarely taught to us directly. We are left to find out by ourselves - each succeeding generation must learn its own life skills - what a waste.

It has taken hundreds of years to perfect many of today's physical skills, much of it by oral tradition, how can we hope that each individual will achieve a satisfactory result in life skills without benefiting from the lessons of others and being taught the basics.

In fact of course, some such teaching is available in the various philosophical schools of the east and west but we rarely come into contact with them until very late (relatively) in life.

And then the lessons on dealing with our own personal biocomputer are often very unclear. Many are dressed in the shroud of religion and overlain with so much irrelevance and added political material that the original message is almost totally lost.

The result is that many schools of bio-programming often reprogramme more than is expected - each is like a trifle, you cannot buy only the jelly it is too mixed up with the sponge and custard - one must buy the whole package even if you do not like custard, and eat it all to reach the part you need. Often the price of getting jelly this way is unbelievably high, indeed belief itself is often the price demanded - not belief in jelly but in the vendor as the only possible supplier of the true jelly.

So why not just buy the jelly - well what does it look like on its own? Each vendor claims his is the one and only pure jelly, and of course if you pay his price then it is not possible to judge the others.

Perhaps then pure jelly is without price and it is the impurities that add the cost?

It seems likely, and most schools and many therapeutic systems work this way, that by bio-energetic means we can impress new programming, and partially at least, erase the old. It is possible however, to retain both and an uneasy conflict between them will exist as each fights to carry out its program in the same body.

Some schools seek to make the programming ever more complex, others to eliminate the more recent and more conflicting programs completely, at least for a time, under conscious control. Can we not seek a more effective way of reprogramming the biocomputer?

It seems clear that mind and body are so closely linked with the emotions (or spirit) that to deal with the emotions we need to deal with mind and body at the same time. We can work directly on the body in a physical sense with known and provable techniques that improve it and allow us to extend its use to nearer full potential - how do we do this for the mind - is it not just as simple?

As it is possible to affect the brain directly from the body, so it is possible to affect the body directly from the brain. This means we can affect our bodies by using that 6th input, our imagination.

In an unconnected or non-integrated person the level of conscious thought reaches only the top level of activity but as awareness improves it is possible to connect this conscious thought (awareness) with ever deeper levels of function even down past the emotional level to the physical body.

Unconscious control works from the lowest level upward and is the normal state of the programmed individual - it is also the preferred and desired direction - when programming is correct and conscious programming/control is no longer needed. The Biocomputer can work on automatic, leaving conscious thought uncluttered. Conscious control works from the top down; we must establish this in order to reprogramme at the basic levels. The aim being to achieve the reprogramming and then withdraw conscious intervention and let the new programming get on with its job.

Man is basically a physical being, his brain developed as a survival tool and his ability to handle alternative realities (plans, hopes, desires, strategies, possibilities) in his head has gradually become an end in itself. So an organ developed for survival has changed its role and now seeks to satisfy itself, so the side effect has become the *raison d'etre*.

It is surely obvious that a tool developed for one purpose is unlikely to be well designed for a completely different one - that it does work to the level here discussed is surely amazing. However, this is the story of evolution in all areas, if the adaptation achieves its end more successfully than its competitors, then it gets to survive and evolve itself. Whither the brain, if developing to serve its own self generated needs?

Much has been said so far about fear, and many people talk about "conquering fear", this seems to be rather simplistic, as if it is possible or even desirable to conquer ourselves. So what is fear, can we understand it in a way that allows us to deal with it - to feel fear and yet be free? I believe the answer lies deep in human development and that fear is both positive and negative, the secret is perhaps how to harmonise with our fear and use it rather than fight it. Certainly without acknowledging our

fear we cannot deal with it, any other course leads us to a dead end. For the more we deny our fear the more impossible it is eventually to deal with it.

Perhaps if we understand the place of fear in our lives then it will be easier to accept, also by understanding that it is universal to the human condition then we can begin to see the fear in others. We are not alone.

The void within which we all fear is the driving force - the stick of procreation. For a woman, it is the need to nurture that makes her genetically successful; for a man, the need to procreate as widely as possible. A female focuses inward, therefore in the present - her life for example may be sacrificed for offspring who, without her, will not survive anyway. A male lives more in the future, he is driven to seek new procreation - to protect offspring yes, but not at his own ultimate expense - he can create many more offspring alive and be genetically more successful than his one sacrificed offspring - therefore there are sound limits to male parenting.

The void is our own biological genetic programme - a need without which we would not survive as a species - that void can never be really filled, it is a tool to genetic success and as such must be unlimited, if it could be filled completely we would limit our species in its ability to compete genetically. Without it we would not be human. In time in fact, the need reduces and as grandparents the male void is modified back to its female origin, grandfathers are almost motherly!

So what do we do with our void? - clear it of neurotic programming and learn how to live with it - it is part of us and makes us what we are. It can be filled but must be constantly refilled.

And why do we fear the void? - if it were not there our species would not survive - it is the very basis of our existence, our genetic selection and cultural development are so intertwined in the use of this basic tool - fear as a driving mechanism - that for it to work it must operate on a personal level, thus we fear our own individual nameless fear - it need not actually be a fear of anything, it is only important that it be there.

It is not that we fear "if I do not procreate then I will suffer destruction" but rather that our genes have been selected from those individuals for whom procreation is a matter of personal survival. Anything less is not enough. As a survival mechanism fear ensures individual existence and thus survival of those genes which engender the fear reaction. This same reaction is also used at an emotional level to drive reproduction with a stick and carrot effect where the high level of fear to which we are prone has created an internal fear environment - the void - which can only be countered by those feelings surrounding the procreative process. Why else would an individual reduce their own security to ensure the continuation of their genes? There must be a reason for the individual to behave in such a way so as to ensure successful reproduction. The result is also species success - but success of a species with a great tendency to feeling fear.

And the carrot - that wonderful feeling when the void is filled - the emotional and physical feeling of joy, pleasure, happiness, of the whole procreative process, loving and being loved - we are also a species with a great tendency to feeling love. Thus we are "addicted" to procreation by the stick on the one hand and the carrot on the other, thus we ensure the success of our species. So we must accept the basic presence of the fear mechanism within us all, and the very basic differences brought about by our sexual reproduction which being asymmetrical in character creates different roles for each parent in order to ensure the maximum chance of successful genetic survival.

As a tool for world species domination this is clearly a successful genetic pattern, however, once our brains reach present sophistication there becomes a conflict between basic genetic programming and the needs of our runaway bio-computer, which by now has started to be so powerful that it has strong needs of its own. These are developments of basic animal needs but under intellectual control and using the same emotional equipment and programming as are used in a more general way for genetic survival. Is it any wonder that with such basic, genetically enhanced emotions our complex minds have found ways of satisfying the push/pull dilemma by means of fantasy? Unfortunately this

too has two sides and while fantasies can give us some of our greatest highs they can also provide our deepest lows.

The basic stick and carrot of fear and pleasure have become adapted to success in all areas of social existence - subverted in fact to areas where the totality of commitment we have toward individual survival and genetic success is not appropriate. In this way fear on any level connects with the most basic fear of all and opens the emotional void created by genetic selection to serve us in our fight for genetic success. Likewise intellectual and physical pleasure in our success or abilities whether it be through power, money or achievement also touches that same primal need, by temporarily filling the emotional void. We can never have enough of it and never be free of the fear that drives it.

Does this mean we should fuck and be happy?!

Maybe - but don't forget the bio-computer has moved a long way on and has needs of its own, and anyway fucking is only part of the procreative process. Our minds have found so much more in life to use the carrot and stick upon - but for all that we are still simple creatures at core, we just have incredibly complex ways of frightening and feeding ourselves. For a balanced individual in a loving environment it seems likely that much of the time the flow of love into the void will keep it close to full, or even sometimes ecstatically over-full. At times however external factors will still lead to additional fear. As always we have two possibilities - minimize the void and maximize love.

It seems to me that it is our ability to deal with this most basic drive to reduce the intensity of all-out genetic/sexual competition and direct our energies so that we can coexist socially - that gives us our ability to work together and live in a group environment to the benefit of all. This is what gives us the right to call ourselves mature and advanced animals - the way we divert our procreative needs!

Without clear principles and with our own inappropriate programming it is obviously difficult in the extreme to formulate a clear idea of how to achieve our objective which itself can only vaguely be defined, probably along the lines of: integration, maturity, balance, achieving my potential, or some similar concept. How can we ask a defective bio-computer to correct its own errors?

One way often chosen is to follow one who has gone before e.g. a great teacher, often a religious figure, or one whom we admire personally, again often a teacher.

This is a way - better than none perhaps - but fraught with difficulties since few teachers can give a clear account of the principles of their teaching. Often they have found something that seems to work for them and are teaching this to others - but they are usually unclear exactly what it is they have found and end up teaching the whole body of what they were taught, but with minor changes. This can become simply a matter of asking another badly programmed person to sort us out - slightly better than doing it ourselves but still dangerous - and of course there is always a price, financial cost being the least problem. The price usually being the additional, irrelevant, useless and often dangerous programming that goes with the useful stuff i.e. the custard and sponge we have to swallow to get the jelly. And this at a time when often we are most susceptible to such programming as a result of trauma.

I have suggested that it is important to work on the three areas of mind, body and spirit, and this can take many years of small steps.

Psychotherapy is a good example of a way of learning to deal with emotions - Zen Buddhism is another - they have much in common, but approach the problem from different angles. It seems likely that strong and clear new programmes have a better chance of take up than complex and/or weak ones. Also programmes that have an integrated base i.e. have common principles across the mind, body, emotion interfaces are likely to be more readily received if only because work in one area reinforces work in the other two. Programmes that are integrated in this way and are consistent will also be simpler, by applying the same message in 3 similar ways rather than 3 different messages in 3 different ways. Thus internal conflict is avoided.

Reprogramming should be aimed at the lowest level where it is presently thought possible to reach and always with a view to extending this awareness to the lowest levels, a change at say the Fear level is magnified as the effect of the new programme works its way to the surface of conscious reaction.

For example, to become connected with core fear and be comfortable, to feel it in our body, accept it emotionally and mentally see it as a controllable, realistic process can allow us to become comfortable with this base level feeling, without setting off the panic alarms of fight, flight or freeze which are so often inappropriate in present social relationships. Similarly, awareness of our anger and of its source within us may allow us to reprogramme in such a way that the anger does not develop inappropriately and that the tensions induced by this feeling can be minimised and then released in ways that do not interfere with the interaction that gave rise to the anger in the first place.

The effect of work on one area also seems to be enhanced if it has a linkage to the other two areas - thus a therapy that works with mind and body or a body training that works with a philosophical approach or a mental training that allows for physical and emotional factors e.g. in a creative sense, all multiply the effect of the effort directed at reprogramming.

Martial arts seem to offer such a training if taken in conjunction with compatible mental and spiritual disciplines. Indeed eastern martial arts have for generations been integrated in this way. Taoism with Tai-Chi, Zen Buddhism with Karate and now in the west we have national sports teams with their own psychotherapists. A clear parallel of Western mind set with the East.

How can you expect to do a technique fast if you cannot do it slow?

Hirokazu Kanazawa

CHAPTER 6

In the previous chapter we looked at a description of ourselves which roughly equates to: "The conscious is similar to what appears on a computer monitor, the subconscious is all the other stuff we don't see that is going on anyway."

Then before that, in Chapter 4, I suggested that skilled external martial artists actually internalised their art. In effect as we develop we seek to delve more and more into the workings of the biocomputer, behind the conscious screen, to alter the basic programming so that different things come up on that screen.

When the deeper programme has been changed by training and internal awareness then new behaviour results. The conscious mind can withdraw so that when a conflict arises then the new training takes over and appropriate action is taken.

So we "Just Do It", the only conscious control required being awareness.

To do this however means letting go of expectations and conflicts in the subconscious imagination. Imaginary fears of what might happen. The thought "He is going to kick so I'd better attack first" creates an unnecessary commitment based on the expectation of a kick. He may not kick, but instead do something else for which you are then quite unprepared -being still attached to the expectation of a kick. This of course is the mechanism of a bluff or feint. However, the one who attacks first, even if only as a feint, creates a commitment in their own mind, at the point when that commitment becomes physical then they effectively give up control and become vulnerable. This is why there is no first strike in Karate - because a first strike creates an opening, even the intention to strike creates an opening.

So in Karate and Tai-Chi as with other martial arts we seek neither to attack nor to defend, but to act appropriately which may be either. Indeed if it is possible to "read" an opponent so as to understand the commitment he has set up before he actually makes it physical in an attack, then the appropriate action may well be to attack physically before he does, but of course only by leaving our own commitment to the very last instant!

Without intention there is no pre-commitment, no attachment to a particular action and result, and no conflict when the real result does not match the imagined one. The mental tension which we create by setting up ideas about others, what they think, and will do, creates a centre for imaginary fears about probable outcomes.

In training we may pair up with a respected instructor whose skill is greater than ours, and feel fear. Why? We know that they do not wish to hurt us, quite the contrary, they have only the best of intentions for us, and yet if we are honest there are imaginary thoughts in our subconscious about the confrontation which creates the fear. To let go of these thoughts by seeing them as pure fantasy and so recognize the reality of a student/teacher relationship releases artificial tensions and allows trust. Without the tensions comes relaxation, with trust can come learning.

If we look carefully at our inner thoughts we can see how these created fantasies distort our vision of a situation so that we react to expectations. By recognising the fantasy reality stands out and our actions can take place in real clarity. Often however the pattern of expectation based on fantasy has been set up over many years, generally starting from childhood and sometimes related to little recalled but traumatic events.

If we can break this pattern of false expectation then our actions can be positive, rather than defensive in a panic driven sense. In this way if we are prepared to act, rather than prepared to defend against an expected attack then we ourselves are not pre-committed to conflict, but are prepared if it happens.

I am reminded of a picture of Miyamoto Musashi with both swords hanging down and indeed of Mohammed Ali in the ring with fists lightly held low - both lack what is normally referred to as an aggressive stance, but who could doubt their preparedness and the effectiveness of their relaxed posture which has no "need" to go anywhere and yet is able to go everywhere.

Without this driven need the reality of the person shines through in their eyes, as anyone who has watched Chiyonofuji (The Wolf) in a Sumo bout will testify, the rest just follows.

One way to deal with fantasy in training is to carefully study the physical actions. By careful observation with a good instructor you can begin to see and feel each minute part of a technique, even down to movements of a fraction of an inch and slight twists of hand, arm, shoulder and hip. At the same time the feel of each increment can be sensed with all the possibilities inherent in tensing this way or that to exert force in varying directions. Tai-Chi practitioners when they begin partner work, such as pushing hands, find that feeling alone pretty much takes over, but even so practice of the form provides an important opportunity for self observation both of feeling and visually.

This slow increment by increment programming of a move allows careful assessment of each increment's validity so that a simple, pure technique results with none of the "bad habits" which our imagination kindly provides us with! Eventually the new pattern of action will take over having eliminated all the extra twists, turns, weight shifts and any unnecessary focus. This slow patient conscious reprogramming at a physical level is very basic stuff. It reaches our lowest levels of physical control, our autonomic nervous system, and our deep subconscious so that when the action is performed fast this low level control takes over. We may not even recall actually doing the techniques -
-in fact we "just do it".

Only after a fight when everything "flew" can we then look back and see what happened, in a similar way to rerunning a car accident afterwards. Time perhaps slowed and you were doing everything necessary but it is as if the conscious mind is elsewhere looking on, almost at a film.

But if the conscious mind is "looking on" how can I still be in control? Easy - the subconscious with all its complexities actually is you, so is the conscious. Your conscious mind chose to involve you in this fight, then withdrew and let the rest of you (body and spirit) handle the situation, each doing what it is suited to.

So one way to reality is to use the conscious for what it is best at - observation and analysis, then leave the physical to automatic (subconscious) control. This minimises unreality by focusing on the physical which can only act in the present. In the same way use of internal awareness is a meditation which frees the mind from its usual chaotic clutter. Practice of Kata or forms provides this opportunity, for if awareness is focused in the body then it can only be in the here and now of reality, there is no room for fantasy.

Intense concentration in a Kata (later translated into kumite - fighting techniques) provides the internal focus referred to as moving Zen, and a long Tai-Chi form can often leave the practitioner mentally floating with no idea of where they are in the form or what the next move is, but doing it anyway. These performances rely totally on the subconscious, any intrusion of thought picked up by the conscious being enough to bring everything to a halt, and yet, sometimes when in this meditative state the subconscious will throw up answers to otherwise intractable problems. For me they appear as notice boards and they represent the solution from the sum of my knowledge. The effort involved seems minimal, the result wonderful.

Meditation exercise

A Bio-energetic meditation for fault finding & reprogramming or debugging the bio-computer.

1. Lie down in darkened surroundings; be sure you are comfortable and quiet.
2. Relax the whole body e.g. yoga style, relax toes, feet, ankles, calves, thighs etc.
3. Put your conscious awareness into your body - let it roam especially on the surface of the skin.
4. Begin measured deep breathing - in through nose, out through mouth. Sound may be produced on the outbreath, this may help link the consciousness to the physical body. As breathing continues a degree of hyper-ventilation begins to take place, and one becomes very conscious of the body tingling.
5. With the awareness still in your body begin to focus in your mind the behaviour pattern that you wish to work on, visualise it in a way you understand and begin to manipulate it in your imagination seeking the truth from all the information available. Review the truth of the emotions created in your body and the logical truth in your mind.
6. In this state the whole being is sensitized mentally, physically and emotionally at the same time. This is a mild form of self-generated trauma, but without a specific cause - we have consciously produced the experience, now we can use the opportunity this provides to look honestly at our programming and change it to what we want.
7. If we have taught our mind and body to always seek the truth then in this state when the truth appears it is easily recognised - there is a clarity and unification, a solidity to the answer we get. Answers click into place.

In this state of bio-energetic meditation connections seem to be very easily made and so the truth i.e. the correct new program, when it appears is strongly imprinted on the mind-body net at a time of heightened sensitivity which is entirely under conscious control.

8. Cease the deepened breathing, retain focus on the new truth and relax your physical awareness as you withdraw from the meditation and savour the experience you have just created.

Recipes not models, principles not rules.

CHAPTER 7

Have you ever noticed how an argument suddenly turns nasty, as if someone just threw a switch? As if the argument had an energy of its own which instantly achieved critical mass and exploded. The two protagonists pushing each other on up and up headed to some extreme point - just because its there.

Just because its there? Yes, neither really wants to go there or has any real consciousness of where they are headed but there is nothing to stop the inexorable progress until one or other reaches their limit and reacts in fight or flight mode. Like mountains that "have" to be climbed just because they are there the extremes of human experience sometimes have to be lived for the same reason. That they exist is enough, that one exists implies the opposite, so it is with love and hate, strength and weakness, hard and soft, male and female, and so the yin and yang of Taoism comes about. Each extreme when pushed to its limit still containing a little of the opposite and ultimately reflecting and again becoming that opposite. For is not extreme strength itself a weakness and extreme love (the great obsession) soon turned to hate?

In today's materialist society more is assumed to be better and goal orientated progress achieves much of what we see around us. Pleasure is measured in extremes and so is depression. Attack and defence, with a striving to put out more power, each have their own extremes and yet to be at an extreme is to be unbalanced and uncentered with one's power spent, un-integrated and close to loss of control. How admired is the master who like the calm at the centre of a whirlwind holds to the centre, and yet who we know is more than capable of reaching extremes we can only dream of?

Yin and Yang the classic Taoist extremes put together in a symbol that shows a merging of one into the other, these can be any two facets but are generally seen as the female (yin) and the male (yang). Western society encourages us to become used to living in an extreme of one kind or another, but one aspect of our lives that is central to our existence is that of our sexuality -how we relate to the world either as male or female beings. This is important not for limited sexual reasons but more generally because it affects the way we see the world and behave physically. Our sexuality is an inbuilt part of us and unless it is in balance then we may fit the stereotypes but we limit ourselves. Interestingly the symbol of the Tao shows a complete being, too much yin or yang and the whole is out of balance, and notice too, for those extremists out there, maximum yang can only be achieved by finding that little bit embedded in the yin! It is not just about balance but as if balance itself allows the extremes to be pushed further out.

There is much argument about inherent mental differences between male and female, but two areas are of interest to the martial artist - focus and intuition. It seems that men generally have the ability to focus deeply and to the exclusion of all other factors and this allows much to be achieved with great energy being directed at a single point. However, as with the blinkers on a horse there is a disadvantage to tunnel vision, and female intuition seems to work more broadly, picking up a lot of little things and putting them together by means of loose connection. While powerful in a different way the ultimate focus cannot be so great. In a martial arts situation then do we not need both yin and yang to be complete? Power and Awareness, what good is one without the other? Likewise in technique to be all hard or all soft leaves us vulnerable and limited, often frozen in stance or yielding too much. Only by finding both sides of our personalities emotionally can we hope to balance our abilities mentally and physically.

Women have intuition naturally or from early conditioning, men must learn it later. Men, whether from nature or from training, develop focus, women must learn that. Men find hardness easy and need to learn softness; women are more yielding but can learn hardness. This too is part of being responsibly human for not only will we improve our art, we will also learn to understand and appreciate others to a much greater degree.

This balancing up of personality does not turn a man female or a woman into a male, it is in addition to, not in place of the existing social training. Perhaps the individual balance will be weighted differently depending on the genetic starting point, but in any event a start must be made to redress the imbalance.

Physically this can be addressed by men practising softness and flow while women can seek to enhance focus of their power. Ultimately mentally and spiritually balanced sexuality can only be achieved through inner awareness which can then reflect outwardly through the physically powerful, flowing and balanced techniques of an integrated person.

In an extreme society such as ours where all is right or wrong, black or white individuals tend to live the same way and only feel alive at their own personal extreme. Greater thrills are sought, bigger extravagances, faster cars, more exotic tastes and anything that does not match up to that extreme is automatically rubbish to the opposite end of the spectrum. This creates a flick/flick existence, all on or all off, all up or all down, all male or all female, all attack or all defence with nothing in between. In fighting there is no rest only the tension of attack/defence, in life there is no existence between peak or nadir experiences. The spectrum between lies ignored and unused, as we flick from one extreme to the other we miss the centre and do not appreciate the common middle ground where most of life exists.

This flicking from one extreme to the other means that we are unaware of the rest of the spectrum and our techniques are external only, they lack inner power from our centre. This lack of awareness means that we miss opportunities (our expectations are tied to our own extremes) and our techniques do not penetrate.

By slowing down this transition, by replacing the flick/flick with a gradual progression we appear to become slower, but this soon changes as instead of having a centre which is only a notional average between two extremes we come to occupy the centre itself and then go to the extreme when we want to. This allows time to build up power so that our technique accelerates into the target with energy increasing all the way rather than suddenly appearing out of "space-warp" but with all energy spent. In this way we also get a choice of where on the scale we stop, we have control of the degree of appropriateness, rather than control only of on or off which is rather like fighting a tank with an H bomb.

So by identifying our extremes we can work on their opposites and by slowing down the switches we can expand our centre, in this way it becomes easier to see when a headlong rush to conflict is taking place. It is already easy to see from the outside, the problem comes when you're in it. By appreciating the gradual nature of our own spectrum it becomes possible to move more gradually along it and in daily life this can lead to greater pleasure in the mundane aspects of life when not at the extremes.

A physical example of this can be seen in the body language of a fighter who is predisposed to attack or defence. Their extreme being pre-committed they will either push forward or continue backward, if they change it is often a "flick" to the opposite extreme, rushed and unbalanced. More mentally balanced fighters hold to their centre in neutral posture, retaining physical balance, while able readily to exert their power and not give it away to their opponent to be used against them.

So too we can see that in finding the spectrum between the extremes, physical relationships (with fighting at one extreme) develop more gradually out of the core relationship between people. This

allows greater choice in how far that relationship should go and if the choice is to make love, or to fight, then it is a conscious choice worthy of full commitment.

Time Is The Simplest Thing

Clifford D. Simak

CHAPTER 8

In looking at the spectrum of life and its extremes we begin to notice something about how we are with this set up. Even when we have found the middle ground the extremes still have their own fascination and if we are good at something like computer programming, disco dancing or flower arranging, skiing or fighting then we seek to get better. The buzz we get, the feeling of "flying" when totally absorbed and living at the edge cannot be matched. In their own way such experiences come to define life because if we come back from the edge only slightly then the excitement goes, the totality no longer exists. So we seek new challenges and we push our limits, we learn and become more skilled so that we can experience more of the extreme. In doing so we ensure we are more capable of living at that extreme, the edge becomes blurred, no longer an edge rather a broad line, a margin. Like a tightrope walker on a beam, for the performer it is easy, the spectators are still impressed, it is beyond their limit, for the performer it is sufficiently within his limit to be even boringly easy.

Life, it seems, exists at the margin, if we seek to buy something costing a pound but have only 99p then finding an extra 1p in a pocket makes possible what previously was not. The 1p makes a marginal difference. Chemical reactions take place when there is enough energy, too little - nothing, a little more energy and the whole reaction works. Marginal energy. Overtaking a car, judge the oncoming traffic; get it right then everything's okay, too slow or too fast by a fraction and disaster. Marginal speed. Examples are all around, so often it is the margin that makes the difference and so it is with skill. At the margin when we are skilled life becomes fuzzy, there is no longer a sharp line (one side life, the other destruction) rather a slippery margin that we can slide up to and with skill stay on, or by overreaching ourselves slide inexorably off the far side. Skill decriticalises the limit, there is no one ultimate balance point but a range over which relative stability comes to exist. By increasing our skill we broaden the margin and increase our poise. A master makes the "impossible" look easy to the less skilled onlooker, only the master knows when he is really on the edge.

If we wanted the simple self destructive buzz beyond our limits then we would all ski down impossible slopes with no practice, we would forfeit all control and with no skill, attempt what masters are barely capable of - we would all seek to pilot helicopters without lessons. but we are not so self destructive, we have that very valid mechanism of self preservation called fear. In the case of martial arts fear of others, of not having control of our own lives, our own being, fear of pain, injury, destruction - we seek to become unassailable.

Training at the margin means "a miss is as good as a mile", you either get hit or you don't. It doesn't matter how close the miss, just so long as you don't get hit. In fact in raising our skill level we seek to minimize the miss in time and space because that leads an opponent into commitment, which creates vulnerability. We seek to minimize the margin of error by maximizing our ability to deal with it. This effectively broadens our own margin of comfort (safety). We accept smaller pieces of time and space because our ability allows us to stretch them - we slow down subjective time.

In doing this we reduce the criticality of the situation and gain choice, we maintain control of ourselves and the situation. We find in fact that the more we do this then the better able we are to respond with minimum action at the most critical point for our opponent thus maximizing our effectiveness. By waiting for him to be totally committed and then not being there we can use his commitment against him. This is not to argue against commitment, far from it, for only with total commitment can maximum effect be gained, it is perhaps more to do with marginal commitment(!) and the ability to be flexible on that margin. In a sense after all isn't the fight itself about measuring

one another's ability to exist at the margin, whether it be the margin of anger(fear)/ defensiveness or of power and control?

Over the years by diligent training we raise our skill level above the average and to some extent begin to feel safe in our abilities, until we meet someone not just better but so much better that it is clear they can do what they want to us if they choose. We learn first hand that there is always someone better, we are not and never will be perfectly defended, unassailable, perfectly safe, and so what have we gained? Superiority over some others? A degree of safety? But what is this worth? All we have really done is raise ourselves to a different level in a game of leap-frog that can go on for ever. At each jump becoming more skilled and less assailable, but still afraid. Fortunately this need not happen, for as we grow in skill we can become more relaxed and learn to face our fear, accept it and live with it, we can observe masters who while so far above us in skill, are simple flawed human beings nonetheless, and we can come to see that our fantasy fears have no place in the fight. Our fears of ego destruction are working against our real interests. The ego and its false fears, its driven need for defence must go, and be replaced by the real person within. The person we ourselves have made by our training.

This slow transition can lead to a different appreciation of the margin our skill creates. By eliminating unreality in our training we get to choose why we are doing martial arts at all. An activity that is centered on survival can stay just and only that, a means of combat. An individual can turn themselves into a very effective machine of destruction, but this too is the road to an extreme. A negative extreme of violence and darkness, where life exists only to threaten or be defeated.

To be able to destroy does not mean that is all there is, or that we should use our skill for that purpose. In fact our skill gives us the choice not to and it gives us something else - we have the margin. And life at the margin is fun! The buzz is no longer just about challenging destruction it is also about playing with its possibility, and in particular playing with others. Out of seriousness we have created fun. Out of the street fight and very serious training we have created an ability to have honest relationships with our training partners. Fun of course can also be a very serious business.

The fun of pushing hands is the joy of a simple honest relationship generated from hard work, so is the fun of practice sparring. When you pair up with a master how often do they smile in anticipation? Is it in anticipation of your injury? Perhaps some do but that is not a smile of fun, more likely I think they look forward to the pleasure of the interaction, to the real enjoyment of play. In a way a form of parenting or the advanced form of a kids rough and tumble, and with the same serious purpose of learning for life.

When training is no longer about winning and losing (being at one extreme or the other, on or off) then we do not have to be right or wrong, good or bad, and can put that aside. The place for winning or losing is in a real fight (perhaps not even there, for letting go of the need to survive is said to allow us to act more clearly and so survive more effectively). In the training hall we can play at the margin and learn about technique, about honesty, about others and ourselves.

We may have created the margin out of fear, now we can use it to learn for ourselves and the ability to laugh at ourselves honestly is a valuable asset in life. What is more funny than the realisation that you misjudged it, demonstrated by a partner who gently pushes you off balance or delicately lands a punch to the solar plexus? What can you do but laugh? Or when reversed, laugh not at their falling over but at the joy that you got it right and both of you are learning from the work. How funny too the psychological battle of wills, the game of aggression, of projection and posturing when played out in training. If you are honest you know exactly where you are in the relationship - in training you can laugh, it is a fun game in preparation for serious combat. The honesty that allows you to laugh can then be turned to deadly serious purpose. Playing in the margin allows us to have fun together and learn together - of course first we must create the margin. Something strange happens when we do this; they found it in physics, when you approach a limit the rules change. The old rules are still valid, but not at the margin, they must be suspended or even thrown away. Like Alice going through the looking-glass reality changes, techniques that look weak are found to be powerful, aggression

becomes fear. In that space we each touch genius, life without rules we break the rules and dance on the waves of a storm. The only stability, that which we create within ourselves, we give up control and yet are in perfect balance. We cannot stay there long, it takes energy to stay in the margin, but the memory of it stays - we know what is possible.

In pushing our limits and creating the margin we then extend ourselves - we live to our limits. This does not mean that because we can execute powerful techniques we go around doing so! It means that the abilities we have created to allow their execution then turn up elsewhere in life. The physical poise and relaxation help us through the day and in maintaining abilities into old age that even adolescents sometimes find hard to match. The honesty and ability to be ourselves without fear helps us in relationships at work and with friends.

Our training in martial arts changes us, whether we take conscious control of that change or not. That we are still nonetheless frail and dishonest simply reflects our humanity, martial arts are one way of addressing those issues in preference to irresponsibly ignoring them.

**Good weapons are instruments of fear; all creatures hate them.
Therefore followers of Tao never use them.
The wise man prefers the left.
The man of war prefers the right.**

Lao Tsu

CHAPTER 9

There is much talked of "control" in martial arts, indeed the subject has come up quite a bit already in this discussion, and it seems worthy of further consideration for "control" exists all around us. Perhaps we should first look at the idea of control in relation to power in a political sense, which involves control of others by some external means. Socially this is exemplified by utilisation of the institutions of the "establishment" in preservation of the status-quo against perceived attacks on "the state" or in achievement of its ends. Similarly on a one to one level the same often applies, control is about manipulation, persuasion or use of raw physical force to achieve personal ends. This may be terms of safety (defence against a perceived threat, not always real) or gratification of desires that conflict with another individual. Control in this sense becomes at best a neutral necessity of defence and at worst a wholly negative attempt to enforce one will upon another (a good working definition of evil).

At a personal and emotional level this sort of control comes down to creating a feeling of safety - "by controlling others, I will be safe". Fortunately others will not always be controlled!

On the other side of the coin is control of self, which can also be to do with safety. "Let others do what they like I will be safe because I am in control". This in turn is about self manipulation, and the development of skill levels as a defence mechanism preventing self expression. Here we touch a raw martial arts nerve, for controlling others and controlling self are very much part of the martial arts context.

However there is another more innocuous form of control and that is the control of systems. It is this control in terms of feedback, checks and balances that allows us to live at all, and function as complex entities. Even so while apparently benign this can work against us, since being closely connected to our emotional control systems our physical ones are greatly affected by our emotions. Tense driven control then relates across to the problem of holding a bird in the hand - a powerful tense grip threatens to crush the bird, and may do so unwittingly, whereas a still strong but relaxed grip quietens the bird and contains it comfortably.

Indeed despite its bad press the concept of control is a natural and neutral one, as is so often the case the problem is what we do with it. To develop control in the development of our skill harnesses

our abilities to our will and so increases our self expression through choice, but how often do we give away that choice?

At the extreme we give it away in the use of weapons, for in a real sense the weapon controls its user. When you use a gun you restrict yourself to the choices the gun gives - to pull the trigger or not to, once the trigger is pulled you have no further choice in events. The bullet does whatever it will, dependent only on our skill in aiming the gun. Once the trigger is pulled you play no part in the matter - you chose to use a gun and in doing so gave up further choice. Similarly with a knife, it has a point and an edge, it can pierce and cut, in the fury of a fight great skill is needed at all, let alone to restrict the level of injury, to pick a non-fatal organ to pierce? (Who is kidding whom)? Again choice has been restricted, by the choice of the weapon the user has given up their freedom to a piece of steel - to use or not to use is all that is left.

It is for this reason that only one who knows himself well can use a weapon without being controlled by it completely.

This control of self by an artifact can be seen in working with a stick for example. In training ask your regular partner to attack with a stick and use whatever stick defence your style includes. Most attackers find it incredibly difficult to let go of the stick, unless you wrench it from their hands they will usually hang on and can be pulled and pushed around in the most awkward of positions long after they should have let go! You do not need to touch them, but control only the stick, the stick in turn controls them - because they let it. Indeed were they to let go, they would regain the use of their hands and may in fact attain an advantage, but they can't let go - mentally or physically.

The attacker in this case has "put himself" into the stick and allowed it to become part of him mentally, there is an expectation of linkage and that expectation has put aside the real choice to let go or initiate some other action such as to kick. We have seen already that expectation sets up pre-commitment which restricts choice and flexibility, now too expectation has done it again!

Even without weapons it can be seen how we tense in expectation (perhaps of an attack) and so limit ourselves. More subtly when we grip an opponent with a hand around the wrist who has control? Watch an Aikido practitioner. The tension we create in the gripping arm acts like the stick we looked at earlier, it locks the arm to our body in a rigid way and we can't let go of the tension without letting go of the opponent - even if it means we get thrown all over the room!

So long as the tense grip is maintained a relaxed opponent can use it against you until of course you learn to grip without tension.

So weapons, expectation and tension all give away control, that is our own ability to choose and take appropriate action with consequences varying between being dead or up against a murder charge.

Least I be misunderstood let me make it clear I do not suggest that in the middle of a fight we stand around making conscious choices - rather that by our predisposition we may limit our own unconscious and purely automatic actions which have been programmed in by training.

Indeed it may well be appropriate to carry a particular weapon, perhaps appropriate to use it, but let this be a conscious choice and not an attachment that pre-commits the carrier to its use and consequences.

By letting go of these attachments created from fantasy ego fears we can still the mind and see reality in a relaxed way. With a relaxed mind can come a relaxed body and appropriate control. Fears of an opponent are clearly real and reasonable, such fear I should not give up even if I could - it keeps me human and has a lot to do with my survival. The problem that seems to arise is when real fear is overlain with yet more, but this time unreal fear, often created by old emotional defences put in place as a child. These fantasy fears may be triggered by any threatening situation, turning our minds against us so that before we can fight the opponent we must first fight ourselves. Rather "deal

with" than "fight" since to fight oneself implies control and repression which can only increase internal conflict and tension. We may in fact do this and very successfully repress these fears, conflicts and tensions but the repression itself limits our development. You can hold down the lid on a pressure cooker, even blow off steam from time to time but the pressure still exists and restricts the flow of steam. Ultimately the lid has to come off to let the energy flow in a relaxed and natural way.

As we have seen before relaxation of mind and body maintains our range of choices or actions so that we do not hand over control to other people or things. We may still be controlled externally but at least we did not give it away. In fact of course a relaxed state greatly increases our power as we are more open to new possibilities and can respond in a greater variety of ways. We may even find that an argument itself is quite spurious, and make a friend instead of an enemy, which is a really powerful outcome.

He whom you would destroy, first befriend.

CHAPTER 10

To relax mentally and physically, how many of us actually know what that feels like? We may get an idea of relaxation at the end of a tiring day in a hot bath and see it as a desirable goal, or even collapsing after a strenuous training session "feel good", but this is relaxation through exhaustion. It is the bit of yin within the yang, what of the yin itself?

If you do not know already what I am talking about then I urge you to get a deep whole body massage and allow two hours minimum. Talk to the masseur beforehand and as best you can give yourself up to the massage - a really deep shiatsu massage should do nicely. One experience is worth a thousand pictures, when you have experienced full relaxation once you will remember it, and have a baseline to measure your tensions against. Also it's a really enjoyable thing to do.

Massage can help you to understand your body and by its emotional connection then to understand emotional feelings. Many people are shy or tense, ticklish or restless; these are manifestations of emotional issues that come out in a massage situation. A sensitive masseur will be able to help you handle them and afterward they are matters worth looking into. How do they come out in your martial arts? What is it about physical contact even in a training hall that restricts your technique? Did you choose your particular style because of the level of contact involved? What are your issues with partners of different sexes? Do you create a barrier in your mind between yourself and your partner/opponent because of your issues over physicality?

To have any kind of physical relationship, especially an intimate one like fighting, we need to be not just relaxed but also relaxed about being physical. When we are happy with this then feedback is possible between partners developing technique, for example "No that doesn't work but grip a little to the left - ah yes now it hurts!" or "If you do it that way then I can resist like this, but do it this way and I fall over".

On a more general front I am reminded of being at the London Basho of Sumo in 1991 and observing two wrestlers in a practice session standing at the side of the dohyo, side by side with their arms around each other - relaxed about their own physicality. To be this relaxed with friends or training partners we need to be confident in our own sexuality for by doing so we remove an imaginary threat and the tensions we create from that threat.

When lying on a massage couch internal awareness follows the process of the massage, relaxing muscles wherever contact is made and a meditative state can be generated as the mind becomes clear of everything other than the physical experience. In the same way the slow performance of a Tai- Chi form allows an individual to generate this meditative state themselves by focusing their awareness internally. If your style is harder and faster than Tai-Chi then please experiment with very slow practice of its longest form without tension. After a few such sessions you should begin to get an idea of the feeling generated and incidentally of the natural rhythm of the form, the yin and the yang, perhaps to find new ways of making techniques work. In any event a calmer clearer mind will

result. By way of interest then repeat your form full speed and power - is there a difference from your previous practice?

In fact when doing an external form, such as a Kata, a meditative state is also generated and the form internalised, hence the "moving Zen" aspect of Karate which we aim to carry over to fighting situations. You may care to compare the feeling of these two meditations - the slow and the fast.

In meditative work we are releasing our subconscious and our body from the tight control of the conscious mind, thoughts that come up are just "let go" we do not focus on them as our awareness is in the body. There are other ways of dealing with our subconscious and thus with the body using the imagination. This involves creating symbolic patterns, pictures, which arise from the subconscious and are manipulated by the conscious. When fed back these symbols generate changes in subconscious programming and are reflected in our body.

The subconscious works not linearly but by creating great numbers of connections from which empirical patterns emerge; we recognize these as symbols - pictures. By releasing the subconscious from the clamp-like control of the conscious we enable it to make its connections more widely and faster than it is otherwise able to do when inhibited by slow conscious thought. We make available all the wealth of knowledge stored in our memories, together with the ways of thinking we have learnt to deal with that knowledge - and it all happens at once. Like putting a microscope on a printed photograph in a newspaper, we can see only a few meaningless dots, but pull back the zoom and a pattern emerges that makes sense, a picture we can recognize.

For example, try to relax your back and straighten the spine by working on one muscle at a time. It is hard work. However now lie on your back with knees up but feet on the ground, close your eyes and imagine a small snake of your favourite colour curled up asleep at the base of your spine. Imagine it is a warm sunny day and you gently reach down a hand to stroke the snake on the head so that he moves into a languous state of semi-consciousness and slowly slips from his coils. Tap him gently on the head - do not wake him but call to him to stretch up your spine so that his head reaches up your neck to your skull and his body is stretched full length down your spine, just a floppy sleepy snake laid out in the sun. Then come out of the visualization and check internally how your back now feels. Relaxed? A picture in your head, a symbol, as an aid to posture - a straight back for a long life as the Japanese say, and for more effective technique.

Do you feel tense, tight and barriered as if wearing a suit of armour that restricts movement? Or do you feel vulnerable, helpless, weak and floppy in need of armour? Let us look at the first case, then if the latter is more you please rework the process to suit.

Put on some relaxing music, turn off the lights and sit or lie down, close your eyes and imagine yourself fully dressed in your suit of armour, in a wooded glade by a pool of clear water. The sun is shining and you are restricted by the armour. Dive into the pool and do not worry as you do not need to breathe under the water, gradually the plates of armour begin to fit less tightly, as you swim in the warm clear water they begin to come undone and float off leaving you naked in the water. Collect up the armour from the pool and take its hard shell to a point at the side of the pool. Set fire to it and watch it destroyed. As the flames die stand up straight, look about you and feel the new freedom, you are lighter, softer and more flexible. Then come gradually out of the visualization and check our body over.

For the reverse of course you can find a suit of shining armour, light and strong, put it on and then go around testing it by breaking rocks or tearing up trees. Its your imagination, you can do what you want with it, but please consider first in clear consciousness what you will do in the visualization, as the symbols you put in will have an effect, and the more you repeat the visualization the more this will be. Think through the effect you really want to achieve.

Use of such symbolism is an ancient practice, from cave paintings to heraldry and Indian totems, this outward display works in a similar way to these visualisations. A warlord might choose to be known

as The Mountain, or The Dragon or The Tiger, not believing that he would become one. Rather by identifying with the symbol consciously, then his subconscious makes all possible connections around what he knows about that symbol, and brings those connections into play in daily life. It is not about being a dragon but about seeking to act in the way ones subconscious imagines a dragon would behave. At the same time of course a particularly ferocious symbol might give potential enemies pause for thought as to how the warlord might react - if the mountain will not move beware of obstinacy and unyielding power (perhaps leave him alone and go around)? Equally such knowledge may well be used against a fighter. If an opponent knows how a fighter sees himself then he knows the behaviour patterns to expect.

Such symbolism connects to everything we associate with the concept of the symbol, but careful choice is needed as in seeking the fighting style of the chosen symbol we cannot help but take on all the other attributes which our subconscious connects with it.

Since most such symbols chosen are animals we should be careful in observing their associated characteristics - can the powerful and ferocious bear risk his cuddly teddy bear associations?!

We can see that such symbolism works and even understand the mechanism but we should also be aware that it is difficult to control and is two edged as already suggested. If the symbol is integrated in the subconscious strongly enough to have the outward effect sought then it will be difficult to remove and may well have unsought personal or antisocial consequences. The cuddly teddy bear may be a nice way to live but friends could get pretty tired of having a spitting cobra around. While a preying mantis would be positively dangerous, not least to themselves, and with no redeeming qualities. Such a one who chooses to be this way takes responsibility for their place in society, which in all probability would be locked away in a psychiatric ward.

Ultimately the best symbol is the one we create for ourselves, our own inner self image, by choosing who and how we want to be, we create our own symbol of ourselves for the subconscious to work on. The picture of our own humanity can then serve as a template for our life.

Creation of such a picture is difficult however, among the chaotic dynamics of daily life it is hard to know who we are now, let alone how we might want to change ourselves.

For the martial artist however life and death are closely linked, "He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword". The end in-fact is inherent in the beginning and so our death reflects our life. The way we began our lives sets our capacity to choose and change it direction. By seeing our lives in the microcosm of our death we can say "this is how I want to die" and in doing so choose how we want to live. When we set the ending of our lives, (positioning the target) then we determine our direction (this is one case where the arrow of our lives must score a bulls eye).

We can of course move the target as often as we want and change the direction of our lives. The same considerations apply as with the symbolism discussed before, since our death becomes a symbol for our life - choose wisely you may get what you want.

One who chooses to die in conflict may well end up living their whole life in conflict. One who wishes to die surrounded by friends, in strength and love will probably live that way. I know my preference - we get to choose, and martial arts give us a tool for freedom, to both choose and carry out that choice.

**In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired.
In the pursuit of the Tao, every day something is dropped.**

**Less and less is done
Until non-action is achieved.
When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.**

**The world is ruled by letting things take their course.
It cannot be ruled by interfering**

Lao Tsu

CHAPTER 11

In the last chapter we have seen how symbolism allows us access to the power of the subconscious, almost by-passing the conscious and enabling us to use the intuitive interconnection that the subconscious provides. We have created too an inner awareness, a focus of consciousness which uses this same intuitive process. It pulls together all we know about ourselves, putting it together in terms of the physical senses and then feeds this back to our conscious where we become "aware" of the feelings.

What then if we take this internal awareness and project it out of our body? We have looked at projecting our awareness down an arm in the course of a punch, try now with your arms in front, fingers touching, project your feeling down one arm and across to the fingers of the other. No problem? - OK. Keep the feeling circling around the arms and gradually separate your fingers, so that the feeling moves across the gap. Now point an arm at some object, a tree will do nicely, then project your awareness down your arm, out of the fingers and into the tree.

The symbol connected to your subconscious is now the tree and by concentrating your awareness you can gain a sense of what you conceive it to be like to be that tree. The process pulls together all you know about trees and that tree in particular, so that you can imagine the treeness of being a tree, even "feel" the branches you can see and the roots you cannot.

Try this with a friend you know well, when they walk into a room focus your awareness in them as they walk toward you and observe them carefully. Through this process you can gain a feeling, an understanding of what it is like to be them; you can become, in a sense, one with that person. You harmonise with them. This process taps into the subconscious model you have of your friend, adds to it all the sensory inputs of the present and feeds it all back to your conscious mind - you are literally running a parallel model of your friend in your head. If your model is good enough then the thoughts and feelings it feeds back to your conscious will be very similar to the ones your friend is actually feeling.

This sounds as if it could get very complicated, creating new models for everyone we meet! In fact of course we don't make these models consciously but subconsciously and all the time. We even have a generalised model of a person in our heads which is a sort of lowest common denominator, so that with a complete stranger we can still recognize basic emotions.

Masters who talk of harmonising with an opponent often urge us to focus on the eyes - the windows of the soul. Try this while projecting your consciousness into an opponent, as you look into their eyes you will get a very strong sense of what they are feeling. It is created in your own head but is probably quite accurate. People can lie with their eyes, as they can with their bodies, but it is very hard to do and sets up its own conflicts which interfere with what they are doing.

The eyes are a particularly delicate and sensitive indicator and while the focus is there peripheral vision, coupled with our other senses (particularly hearing) and our unconscious observer will monitor the opponent's body and our surroundings. When we establish physical contact then vision becomes less important as touch is much faster to interpret and respond to.

So as we develop a relationship with an opponent distance is a crucial factor with different senses operating at different distances. The interaction may start a long way away on a purely visual basis, where attack is impractical, move into hearing and gradually into attack range and then physical contact. Each stage is different and each updates the subconscious model.

Some people can do this harmonising automatically by experience, others of us have to learn step by step - either way when you can do it, it is like looking into someone's soul. Basic emotions are laid bare and it is sad to see so much fear.

By using this technique when working with a training partner then greater honesty can develop and since you know both what they are going to do and the feeling behind it, then timing is improved. Partners can work together in training so that techniques are neither too soon nor too late. To tell the difference in an opponent's eyes between fear and confidence is also important. Next time you watch Sumo look at the eyes - the loser is often the one who "gave" the bout away in the pre-fight posturing. The eyeballing and body language being so important to the dynamics of the physical contest which follows.

Strategies for dealing with this technique vary from feints and chaotic action meant to confuse right down to a relaxed static posture giving nothing away but perhaps feeding out small misleading signals.

Finally if you get an opportunity to meet a great master up close, then look into their eyes (briefly and with respect) and learn. Do not of course form an orderly queue and peer at them, glancing eye contact in conversation will be enough. This is an intimate thing to do, but takes nothing from anybody, if they feel it to be an intrusion you will know.

Beware the one who is frightened but does not admit it, for they will betray you. They are controlled by their dark side even though they deny it. The honest person admits fear and does not deceive.

CHAPTER 12

A friend once told me of his getting up from a meal and leaving a restaurant when some rowdy jobs were creating a disturbance. "Otherwise I would have killed someone" he said.

How much anger, rage and hate are contained in those words? But do not imagine for a moment this is unusual or confined to men. It is not. My friend is a quiet and gentle person, generous and self reliant, he lives life like a pressure cooker with a smoothly operating safety valve that he has learnt to control very effectively. There is a dark side to my friend that he does not like - and I love him all the more for recognising it and for his determination to deal with it.

The dark side is that part of us that creates our nightmares and is ruled by our fear. It is the drive to destroy the object of our anger, it is the loathing we feel when betrayed and our striking out in reaction to unreal "threats". At the extreme it is a need to dominate others and grind all beneath us in order for the tiny, weak terrified inner self to feel safe. It is the dark side which, if allowed to, will create monstrous fantasy threats to which monstrous reaction is the only response it will accept.

It leads us to create monsters of ourselves and monstrous societies too - if we let it. It is part of us all. Denial only prolongs and enhances the hold over us which this side of our personality can have.

"I'm not denying it, I simply don't have that sort of thing in me" I hear.

Have you never been angry, wanted to throw something/someone, never ridiculed, mocked, laughed at (rather than with), never withheld maliciously, manipulated, distorted, lied, cheated, maneuvered or otherwise been really quite nasty? In short if you've broken any of the Ten Commandments then why deny your humanity?

We deny it because it is socially unacceptable, because as children we are repressed and threatened, often actually harmed in cruel and violent mental or physical ways by our supposed protectors. In our openness we do not understand and cannot accept the truth - we retreat into fantasy for explanation and for defence.

It is socially unacceptable because "it is a chaotic force in a "civilised" world and because others fear its outward expression. The result is that the "negative" side of our natures, from where we get much of our strength in defending ourselves and our loved ones, has to be distorted, sanitized, driven underground and denied.

I look around and see fear in unexpected places, in the business man who breaks his word for fear of himself being cheated, in the man or woman who seeks to bind another to them for fear of betrayal and in the martial artist who in order to defend himself has become capable of killing, only to fear that he will.

These are the dark sides of ordinary daily life that we deal with by putting a lid on and hoping they will go away. They do not; instead what we repress in one area comes out in another. Repression allows us to function with minimised disruption to life but the leakage can be seen - in the distorted physiques of monstrous bodies created by our subconscious (and our conscious) to defend us against fantasy fears, - in the power games we play at home and at work, - in the paranoia of the state and the existence of tyranny world wide.

While we seek to deny this then we let the pressure build up until the lid blows off and there is blood, guts and shit all over the walls. If we are lucky, or responsible, we find the safety valve and learn how to use it. If not, anger and resentment - destruction ensue.

It has been said "Sometimes you just have to put your fist through a window" - well you don't have to actually do it (although that may work) but if you really do feel like that - who hasn't? then accept it and don't just put the lid back on.

The feeling is powerful, of great contained pressure, the fantasy of total power - of super strength that when the pressure blows it will destroy all before it, blow away every threat. Some never learn to control this, some loose control of it through drink, others lock it away somewhere and with a sweet smile castrate every man or woman in sight. Few accept it and learn to live with it by seeing it honestly for what it is, and choosing not to act on it.

This is the only real way to deal with the dark side, it is there and will not go away but as individuals we can take back our own power to choose light, life and love, as a community we can do the same.

Most of this dark side, the unacceptable fantasy part, is driven by fear, generally fear of threats that do not exist in reality, and it is this fear that we must address if we are to minimize its effect.

When we see this working inside us with the anger, hate and straight negativity that results in our lives, we can see how it distorts us and prevents us from living fulfilling lives. In the training hall too it gets in the way for the dark side is based on fantasy just as much as any "love" obsession, and a fight is no place for unreality (unless you can sell it to your opponent)!

The internal pressure and conflict of our emotions turns outward creating fears in the mind and tensions in the body. These in turn restrict our reactions, limit our movement and disrupt the

appropriate control that we seek. In short we can go a long way by learning how to restrict the dark side but the only real solution is to address it directly, integrate it and render it powerless.

Denial only leads to feeding this negativity with yet more energy, until the lie within is distorted so much that the poor individual is taken up by it, to the extent that even Hitler's big lie can be believed. Being based on fantasy however, it contains the seeds of its own destruction, although the harm done in the process confirms "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance" as a price worth paying.

With recognition comes revulsion "I don't want this inside of me" and (I hope) a desire to deal with these feelings and negative behaviour patterns.

We can address this in many ways including the following:

1. By directing our martial arts practice to the removal of tensions and the smoothing of flow. Following the principles of truth and honesty in our training will itself work through the body on the subconscious easing emotional conflicts. We eliminate unreality in the physical world and so remove fantasy in our emotions.
2. By "blowing-off" the energy in some external way, this temporarily lowers the internal pressure level. Martial arts can provide a safe environment for this aggressive energy release.
3. By choosing to act positively, choosing light, life, joy and love whenever possible. Increasing our skill level raises confidence and reduces fear, so that we can see and choose more clearly.
4. By seeing the reality of a situation, recognising fantasy fears and acting on the reality not the fantasy.
5. By accepting that our dark side is part of us, the counterbalance to our light or positive side and an essential part of our animal humanity. It can perhaps be seen in the sense that a director makes a horror film - it is his, and it is horrible but he doesn't live like that.
6. By looking deeper at the roots of our fantasy in a process such as psychotherapy.

To expand on the analogy of a horror film, what is the worst thing you can imagine doing personally? OK can you see yourself doing it, sense what it feels like? Now you've run the film, you made it, it's yours but you don't have to live like that. You can accept responsibility for the film and choose to live another way.

If you deny it the repression causes conflict and the whole miserable cycle can start. Accept it and it has no power because it is an integrated part of you, and you choose to do something else.

If you enjoyed running your personal little horror film then please share it with someone, or if you could not imagine anything horrible at all, there are probably a lot of things you want to talk about. Maybe problems at work or in relationships, perhaps physical problems like recurrent headaches. People who can be very helpful in this way can be found at your local branch of Relate, listed in the phone book.

Now Throw Away The Rule Book

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by John C. Lilly M.D.
published by Sphere Books ISBN 0349 122040

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published by Rider ISBN 07126 38172

People of the Lie

by M. Scott Peck

The Nature of Things
by Lyall Watson
published by Hodder and Stoughton ISBN 0340 502851

ORGANISATIONS

There are many local Tai-Chi, Karate or other martial arts classes run on a local basis, for anyone thinking of getting involved I would offer the following advice:-

- visit a number of classes of different styles to watch, remember you can learn a lot about the teacher from the students.
- train with the best, which may not mean the highest grade or the teacher with the longest experience or with the most impressive list of "credentials".
- go to someone who can **teach**, there are many good martial artists who are not such good teachers. When you find a person who can do both, look no further and do not leave until the time is right.
- commit yourself to **at least 6** months regular training. - consider carefully why you want to study martial arts and what you might receive in a particular class - by all means do this emotionally. What level of involvement do you want, how much care/support do you expect of your teacher, will an internal or external style suit you?

Similarly there are a number of personal development/therapy organisations, the following would be good places to start looking:-

- Relate, whose local office can be found in the phone book.
- The Life Training Centre, who operate regionally and are based at 16, Talbot Road, London W2 5ZH.
Telephone 0171-727 0652
- CHIRON Centre for Holistic Psychotherapy, based at 26, Eaton Rise, Ealing, London W5 2ER.
Telephone 0181-997 5219

Many other organisations of each type can be found in the wide variety of related magazines available.

www.sheffordtaichi.org
www.taichiblog.org