

Tai Chi – important behaviours

By Ian Deavin

© Ian Deavin February 2012, All Rights Reserved. Article may be downloaded for personal use only
www.sheffordtaichi.org, e-mail: ian.deavin@btconnect.com

I was talking one day with a student about the behaviours that might be considered advantageous in a physical conflict – and gave him a homework project to think of a list of 5 or 6 – then to write about them – and of how they might also have positive aspects in constructive relationships. In thinking about it later I gave myself the same task and came up with the following list. It then occurred to me that actually they are all facets of the same thing – each related to the others – labels with the same content seen from a different angle – each compliments the others – and indeed each has its positive aspect that would be a valuable behaviour in a caring/loving relationship. They are not good or bad – we get to choose the end to which we put our skills and seeing both aspects we get to make that very human choice of who we wish to be. Tai Chi simply provides a means of developing those skills and exploring their value.

They are in no particular order although I have in some cases grouped more closely related items together – the whole exercise is really about provoking thought.

In looking at the value of these behaviours in positive, caring and loving relationships we can usually look at the way the behaviour works in a negative way and do the opposite and so this is the format I have adopted in the following notes – first the behaviour – then the way it works in a destructive relationship like a fight – *then the way it works in a creative relationship in italics*. Both represent harmony in their own way – as so often in life – it is all about the intention – how the energy is directed.

Following – staying in-touch so that one can feel the opponent and gain information without giving away ones intention by leading. In following really close you can direct where the opponent can go – like marking a footballer. This enables you to trap and corner them at the limit of their comfort zone and take control of their balance. *Positively one seeks to gain information so that one can use it supportively or to stay in touch so that ones' partner may gain information in order that both can merge and agree and act in unison.*

Softness – an underlying state that enables us to develop other behaviours such as following, quietness, sensitivity - relaxed movement that does not give away information but enables a quiet state where the opponent may be felt without giving away information about one's own movement. *Being relaxed and gentle with each other.*

Hardness and softness – the ability to become hard or soft in your body to resist force or absorb it, to express short hard force like a hurricane or long soft warm force like a Tsunami. *Hard/soft in your body, in your affections as a lover, a parent or in your intellect and emotions in all business and social interactions gives you a spread of personal expression and balance.*

Quietness – enables one to “hear” what is going on – to pick up delicate, subtle signals which would be difficult to differentiate against one’s own internal noise – both mental and physical. *Enables us to “hear” ones’ partner – to pick up delicate, subtle signals.*

Openness – being mentally open we can be fully aware of the world and prepared to deal with it however painful. Being open we can see reality and respond accordingly. Openness implies no committed boundary filtering things – just observing and enabling preparedness – a state of potentiality. Being open we can respond spontaneously in real-time without artificial mental or emotional restraints. *Being open we can be fully aware and use the awareness creatively in our relationship.*

Trust – trust in our teachers in our training partners – in ourselves. Enables us to explore and learn and believe in ourselves in a fight. *Trust - also essential in a loving relationship!*

Staying out of the others awareness – by moving in ways that do not give away what you are doing. Rolling not brushing, having a small centre which moves very little. *Being non-disruptive, moving easily- this time without the intention of hiding but rather of being easy to be around.*

Keeping close – enables one to listen and to defend and to take rapid advantage of opportunities to smother or disrupt the attacker. *Enables one to listen and be quick to support.*

360 defence – a good all round defence enables you to feel confident and have the time to notice the strategy of your opponent. *360 degree capability enables you to feel confident and work efficiently without rushing or panicking.*

Balance – enables you to listen and deliver power without giving anything away. Having balance yourself is essential to unbalancing the opponent. *Enable you to listen and operate effectively in the middle of turmoil.*

Sensitivity – so that you are aware of what is going on even while receiving or transmitting power. *So that you can gain pleasure from being sensitive with each other and can be responsive without being reactive.*

Soft power – ability to exert power in a soft relaxed way that does not provide leverage for the opponent and a way that delivers penetration. *Soft relaxed self-expression mentally and physically aids clarity between partners.*

Penetration – the ability to deliver power into and through the body not just onto the surface. *Joking aside - being a powerful individual can be important to a relationship of two equals.*

Dynamic balance – the ability to move fast and dynamically while retaining balance and control. *Keeping up with an energetic partner or family situation will benefit from being able to keep your balance mentally and physically in an energetic situation.*

Absorption – taking up the impact of a blow so as to gain and store the energy – also one gains time. *Perhaps not physically – but certainly mentally/emotionally so that one can be responsive rather than reactive.*

Neutralising – smothering or otherwise negating a force. *Much like absorption in negative situations – and also implying the act of active reinforcement in positive ones.*

Deflection – diverting a blow or other force often storing a proportion of the energy in one's own body at the same time. *In deflecting one learns also to go with the energy so as to join with it and so can join with ones' partner in their activity.*

Storing energy – the moving of energy to store in a different area of one's own body prior to release includes the moving of one's own energy and the taking in of opponent's energy to recycle and return to them. *Storing and expressing of energy involves the interchange of energy between partners – creatively for mutual pleasure or benefit.*

Unified movement – moving as a complete and synchronised whole enables fluidity and focus of power. Also the “one part moves, all parts move” enables a big movement to be created from lots of small movements so that the structure can remain optimally aligned. This is also more difficult for an opponent to read and does not present the same vulnerabilities as a single part making a large move. Internal leverage is maximised while the possibility for an opponent to exert external leverage is minimised. Essential for fluidity. *Just makes life easy – two people working together in harmony – working as a team – each augmenting the efforts of the other.*

Grounding – ability to use the floor from which to exert power or to use as the 2nd jaw of a vice. Staying connected to the ground at all times so as to use it as something to work with. *Being*

grounded – connected to a solid base - enables one to be a solid and effective partner - grounded in reality.

Standing upright – a straight back – vertical posture with poise and balance – an important factor in enabling many other behaviours – minimises effort, maximises balance and leverage. *Really good for health and in older age for preventing falls.*

Lithe and limber movement – the ability to be grounded and to float at the same time so that one can always be quick to move and to connect to the ground to maintain balance and exert power. *Physically useful in life from gardening to anything else – emotionally useful in relationships – intellectually useful in work etc.*

Connectedness – feeling all the parts of one's body, having them working in synchronicity and sequentially with each other. Awareness that the body feeling is working in tune with intellectual/emotional feelings, giving a congruent whole person. Perhaps a sense of relaxed strength and confidence about oneself. Builds a strong mind/body. *Physically adds to the fun – emotionally you know who you are dealing with.*

Clarity – clarity of viewpoint, clarity of understanding, clarity of self-purpose leaves the brain clear and enables action without the delay of equivocation. *Good in any relationship.*

Preparation – put in the work first then you can have the skill to use automatically when needed. Also a body that can deliver the skills. *Whether working together or having a physical relationship, preparation and experience have got to be beneficial – if only so that you can be spontaneous.*

Developed skill – the careful study and practice involved in producing a skill set, an approach not just of practice and preparation but of purpose and understanding. *How would that not be useful in a positive relationship?*

Healthy body-mind – learning to look after yourself, to enable the body/mind to work together in harmony. *Apply this to all parties in a creative relationship – it is often at the basis of Tai Chi people taking up teaching, sharing and healing.*

Resilience – the “bounce back” factor like a rubber ball – so applicable in ideas of absorbing power, storing power and returning power. The ability of the body and mind to quickly restore themselves to a comfortable state. *Bouncing back is important to keep the most harmonious*

relationship harmonious – and well just bouncing energy around is great fun whether in playful games or in flirting, in conversation.

Tangential movement – to move so that one's opponent's force is always directed tangentially to oneself – they can never impact directly or control one's centre or balance. *Just do the opposite – allow your partner to find your centre.*

Natural (subconscious) movement – developing centred and fluid segmental movement that enables one to build on this way of moving into complex, subtle movements that nonetheless feel comfortable and natural, having internal harmony. *Surely good in any situation.*

Suppleness – a body that can move easily over a wide range of action without tension. *Never a bad thing – could be very useful in dance and sex.*

Speed – ability to move fast at any time over the required range – short, medium or long. *Equally the ability to operate at speed using ones' intuition and so get things done quickly – the ability to deliver urgency with precision.*

Change of pace and direction – not getting locked in to a rhythm – having the ability to break it up and change direction at will. *Knowing this to notice it going on around oneself and to remain unaffected by it.*

Miss-direction – creating habits that suggest to the opponent that you are about to do one thing while actually doing another, or simply re-directing their attention to a different place so that you can work in a vulnerable area unnoticed. *The basis of humour and magic- very entertaining when used in non-threatening ways and fun to do between friends.*

Optimal body usage – learning to make best use of what you have. *To make life easier and to live longer.*

Leverage – recognising when you are in a position to take control of the opponent's balance, or to deliver power to a vulnerable area. E.g. by miss-directing when leverage can gain time or in mechanical terms where one positions oneself to exert power against a weakness. *On recognising another's weakness – being supportive, being positioned to give that support at small cost and while retaining ones' own balance.*

Fluidity/flow – enables continuous movement that the opponent cannot read but leaves you always able to deliver power unexpectedly e.g. fajin. *Moving easily through a situation, good for physical labour and for sex.*

Explosive power – Fajin – the ability to exert whole body explosive power at any point or time can be extremely disruptive to an attacker, especially when exerted at short range and with complete surprise. *Really a very refined extension of fluidity/flow - so the benefits are the same.*

Entry/withdrawal – understanding and skill in the process of closing distance and withdrawing out of range as appropriate and whoever is doing it. How to do so without presenting vulnerabilities and in a way that enables you to take advantage of opportunities at any stage. *No really don't laugh – OK then do laugh - and then just allow your vulnerabilities to be seen the next time.*

Unbalancing – control of centre - if you can achieve unbalancing of your attacker/opponent then they cannot exert force on you and may be easily controlled. *Just learn to balance others harmoniously.*

Internal honesty – only if one is completely honest with oneself can one correctly understand what is going on within and what one is doing externally. Honesty is further important in understanding one's opponent. *Or friend or family or lover, or work colleagues or anything.*

Sequential movement – movement of the body segments initiated from the centre is an optimal and powerful way of movement with many benefits in terms of balance, fluidity, power, sensitivity etc. *It's just an optimal way to move whatever the situation.*

Centring – involves creating a state of connectedness where the body is linked to and operated from movement initiated at the centre. *Being centred emotionally, intellectually and physically – enables you to make human choices.*

Take-down – the ability to disrupt the opponents balance so as to bring them to the ground, so using the ground as one might slam an attacker against a wall. *A particular application of Unbalancing – the opposite – lifting up.*

Opening /closing – a Tai Chi principle generally related to using the body so that body segments open or close or so that joints do so. This has the benefit of creating unified squeezing power – or opening power – while enabling the joints to relax. *Useful anywhere that physical effort or skill is needed.*

Full/empty – understanding the forces within your body so that it is clear which part is exerting force e.g. a leg which is supporting weight or storing energy will be felt as full. A part which is not carrying weight or has just exerted force will be felt as empty. *Useful in gardening ... etc. Also useful in an emotional sense to recognise it in others.*

Left/right – if you wish to move east first move west. **Up/Down** – when moving down also consider up.

In moving always consider the opposite direction and in unbalancing first move opposite to the direction you wish to go. This stabilises yourself and unbalances your opponent, and takes skill to achieve subtly with them unaware. *Back to humour and magic. A useful physical skill in moving through crowds – and in play fighting, flirting and sex. Keeping someone slightly off balance then catching them and keeping them safe is the basis of many fairground rides or thrill seeking activities.*

Turning without turning – not just turning using one hip or the waist but making a whole body integrated and fluid turn so that the movement has no seams and presents no opportunity for weakness. A complete repositioning of the whole body. *Just an optimal way of moving growing out of the other behaviours.*

Vulnerable points – use of points on the body known to be especially vulnerable to strikes or pressure in order to disrupt consciousness, balance or body tissue. E.g. acupuncture points or gross delicate organs. *So try tickling someone or stroking them and see how much fun/pleasure it is – and how you can recognise their vulnerable areas by their sensitivity.*

Floating/sinking – in creating these states in our body we are better able to retain dynamic balance and to achieve transmission of force through the floor in our actions. *We can become light and limber in our movements whether dancing or partying or any other physical activity.*

Advancing while retreating – we should develop the skill of giving way in one place while gaining greater advantage elsewhere – thus gaining an overall benefit in our position. *Sculpting, pruning, painting in fact practically any activity involves give and take – doing it gracefully, with style and leaving all benefiting would be a positive outcome.*

Communication – using all channels we can receive information and seek to minimise transmission. In Tai Chi touch is an especially important channel – hence we “listen” by feeling. *Back to sex – but actually good communication is important at all levels - and in a creative relationship we would seek to transmit clearly as well as reading incoming information.*

Understanding – by understanding we hope to have an advantage and to be unsurprised. In this way we are prepared and can remain calm. *Understanding also enables empathy and so engagement and support or joining. Understanding aids confidence and acting out of understanding we can offer the best of ourselves.*

Will – our Will is all – it directs our actions and keeps us going when in difficulties, it enables us to train and to control and to subdue. *It helps us to direct our lives and to keep good relationships going in difficult times; it helps us to achieve our goals in all areas.*

Ferocity – growing from the **Will** and **Passion** ferocity is a very disheartening emotion to face and can be overwhelming to an opponent who doesn't expect it – however on its own can alert them to weakness, especially when dealing with an experienced attacker who may just escalate – and so one would seek to temper it with **Wisdom** ensuring the element of surprise which can make this behaviour even more powerful and which can remind us that “discretion is the better part of valour” if appropriate. *As a positive behaviour **Ferocity** is probably not quite what one would go for – but **Will, Passion** and especially **Wisdom** can be seen as extremely positive in all walks of life – even if others sometimes find them difficult to deal with they are definitely part of a balanced personality.*

Persistence – the ability to just keep going – they say “it's not the dog in the fight – it's the fight in the dog” and the ability to keep going until the job is done i.e. one's attacker is neutralised in some way, is highly important – likewise in training persistence is vital to creating the desired habitual behaviour. *Persistence as a positive quality seems fairly obvious – in life, in creative endeavours – especially when coupled with the wisdom to channel it.*

Focus – actually variable focus – associated with awareness and mindfulness – being able to switch “focal length” from close scrutiny to peripheral vision – important in training and in a fight as ways of enabling the subconscious to gather information – sometimes scanning for change – other times scrutinising for detail. *Important in life for the same reasons.*

Strength – skill in martial arts requires strength for completion. A weak body can achieve little – but we must understand strength in soft and hard terms. *Physical strength is a plus generally to a point at least – sometimes it is important to be weak – to invest in loss and to be aware of our weaknesses – to allow others to care for us.*

Cunning, Trickery, Diversion, Deceit – pretty obvious in a fight situation – connected with so many other aspects like “hiding your intentions” shifting ground, unbalancing etc., and some people have these attributes naturally as a sort of street smartness. Interestingly for those

looking to develop them – like magicians – who actually need to have a good idea of reality otherwise they end up living in a fantasy world – which can then become a weakness. *Perhaps almost by definition not of themselves particularly positive – although I guess they have their uses in life – but positive in that if one is aware of them as behaviours then one is more likely to spot them being used by others and in personal development and training terms to spot when we are in some way deceiving ourselves.*

Observation – we train ourselves to observe everything – ourselves inside and out as well as our training partners and opponents – so that we can see the small things that make big differences. *Nothing negative there then.*

Attention/attentiveness – the on-going task of observing in an understanding way. Conscious attention – whether in training or in a “situation”. *All good stuff whatever.*

Awareness – converting observation to understanding on a continuing basis by paying attention. So that one may use the information gained in a beneficial way. *Still all good.*

Commitment – an ability to be completely involved in reality – although one may be less than 100% committed physically – e.g. 5% or 95%. *Good again.*

Care – we should be careful – of ourselves and others, and of our actions so that by being careful we can commit appropriately in a physical sense and understand the reality of our position. Essential in training – but like everything else – having learned it in training it should pre-program our subconscious. *Yes lets be careful in our caring relationships and in our work and all other aspects of our lives.*

Self-knowledge – being aware of oneself in all respects ensures you do not over reach or over commit and that your vulnerabilities are covered. So that you stay inside your range of capability – your comfort zone. Important in training so that you can observe change and direct development. Important in confrontation to understand what can be achieved without combat. Important in combat to remain human. *Well – the ability to remain human – not to get lost in fantasy like romance and glamour – while being able to enjoy them - I'm sure it applies everywhere as beneficial so long as we do not use it to put ourselves down or negate risk – so long as we use it as a base from which to expand our comfort zone. Once again it is about what we do with the knowledge – that we are not afraid of it.*

Knowledge of others – specific. If you have the time prior to an attack. Who is standing before you? What are they? What are they capable of? Reading an individual prior to contact

and during contact having knowledge of their balance and weaknesses. *Basically what do you need/want to do – disrupt their vulnerabilities or build them up, avoid their strengths or partner with them- your choice.*

Knowledge of others – general. It is important to have a good understanding of the human condition – of what is possible in the behaviour and abilities of others. This will reduce the surprises you experience and inform your reading of bodies and specific situations. *Enables you to take short cuts – so long as the knowledge does not take on the guise of unreal stereotypes. Enables you to understand an individual within the context of a broader humanity. Validates the idea of being Human.*

Hiding your intentions – well you would wouldn't you? Doing so however is a skill. Basically there are no secrets – everything is there to be seen if you understand what you are looking at or feeling. But there is a problem. Working internally and ever reducing the size of movements while becoming soft and fluid can work wonders – so your skill level is critical. Holding oneself in a state of potentiality and awareness helps – as does everything else we have discussed. *Well just do the opposite – being balanced in a state of potentiality can go either way – one can as easily go to the positive and express oneself to others – and to explore ones' self-expression, to extend one's way of being in the world.*

Locking – joint locks – Chi Na – an integral part of martial Tai Chi enables you to take advantage of the broader principles of unbalancing and listening, and explosive power, so that you can achieve a beneficial end game. Naturally ability to avoid and dis-engage from locks is also useful. *I guess that an understanding that one is always able to create some freedom of movement in any situation is useful in feeling more in control of one's own life.*

Punching and kicking – or perhaps broader – striking etc. with elbows, shoulder, knees etc. Basic to any martial art – delivered in Tai Chi at any range (preferably short range) with explosive power and without warning to a vulnerable area (although when delivered well then to any area). Kicks generally at low level – but if you are very athletic then you may achieve higher. Chen Xin explains something like “leap up - from the ground - and kick to the head, but not too high or you may risk compromising your upright posture”! *Hm... difficult to find a specific positive to this in strict terms – although being able to do it will keep you fit!*

Distance-ability – read as distance closes; learn to position before contact is made. Make internal preparation. Be comfortable at kicking range, at arms' length and at close range. Know your ability at any distance – do not let your opponent chose the range. *Sounds like most of my*

first dates! And actually on reflection isn't that people reading and being comfortable with others a major part of what we do every day?

Close-in-ability – the focus of Tai Chi where contact is the gateway to the body. Tai Chi deals mainly with staying on your feet while incapacitating an assailant – often by taking down to the floor with force and control. *Not so natural to Brits – with our precious personal space – so really good to learn how to be relaxed in crowded areas.*

Ground-ability – however good you are at staying on your feet I would still want to have some understanding of ground work – if only to know not to go there! I believe that a good understanding of Tai Chi principles will also apply in ground fighting – so perhaps – don't go there but know what to expect if you do. *Any physical relationship – playing with the kids, being with a physical partner.*

Mapping of personal space – developing a kinaesthetic awareness of the space around you. How you can reach any part of it and how you can control another body within that personal space. How you can move within it and move it from one place to another without losing its integrity. Knowing its limits and its shape.

Fortunately our subconscious has the ability to do this – we all have body maps internally e.g. pianists have larger maps for their fingers than normal. Practice of exercises and forms enable us to integrate these maps into a whole body map. Practice with training partners enables us to map our comfort and control areas – those where we can reach and be effective. *We are all physical beings – how we work in the world and how we do things in it are important aspects to our lives and are benefited from this skill all day – it just makes life easier and helps us to flow as we move.*

Positioning - picking your ground – changing the ground – behaviour that habituates to always having superior leverage – mechanical or emotional (eg creating fear can be leverage so can complacency) – so physical position or intellectual or emotional position. Refusing to meet on another's preferred ground – physical or mental. Constantly changing the ground and the leverage in such subtle ways that the opponent does not realise you have shifted. Allowing them to move so that they limit their own space or balance. *Useful to know when others are doing it to you – almost by definition it is something characteristic of a manipulative person so when you find it happening in what should be a caring relationship then you can deal with it accordingly.*

Ability to use all body parts – some body parts are more obvious weapons than others – developing the ability to use any body part to disrupt balance, control or functional capacity will enable its use when not expected for example the back, the buttocks, the belly, the hip etc. which may correctly applied be very forceful, perhaps in unbalancing – so providing leverage for something else – or in conjunction with another body part. *Certainly helps in the fit and healthy department – and in physical relationships – or just being comfortable being physical with anybody.*

Personal integration – unity of self, congruence, authenticity – gives us personal solidity and integrity, relaxation and confidence – having chosen who we wish to be we then get to live it without reservation – in a conflict or in life. *Got to be a good thing whatever.*

Restraint – prevents over commitment, which creates vulnerability to having one's balance destroyed. *On the positive side I am reminded of the saying “ least said soonest mended “.*

Patience – sooner or later your attacker/opponent will make a mistake – you only have to wait for it. *More positively your patience can give others the time they need to relate to you creatively and positively.*

In truth one could go on indefinitely discerning ever more refined verbal definitions of behaviours - and they will always remain an intellectual exercise unless we seek to develop them in ourselves and actually create a path of personal development.

How Tai Chi deals with all these:

Tai Chi comes at all of this from a very practical and pragmatic perspective – essentially a structured program which takes us through each natural stage producing a way of being tailored to dealing with change and external energies. In the end the labels mean little – they are just part of the path to our development.

Kung Fu - daily repetitive practice of fluid forms and exercises involving effort, observation, exercise, consideration, refining.

The six harmonies

Meditation and Qigong

Sung state of body and mind

Partner work – pushing hands. In Tai Chi partner practice we train co-operatively to raise our skill level – so the relationship is somewhat mixed in its intention – on the one hand to unbalance and disrupt – but on the other to do so creatively in a way that enables both parties to observe and learn.

The eight energies - Jin – ways of exerting power, - ward off, roll back, press, push, pluck, split, elbow and body stroke (peng, lu, ji, an, cai, lie, zhou, kao).

Stick, adhere, continue and follow (zhan, nian, lian, sui)

Falling into emptiness - ability to create this for the opponent to fall into – so they are vulnerable to Fajin explosive power.

An experienced teacher to present examples and opportunities to practice and develop skill.

A world model basis of Taoist philosophy:

Wuji – being in a state of potentiality

Wuwei leading to Tai Chi – spontaneous creation leading to harmonious action

Wuji – return to potentiality

Tai Chi offers all these and other practices and at the same time encourages us to observe and to think deeply about what we are doing and why it works etc.

Chi and body mapping

It seems to me that when we pattern our bodies through practice – directed by thought - to work according to Tai Chi principles - then we set up an internal pattern of muscle and nerve activation which feels like (and actually is) a flow of movement within our bodies that will be experienced differently for each of us. This feeling will follow the route of the sequential nerve activation and associated muscular action – in other words the patterned habitual way of moving actually creates an internal order of a quite substantial level on an otherwise somewhat random internal environment - and can then become a way of directing our development by monitoring the way the feeling develops with practice and the way we are able to operate in the external world e.g. with others in partner practice and in normal daily tasks. Consequently we can anticipate this feeling becoming more noticeable and more defined as we practice.

So this feeling, which we can call Chi, provides us with a tool to map our body usage and to understand the areas around us in which we can operate effectively and how to do so – i.e. with balance and power. This establishes a volume of personal space – a volume which is quite organic in its shape and representing variable ability with pools of good capability and areas of not so good and a boundary of marginal capability (which may be a long way out from our body or quite close to it).

This operating volume - or comfort zone – defines how we can relate to others in a fight – in that we need to stay within those areas of maximum capability and to lead our opponent into their areas of vulnerability so that we can establish control – this is done by taking their balance - by what we call “finding their centre” while not allowing them to do the same to us.

By unbalancing we neutralise and control making the attack ineffective – doing this instinctively we respond instantly.

Notes on important behaviours

We have considered a wide range of human behaviours in this paper and noted the way in which each has a positive and a negative potential – the way we exhibit these behaviours positively or negatively in our lives largely demonstrates who we are – they are a presentation of our self-expression – of our personality.

Fortunately experience suggest that most people take the positive way if they feel they can – however sadly there are people who cannot tell the difference in their daily lives – people who unconsciously use whichever aspect suits them at the time – essentially they do not know the difference between a loving, caring relationship and a destructive one. Consequently they apply these principles in whatever way suits their own material/emotional ends – often completely unaware of what they are really doing. These are frequently manipulative bullies or “charmners” – who may in their way consider the needs of others superficially – perhaps in an intellectual way – so long as it does not actually cost them personally. These are often very successful and on the surface pleasant people – their strategy after all follows the behaviours in a way that masks their true intent – they inappropriately apply martially oriented strategy to daily life.

Similarly we find people who consciously and sub-consciously use these behaviours in a search for personal power, sometimes in an extremely destructive way – these people we can call “evil” if we wish – they have made a choice to “ go to the dark side of life “.

On the other hand as martial artists we study these behaviours carefully - and while others may deny responsibility for their choices and justify their manipulative selfishness, it is more difficult for those of us who know we have a choice.

It is my belief that the best hope for humanity comes from this personal awareness coupled with the ability to understand and chose – which can only come from a basic honesty. Tai Chi and martial arts in general seem to provide a path to this if we decide to take it. Fortunately experience (and hope!) suggest that despite the on-going mass killings in various wars around the world – given the chance in a fear free environment – on balance - most people seem to make positive choices.