

Amicale

Yangjia Michuan Taiji Quan

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Rooting

Un pas
vers la paix

The
energising
nodes

One brea-
thing:
agree or
disagree?

Is Teaching
Taiji a True
Profession?

楊家秘傳

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Is it still necessary to promote Taiji, when we see what newspapers and other media publish about our discipline throughout the years? The Taiji pioneers, who were the first generation of Western people to bring the Chinese teaching to Europe and the United States have done most of the work over some decades. Well done! That was not a simple task in the 1970s and 1980s as they had to challenge the "good for your health" Swedish gymnastic schools; moreover the Western physical education was opposed to a completely new way of considering body and mind, finding fault with exotic and arcane subjects.

If Jane Fonda still practices her workout in gymnasiums, Taiji now takes a prominent space in physical education and health. And yet, nowadays, is it enough?

Taiji only comes in through the back door in hospitals as an adjuvant treatment to the diseases of our time while serious and thorough research should reinforce its quality and Taiji should be better advertised to the medical community as well as to the general public. Our practice has neither unveiled all its secrets nor all its benefits; there are still numerous fields to be explored by the teachers who wish to orient towards a wider range of expertise for their personal research and teaching and though they do not pretend to rival medical practice and physicians, they wish to accompany doctors and share with them a new look on illnesses and therapies. I do think that Taiji has a bright future ahead; teaching Taiji is a job for the future.

Françoise Cordaro

From the President's desk,

This is now the autumnal equinox, a time when Yin and Yang are equal.

We are also anticipating our Annual Meeting, which will take place this year at Balcons du Lac, very near Annecy, from November 7 to 11. These meetings are organized by the association called Cran Gevrier Animation. As usual, great numbers of you will arrive to take part in this annual event.

We have had a new fiscal year since September 1. Don't forget to pay right now your subscription to the Amicale or else to the bursar at the annual meeting.

I do thank the Board of Directors, the administrative board, as well as the members of the different committees and commissions, for the work they have done this year.

As for the Bulletin, we are very grateful to Françoise Cordaro, our chief editor, and to Michel Ségal, who does the layout, as well as to the Bulletin committee and the Translation commission for releasing the Bulletin in French and English synchronously.

We pay a special tribute to the web site committee who enhance on a day-to-day basis the content, with events, special courses, uploading the Bulletins, referencing the associations, and so on ...

Sixty-two little Red books by Mr. Wang have been sold; we have run short of the 2014 stock. A new French edition will be for sale at the Annecy meeting, with a new translation of the Classical Texts, which was finished this summer, a version that was drawn up by the members of the Classic Text committee under the authority of Sabine Metzlé and Marie-Christine Moutault. This "versified" version is more akin to the original chanted spirit, an echo of the time when it was passed down by oral transmission.

It will replace nowadays' prose version. The translators not only worked on the "phrasing" but at the same time endeavored to be very faithful to the meaning emitted by the Chinese characters while relying on their own experience drawn from practice to really grasp the deep meaning of the texts.

Do not forget: this booklet includes much more; it is a great help for the practitioner of our style. Thanks to its compact format you can always have it with you ready to consult as often as possible.

You may get in touch with Alain Coussedière, our bursar to buy one. Two new associations have asked to subscribe. They will join the 92 associations already members, and they signal the pep of Amicale.

The agenda of the next general meeting, which will be held during the Sablé meeting, at 8:30 p.m. on November 8, will be given in the October administrative newsletter.

You should appoint a representative from your association to vote at the general meeting while you may also plan to apply for the year 2015-2016.

After the holiday break, having taken advantage of one of our summer courses, as I hope you could, I wish you will enjoy a pleasant regular practice.

Jean-Michel Fraigneau

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Rooting

Mark Linett

Generally speaking in the practice of T'ai Chi Chuan developing a root is one of the signs that someone is progressing along the way. It comes from a variety of practices and it is the product and result of an extended period of practice. This may include repeated self-correction of one's position, a relaxed, deep and sunken body position as well as the proper use of the mind (Yi) and deep Dantien breathing.

In one Push hands practice class which was part of a series of intensive Push hands classes with Wang Laoshi we worked on rooting. We started off by standing on one leg with our arms relaxed and hanging by our sides. We were asked to tuck and relax the Weilu point in the lower back as well as to relax the chest at the sternum (Hang Shiong Ba Bai). Relaxing here results in a slightly rounding of the back and allows for the flow of chi from the upper body down into the waist and the legs. One thing to be a bit cautious about is not to use too much force or Li to tuck the lower back but to naturally relax and allow the lower back to sink on its own.

Also the back or weighted leg does not move unless there is a shifting of weight. By being relaxed, our weight naturally drops into the legs and feet, and the upper body can relax and be agile. If the upper body is relaxed then then our movements can be rounded and relaxed.

By standing in Ward off or Peng position and facing a partner in Peng position, we can begin to practice rooting. This practice is a very effective rooting practice. When the partner exerts pressure or power against the Peng arm simply by sinking onto the back leg and tucking the lower back the power can easily be absorbed without using Li or hard strength. The more power that comes, the lower we sink and root the incoming energy. Furthermore, we can continue in the same Peng position with a part-

ner and begin to make small circle, maintaining contact and listening to the Peng energy.

It is possible to also practice by standing front of a wall in Peng with all the weight on the rear leg with the front leg remaining empty. Gently pushing on the wall and feeling the connection with the opposite foot (right hand, left foot; left hand, right foot), feeling comfortable, balanced and relaxed while pushing, feeling the shoulder with the other hand to see if the muscles in the arm and shoulder are tensed or soft and relaxed.

In our classes with Laoshi, he often checked to see if we had placed all our weight onto the back leg. It is quite easy to see if our all our weight is truly resting on the back leg by lifting the front leg, without there being the slightest movement in the body.

Breathing deep into the Dantien also helps in the development of a root. The breath draws the attention and the Chi deep into the waist area. To check the depth of the breathing into the Dantien placing one hand on the Dantien in front and one hand on the back at the Weilu point to feel if there is movement as one breaths in and out, much like a bellows.

Also in class, Laoshi would come around to each of us and push us at the Dantien and then at the back to see if we were stable and rooted. When being pushed at the Dantien we were instructed not to resist when the push came.

If there is any résistance then when someone pushes and suddenly pulls his hand away, the person being pushed will be uprooted. To remain stable and rooted, it is important not to resist any push but to yield to it.

By continuously and frequently self-correcting our position, then after some time we can naturally assume the correct position in the form and when doing Push Hands. The correct position is essential to developing and streng-

thening a root. The lower back needs to remain relaxed and tucked otherwise it is quite easy to break one's own root. Relaxing the shoulders is also essential as well as being aware of the position of the front knee when doing a push. When doing a push from the front leg it is important to use the power from the back rather than from the hand and arms. If the hands and arms are used it is possible to over-extend and lose balance and break the root.

Another point is not to move the "planted foot" whether it is the back foot or front foot. One foot needs to be planted while the opposite hand is doing the pushing. Even when doing moving Push hands it is important to plant one foot before attempting a push.

Another practice that was often seen in the parks here in Taipei years ago may be useful in developing a comfortable and stable position. The practitioner slowly walks in a circle moving from one leg to the other, there is a gentle toe tap with the empty foot which allows a brief moment to find and maintain balance and stability on the one leg.

Finally there is another practice that is very common and is well known in T'ai Chi circles. It serves the purpose of strengthening and developing a root. The Tsai or pull down movement is practiced in the form but can be a two person practice as well.

The two practitioners stand facing one another with their weight on their back legs. The hands are in Shang Peng or a high Ward off position. One partner starts off by turning his hand and pulling his partner down and to the side, attempting to pull his partner off his root. They take turns rising and then pulling each other down.

Anyone with a strong interest in this practice will naturally look to develop and research their own methods to augment their practices. But keeping alive and passing on some of the basic methods and practices that were generously handed down to us by Wang Laoshi can be immensely valuable.

The energising nodes. Passes, doors, pivots, gates, chakras ...

Jean-Luc Perot
Translation Cynthia Hay

A'RTiculation makes possible fitting together a hARmonious arrangement of different elements. ARticulating, Rhythm and Ritual are all involved in this adaptive faculty.

Articulation occurs with parts, pieces, moments and times, thoughts and humans who permanently adapt themselves to life.

This function of reciprocal adaptation takes place between bony segments, in the shifting of the intestines and in cellular movements and, in a general sense, in all the pivots, relays, hinges and parts which make the machine operate.

The Indian tradition has bequeathed to us the notion of chakra to describe this function which articulates mechanics and energy, physics and psychology, matter and spirit.

The Chinese tradition speaks of gates, passes and doors through which the flux passes; it situates places and turns them into pictures in a landscape.

Our interior spaces are consequently organised in a field where cinnabar is cultivated; it forms the pearl and nourishes the embryo of another self in the process of becoming.

There are three special (privileged) places in which the stages of individual development are located: the crucible of the pelvis, the respiratory box and the cranial cradle.

The texts "refine" the localisations and correspondences between these three places and the points before and behind, but in current usage reference to the seven nodes (chakras) is the customary way of situating the interior progression.

From the bottom to the summit: the buttocks, the navel, the cavity of the stomach, the middle of the chest, the tightened passage of the throat, the glabella¹ and the crown of the head.

¹INDT: The glabella is the space without hairs between the eyebrows.

These reference points resonate with the neuro-vegetative plexuses and are connected to both the emotional functioning as well as to the opening of the spirit of the practitioner.

Here is how I situate them in practice:

a. Down below, the basis, the seating : Having a good foundation

The relationship of being rooted in the earth for physical and emotional stability but also the relation to what constitutes the roots of our identity: gender, masculine or feminine, generation in ancestry and descent, sexuality in the conjugal and in the soil, historically the place of birth and root in culture.

Thus the support of the foot extends through the legs up to interarticular ligament of the hip joint which suspends the pelvic hammock between the pubis and the coccyx, the sacrum and the ischia.

In ancient Chinese medical thought, it is from the bottom that the vital power springs up like a geyser (Chong Mai). To take on one's roots, to have feet on the ground, not to be caught between two stools, gives balance and therefore ... nerve.

b. The umbilicus and the Ming Men : in the hollow of the loins is the door through which we are called into existence. We come into life; it is important that this door remains mainly open. The umbilicus is central to the organisational structure of the embryo: it forms the knot which closes the belly and which marks the separation thereof between the placenta and the mother. To have guts, to have fire in the belly, to have intestinal fortitude echo individuation and possible access to autonomy. The waist is responsible for lumbar rectification centred on L3 and for cohesion of low and high. Having a sturdy back bears witness to the strength of a person who is an appropriate size and is in good health.

c. The pit of the stomach and the diaphragm : intermediate zone where the bellows of the diaphragm, a suction and pressure pump, activates breathing, harnesses the energies of the pelvis and helps the return of blood through the veins. It is the pneumatic dynamic (inflate/deflate) and the cohesion of the pelvis and the breast which effaces

the division of the waist by linking the thoracic vertebrae, the ribs and the lumbar from D7 to L2.

This region is a passage :

- towards below and when that does not proceed well, it remains on the stomach or on the heart; one does not digest and breathing remains superficial.

- towards above for the ascent of blood and of pure breaths, clarity of the mind, the sonority of the voice and radiance.

d. The torso, the thorax and the back, the chest

Usually designated as the location of the heart and of feeling, the thoracic cage is openwork, the bars are mobile and make possible the expansion of the heart and lungs. The torso can form a rampart and the back can enlarge itself to take a lot of punishment.

But often the cage becomes a prison, and life is narrow and confined, the heart and the breast constricted. An open chest leads to powerful breathing.

e. The opening above

The pectoral girdle. the throat, the neck and the lower jaw.

Entry or exit, the passage is narrow and guarded, it controls exits and regulates entrances.

- At the armpit, linked to the spreading of wings, of arms that welcome or close up, embrace or release and hands that give or take.

- At the throat, the narrow pass provides a passage for breath and for blood, for sound, for words and for song. It is important that the neck should be supple and mobile, straight and not slumped.

f. Above, the eye and the ear which epitomise the unifying power of the mind which distinguishes, analyses and gives coherence. At the level of the interior ear, the location of the vestibule (when the three semi-circular canals are oriented in accordance with the three anatomical planes) is in equilibrium with an opening of the relaxed head: the acuity of hearing thereby is then better.

g. All the preceding levels are subsumed in the summit, the individual is thus complete. Above the skull intelligence is opened up to the integration of the self with the universal adventure which goes beyond the reach of our senses. Self, the other, society, the planet, the cosmos...

Thus the global symbolism of Man between Sky and Earth finds specifications in the different levels of the standing posture.

It is better to have a good stature than bad posture!

A RECIPE FOR VEGETARIAN NOODLES

Maître Wang Yen-nien

Text given by Henri Mouthon

Master Wang often compares the process raw noodles go through to become cooked noodles to the process a person goes through to become a human being. This recipe for vegetarian noodles comes from Shanxi Province, Master Wang's home province and a province famous throughout China for both its noodles and its martial artists.

Shanxi Province Vegetarian Noodles (serves for)

Ingredients :

- Sauce
 - 2 green chinese onions : remove leaves chop finely
 - 4 tablespoons soy sauce
 - 3 tablespoons vinegar (dark vinegar preferred)
 - 3 tablespoons butter or vegetable oil
 - 3 tablespoons water
 - 1 à 2 tablespoons sesame oil
 - Small handful of peppercorns (about 20)
- Garnish :
 - 2-3 small chinese cucumbers, sliced into fine stripes
 - 1 1/2 lbs. fresh noodles or dry noodles for four persons
 - 1 -1/2 cups cold water

Preparation

Heat the oil in a wok over medium flame. When hot, throw in peppercorns and heat until the fragrance of the peppercorns emerges. Then remove the peppercorns from the oil. Add in finely chopped green chinese onion. When you smell the fragrance of the onion, pour in the soy sauce and dark vinegar. Pour in the water. Bring this mixture to a boil and the sauce is done. Pour the sauce mixture into a bowl and add in the sesame oil. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Place fresh noodles in the boiling water and boil for about two minutes. Add in a 1/2 cup cold water, bring to a boil and boil some more. Add in a little less than 1/2 cup cold water ; bring to a boil for a third time. Allow the noodles to continue to cook in the boiling water until all the noodles float to the top and move freely in the water when stirred. When all the noodles float freely, cook then for another 2-3 minutes.

Note : If you used dry noodles instead of fresh noodles, you may want to add another 1/2 cup cold water and bring the noodles to a boil for a fourth time. Remove the cooked noodles from the water, separate into four equal portions and place them into four large bowls. Portion the sliced small chinese cucumber into four parts and place on top of the noodles. Finally, pour the sauce over the noodles and serve. Mix noodles, cucumber and sauce well before eating.



One breathing: agree or disagree?

Marie-Christine Moutault

La Haute Jeannière, août 2015

Translation Maud Trolliet

For some time, occasionally at the College, or elsewhere, one says that we should not impose breathing scansion during practise, especially for beginners; sometimes even that breathing does not matter at all and that we must leave this aspect aside to allow the practitioner to focus on everything else; that we belong to the only style where movements are calibrated on a defined inhalation and expiration. So what to think?

I both agree and disagree.

I agree: to impose no one a breathing rhythm which could asphyxiate him, makes him out of breath or makes him tired.

I agree not to block the practitioner and especially the beginner who is learning a complex sequence. Besides, very often, practitioners (during the learning period) focus on the movements, on the coordination... the Xi-Hu is only the background music offline their practise.

I disagree: because putting aside this scansion is, according to me, missing a teaching aid in the search of Unity. Let me explain: the unity of the gesture when practising the form, tuishou basic exercises and the weapons is expressed in the 1, the unity which contains the absorption – inhalation phase – which generate itself the expression – expiration phase-. These times can't be separated, there are not two but ONE.

If the practise includes breaks between the absorption and the expression, the gesture is missed; then the energy (Qi) generated in us by the constituency of the ALL in ONE is minimised; the unity created by the gesture is missed. It is mechanically possible to separate absorption/inhalation and expression/expiration but I believe that living them in harmony is generating energy.

You would say to me though, that there is already a break in oral scansion and the teacher has to take a breath! Yes, but at what time does he take it? In this suspension time, where THE gesture changes in its expression as well (it passes from the absorption to the expression or

vice versa). This silence between “Xi” and “Hu” is in the “right after” the apex of the Yin and in the “right after” the apex of the Yang. This time of mutation in the Form is the chosen moment for himself, who chant the breath for his pupils and not for him, operate the mutation in his breathing cycle.

On the taiji symbol then:



The S.1 zone corresponds to the inspired after the inspired, from the energy point of view, it is the beginning of the rise of yang, and we know that in nature, this time is somewhat suspended, it's still cold and yet the days lengthen; underground prepares in silence, what will hatch by early February.

This phase continues the prior condensation of yin, while possessing the seed of expression. It is, for me, the period when the inspired ends and we continue to accumulate in the nascent mutation; because it is in the same time as the foot forward, the hands reverse their motion, nothing is expressed yet and though everything is preparing. The expression of the gesture and the exhale of the teacher arrive just before the laying of the foot to the ground and, if there is a partner, at the time of first contact of the hands on the partner (in the Form the contact is always present in tuishou basic exercises, it is then the intention Yi producing mutation in the hand). You understand that there can be no breach at that time in the gesture, since it is a generator continuity.

The S.2 zone corresponds to the exhale after breathing out, this is the beginning of the descent of yang and the refocusing in the yin, in nature there is the maximum deployment of what was allowed by the rise and explosion of yang, but already a keen eye can see, as the days begin to shorten, that the leaves of some trees begin to turn... In the course of the Form, the gesture of expression continues to unfold in space but it is in the accompanying of the other, the partner, it is no longer in the efficiency of expression. Already, at the same time, the body begins an appeal gesture from the centre (lower Dan Tian and size [yao]); the centre calls back to it what served its previous expression: arms, and begins intensification in the support foot. Here again, there can be no rupture otherwise the risk is to disperse, getting lost, being diluted in space...

How to reconcile agree, disagree?

When we practice together in the courtyards or at the meetings of the Association, the scansion of breathing by the teacher is a proposition (needed for global unity of the group in the course of the Form), a special attention to the unity of gesture in coherence of densification and deployment, more than breathing. If people who practice at that time can easily be grafted on this respiratory rate and in the Form, it's great; if they can not, it is important to respect their priority for respiratory rate rather than asphyxiation, but it seems to me that there will inevitably be some inner disharmony.

So must we practice alone, in order to follow our own rhythm and harmonizing breath and gesture? While it is good to practice alone, it is very nice to practice in a group. It is quite usual that after one or two years of regular practice, the heart and respiratory rate subsides and it is becoming easier to follow a slow scansion.

NB (a wink): this remark does not apply to Jean-Luc (Perot)'s breathing chants, which is, for me, a poetic melody accompanying the brush of the artist who described the scrolls of a landscape. And when Jean-Luc succeeds in that all present brushes align, the work is successful...

And (another wink) I give you this thought: what if this training to Unity of being, was only an opening to learn to make his life an Unity between the inspired birth and exhalation death?...

In conclusion, a personal observation:

It is by practising regularly and with concentration, that we become a little more aware of the internal logic that inhabits the movements of the Form, the Tuishou basic exercises, weapons practice, the role and place of the breathing; that we perceive with another colour and another echo the words or phrases heard, from Master Wang or other teachers with more advanced experience than ours: they take in passing a practice a dimension up there still unknown. And when all this crosses reading the classics, it is almost exhilarating to perceive how one illuminate the other and vice versa.

Always searching for meaning, searching for unity that leads to progress step by step in the practice, itself making progress in the understanding of the classics.

This back and forth is not it, also, a breath?...

And!

Even if intellectually, we knew... We remain amazed by the urgent need for a time of inner maturation, and must especially an incompressible time. We also understand, in a smile, why this practice is called practice of long life... Not that we do live longer than what is indicated from the outset, in our cells! But this practice helps us as much as possible, to go through the cellular program "consciously"... In order to have the time necessary to move toward maturity that allows us gradually to deploy the Unity...

Extract from Song of Taijiquan (new translation that you can find in the new edition of the little red book to be published):

Taiji comes from Wuji

Origin of the mobile and immobile

It generates Yin and Yang

Differentiated in the mobile

United in the still.

I let you walk with this excerpt, good trip...



Des voies nouvelles pour un sport utile à tous !

• EDUCASPORT • Tai chi chian and Qi gong – longevity prac- • tices for 8 to 108 year-olds... and more! • • • • • • • • •

Christian Bernapel

Translated by Sylvain Maillot

Hello, I'm Christian Bernapel. I'm 63. During my professional career I was an executive at France Télécom. Today I spend a lot of my time teaching Tai chi chian at several associations, including Université Populaire Européenne in Strasbourg. I am a certified professor of Tai chi chian and Japanese martial arts, and have been teaching these for over 40 years with great pleasure.

This occupation is part of my daily life. It has been a faithful companion all along my professional, personal and family life, helping me under all circumstances to keep in touch with my inner self, stay balanced on the physical, emotional, psychic and mental levels, and live a harmonious life.



For this talk I chose the title "Tai chi chian and Qi gong – longevity practices for

8 to 108 year-olds... and more!" in order to emphasize the fact that those Eastern disciplines bring useful resources at all ages through their diversity and great adaptability.

I tried to stay away from the stereotype of the "wise Chinese man" even though those practices are thousands of years old and have become simple tools which can be adapted to the constraints of the modern age. Yet this slightly mysterious, even mystical "wise man" lies within ourselves and accompanies us with his poetry. This is certainly part of what makes these techniques attractive; beyond the physical level, they may lead us to discover other dimensions within ourselves.

At every age, the body is the essential instrument of the harmonious expression of life and spirit. How can those physical activities from another era be so beneficial from childhood to old age? It's all about playfulness, spontaneity, well-being, centering, looking for the essential, efficiency and tranquil performance, enhancing watchfulness and listening skills, a taste for gentleness and slowness, the relationship with others, distance and closeness, observation skills, acting at the right time, but also serenity and peace.

In the Chinese tradition as well as in ours, the number 5 represents stability, foundation. The four cardinal directions only become significant through the 5th one, which is the center. The human life might be decomposed into five major stages: childhood leading to adolescence, adolescence to reason, the age of reason to maturity, maturity to plenitude; lastly, plenitude to serenity. And after





serenity, what remains to be found? If not happiness through self-accomplishment and inner peace. Something like a bit of wisdom! May you find peace and wisdom before the 5th age!

The child likes to play, to discover the world and the surrounding people. Through playing, it explores its body and mind, its outline and limits, the presence of others, through roundness which leads to joy and develops the intellect. Through movement names of all sorts: straddle the tiger, grasp the sparrow's tail, wield the pipa, repulse the monkey, the white snake which darts its tongue, the dragon which explores with its talons, the high pat on the horse, the single whip, the hands that billow like clouds and search for the needle at the bottom of the sea, the white crane that spreads its wings, and so many others... learning Chinese body arts is full of playing and imagery. Through mimicry it arouses the child's curiosity and sense of identification with all those animals and accompanies the child through its body and stimulates its mind. The teenager will later be able to discover the martial aspects: contact with the partner, sparring etc. and build the foundations for a more precise psychomotricity by means of improving proprioception, listening skills, and intuition. Intuitive research of the "right gesture".

The child starts experiencing a need for a reasoned approach when it begins to discover its independence and explore unknown territory. He is now a teenager, a young adult, full of vitality which he needs to channel in order to gain access to all aspects of these practices. He can then pit himself against the others and learn self-control and respect. Then many choices lead to a more self-conscious commitment: an educative practice for the student or the apprentice, or a (short or long) professional career. The possibility of competitive practice: tuishou, taolu. High performance sport or a search for a balanced life, relaxation and one's inner self

A physical activity involving confrontation and self-fulfillment, providing tools that can strengthen the body and the mind in all aspects: concentration, action, or observation; developing qualities such as patience, knowledge of one's abilities and limits, perception and listening skills, physical abilities, stamina, quickness by means of both slow and fast techniques. Slowness allows to use the natural abilities of psychomotricity and is a preparation for fast, adequate and efficient movements, adapted to the necessary level of performance. There is no requirement to 'win' or always be performant. This leads naturally to calm and self-confidence.

Then reason leads to maturity : flexibility and simplicity permit to practise anywhere, at any moment, without special sports outfit, equipment or venue. One's own body is the only material. Those disciplines can thus be adapted to everyone's lifestyle, with its social, personal and professional constraints. They become a daily companion for hygiene, comfort, keeping contact with one's inner self, learning, sharing. You can practise alone or in small or larger groups. An ideal companion for the yuppie or the loafer!

From maturity to plenitude : getting older, body and mind awaken, sometimes painfully. Adaptation to one's own constraints becomes more accurate and allows to determine the limits. Instead of being overwhelmed by the decline of physical and mental abilities, one tries to benefit from experience. With time and practice comes expertise, the ability to move with softness, efficiency, intelligence and satisfaction. With maturity comes the 'right gesture', and with it joy and a sense of accomplishment.



UN PROGRAMME POUR CONSTRUIRE DES SOLUTIONS...

What I've said refers to people who are blessed with a healthy body and mind. All of these disciplines can be adapted to any handicap and any minor or more serious illness. There remains much to be done for those people through collaboration with private and public medical and paramedical organizations.

And from plenitude to serenity : the older you get, the more you enjoy life and the bigger the return on investment. Calm, smiling, well-being, the joy of a better perception of others, confidence and acceptance of differences. A healthy heart, fluid blood circulation; easy, deep breathing, a smooth and supple skin, a shining eye, clear thoughts, a keen and lucid mind, a lifetime of accomplishment.



You all know intuitively this fifth age: it is everyone's long time goal. It brings the satisfaction of a useful, fully lived life. Body and mind find plenitude and peace!

We just described the stages of an 'ordinary' life. We can thus understand better how those practices have been able to stand the test of time, from Chinese antiquity to now, and gain such an audience in the modern Western society.

Thanks to their great adaptability, the traditional physical practices originating in China such as Tai Chi Chuan or Qi gong, characterized by slowness, softness, deep breathing, bring a natural, inexpensive answer. They can be practised alone or in a group, without any equipment, anywhere, in nature, at home or in the city, whatever the age and the physical abilities of the practitioners. They operate on a set of anatomical and physiological parameters as well as on the emotional and psychic levels. They have a positive effect on self-perception.

They also have all the features of a moderate physical activity; they are of specific pedagogical interest, and are healthier than more intense or competitive activities. They contribute to well-being and quality of life. For over a decade, contemplative and internal practices from China have become an object of study for neuroscience and an exploration field for medical research, which confirms their benefits.

It is certain that those ancient practices, when integrated with Western culture, bring their riches to the modern human being, and their benefits to public health organizations.

Thank you for your attention.



Le Tai Chi Chuan pour les enfants et les adolescents

Les principales techniques de base illustrées

80 jeux éducatifs

Jacques Choque

Éditions Amphora

J'ai eu un très grand plaisir à lire ce livre plein de fraîcheur. Superbement illustré et bien documenté, je suis sûr qu'il aidera autant l'éducateur que le pratiquant. Tout est simplement présenté et l'on sent que l'auteur a du métier d'éducateur derrière lui. Je connaissais Jacques Choque comme auteur de nombreux ouvrages sur le yoga et le stretching mais je ne m'attendais pas à une production sur le Taiji quan. Ce fut donc une belle surprise et je ne doute pas un instant que ce livre sera une référence dans les milieux éducatifs.

Jacques Choque est un personnage très discret qui a su se faire une place dans le milieu éducatif sportif par la qualité de ses différents apports. C'est un chercheur qui ne se lasse pas et qui n'hésite pas à faire de grands déplacements pour aller à la source de la connaissance.

Claudy Jeanmougin

Chérac le 29 mai 2015



Is Teaching Taiji a True Profession?

Claudy Jeanmougin

Translated by Leland Tracy

It's been almost three years since I asked four certified professional Taiji teachers this question (see the Bulletin #71, September 2012). How time flies! In thanking Sabine Metzlé, Françoise Cordaro, Claude Eyrolles and Henri Mouthon for having agreed to tackle this question, I also promised to try provide an answer. I am now happy to keep that promise, particularly because just last September I celebrated 30 years of teaching Taiji.

But why even ask such a question?

Perhaps I was just tired of hearing terminological debates between those who make their living teaching Taiji and those, who might be qualified as 'amateurs' for whom teaching Taiji is not a profession but who are still paid for teaching classes and workshops. Perhaps also to encourage people of all ages who have considered enrolling in training for certification leading to a diploma delivered by the Ministry of Sports, which, in 1989, recognized Taiji as an official sport, the teaching of which is subject to the laws which this ministry is charged with enforcing. And to further encourage everyone who would like to earn a decent living teaching Taiji. Also, to say to those who think that one should not make money with a spiritual discipline like Taiji that teaching Taiji professionally is not shameful, but an incredible opportunity to make a living through such an enjoyable activity.

Françoise helped clarify the subtleties of words like 'occupation', 'profession', and 'teaching professional'. The preceding paragraph underlines the ambiguity of these terms. Sabine and Claude discussed the hard work involved with teaching Taiji Quan, Henri insisted on the importance of continuing education for those who teach classes. After taking a closer look at some of the terminology, I will continue the work of my Taiji Brothers and Sisters by further examining the specificity of teaching Taiji Quan.

Professional - Amateur - Volunteer

What is the difference between professional teachers and those who teach but who are not professional, but who do not want to be considered amateurs? Or those who use yet another term to qualify their teaching status by calling themselves volunteers, but who benefit from certain compensation for their participation in the activities of their association, which may include teaching Taiji? The term 'professional' generally refers to someone who is specialized in a specific type of activity and is fully qualified to practice that activity. An amateur is someone who does the same job but who is not fully qualified. The difference between an amateur and professional depends on how well they master a given job, it has nothing to do with whether they're paid or not. Someone who donates their time and works without pay is not necessarily an amateur, but a professional volunteer. An amateur is someone who does a given job and gets paid for it even though they are not necessarily totally qualified. This is frequently the case in teaching Taiji.

Let's go back to the case of a volunteer who gives his time to help an association achieve its goals. If some volunteers are truly professionals, others are sometimes poor amateurs comfortably occupying the position of President from which it is often difficult to remove them. Just because we are not paid for doing a specific job does not mean we have the right to be incompetent. Just because someone works for free does not mean that we have to accept their incompetence.

The confusion that exists between these terms has arisen directly from the world of sports, mostly soccer and rugby players but to a certain extent all of the other Olympic sports, who can be separated into two categories; the amateurs who are not paid and the professionals who have made a career out of there sport. While the Olympic games are theoretically reserved exclusively for amateurs it was not rare to find certain athletes who had a fictional job

which they did not really perform, but which allowed them to participate in the Olympic games. This is comparable to the situation with performance-enhancing drugs. How long will we continue to turn a blind eye? But that's a totally different subject.

Professional - Profession - Occupation

We have said that the professional was a person who does a specific job for which he had been well trained. An occupation is a line of work which requires either an apprenticeship or some other form of training and which may become a source of income allowing someone to earn a living. Let us keep as part of the etymology of the term occupation, the words 'position' and 'service'. An occupation is a job for which someone has been trained in order to provide service to those who on the other hand have not been trained to do. We will insist on this idea of training which provides certain skills.

The word profession comes from the Latin *professio*, from *profiteri*, to engage. To profess means to openly and publicly declare. For someone who is religious, professing one's faith is the act of publicly declaring their belief in a religion. It was not until the 15th century that this term evolved to include the practice of a specific occupation. The noun profession then led to the adjective professional.

Because professionals today have a specific occupation, occupation and profession are often confused. For the rest of this article we will stick to the signification of the word occupation keeping in mind the professional is someone who performs a specific occupation.

Teaching Taiji Quan.

Teaching means passing on knowledge and ability to a student in a way that enables the student to both understand and to retain. The definition of the word teach in the *Petit Robert* is: "the act or teaching the transmission of knowledge to a student". But to understand the art of teaching Taiji, we have to go one step farther because it does not involve simply passing along knowledge but also an understanding of how to teach that knowledge, which leads me to conclude that teaching Taiji involves "passing along a teaching". And this is what makes teaching Taiji special.

In order to teach Taiji Quan one must be trained not only in all aspects of the discipline itself, one must also make the step from learning to teaching.

Only once it is possible to learn the practice of Taiji and how to teach it, can we consider that teaching Taiji can become an occupation.

But remember our question also contains the adjective 'true'. So we must also consider what that means. And since I'm the one who asked this question, let me be clear that for me the word 'true' concerns the place that Taiji has in our tangible earthly reality, even if there is a rather esoteric aspect to this discipline. One of the central characteristics of our discipline is the Chinese conception of 'energy' which is it admittedly difficult to apprehend. If an intellectual understanding of this concept is relatively accessible, the ability to directly experience this energy remains extremely difficult, particularly because our conception of it (and therefore the feelings which we expect to have) are sometimes antithetical to its actual manifestation. So teaching Taiji should first and foremost be based on the concrete and the tangible. Then, little by little, the teaching can evolve towards those more spiritual aspects. Refining our ability to listen requires the development of our senses; it is therefore indispensable to really live within our bodies.

So what I mean by 'true' is that teaching Taiji Quan must include all aspects of this discipline, the totality of our being which includes both that which is the most tangible (our bodies) and that which is the most evanescent (our spirituality).

Beyond the difficulties presented by the notion of energy we can also apply the term 'true' to the definition of an occupation, an occupation that requires a certain amount of training before the teacher becomes a professional. So what is really, truly involved in this training?

Training for Teachers of Taiji Quan.

In France, the answer to this question depends on whether we are talking about the period before or after December 1989, when this discipline was recognized as an official sport by the *Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports*.

Before 1989, most teachers' training focused on the technical aspects, with very little concern for pedagogy. This process usually began with the future teacher simply imitating his or her teacher, leaving each individual free to figure out the rest. The result was that many teachers were not much more than simple models for the gestures, because they lacked the pedagogical training necessary to

become a real teacher. We can say that during this period the occupation of teaching Taiji was in fact missing a crucial element of training and that teaching Taiji was not a true profession.

After 1989, a law was passed specifying the conditions necessary to teach Taiji. Surprisingly enough this law creates a distinction between those who are paid to teach and those who do so on a volunteer basis. And the level of training is not the same for those who wish to charge for their teaching. It may be that the qualification of amateur started here before spreading to the rest of the sports world and beyond. In this case the amateur is someone who has not had a complete or thorough training but to whom we still extend the right to teach as long as that person is not paid. In other words an amateur does not exercise a profession because he does not have the necessary training, but in that case we might wonder why he is allowed to teach at all? And what do we do when this amateur actually does get paid?

Let's not be quite as strict as the law would have us be and suppose that this amateur is in an intermediary phase of his training to become a professional teacher. Today Taiji teacher training is overseen by the FAEMC (Fédération des Arts Énergétiques et Martiaux Chinois). In practice this Federation allows practitioners of various styles of Taiji to train their future professionals.

We should mention that while this Federation proposes training for a recognized diploma we may still wonder whether such a diploma is actually sufficient to become a professional Taiji teacher. I'm not so sure but that's another debate, one that will be the subject of a future article.

Conclusion

Yes, teaching Taiji is a true profession as long as the teacher has been trained sufficiently and acquires the following skills and knowledge required by this discipline:

- Theoretical knowledge
 - Basic biomechanics
 - Basic Chinese energetics
 - Essential principles of Taiji
- Practical knowledge
 - All aspects of the discipline including warm-up exercises, tui shou, technical and martial applica-

tions and related techniques

- Basic pedagogical training for classroom management

Under normal circumstances, one's teacher should pass along this practical knowledge. In our style this could be one's sponsor in the Teachers College, without necessarily creating an organized structure within the college. That said, our College is better adapted for the exchange of ideas and for overseeing and protecting the evolution of our style then it is to help practitioners make up for lessons they've missed. It seems to me that there are plenty of qualified teachers in our style who can help these practitioners if they are sufficiently motivated.

Finally, after 30 years practicing the profession tai chi teacher I must say that it was a great fortune for me to encounter this discipline. Today I would say that I am not a Taiji professor, but a professor who passes long a teaching. So forget about counting my hours, because I don't owe my students a certain number of hours, what I owe them are my presence and to fulfill my contract to pass along this teaching. As a liberal professional, I reserve the right to choose the students to whom I pass this teaching along. So I'm free to refuse access to my classes to anyone who does not really want to understand our discipline, which is quite different from other sports.

Our discipline has its particularities, and they of course contribute to the particularities of teaching Taiji. Here is some advice for anyone who would like to get involved with this profession:

- It is possible to earn a decent living as a professional Taiji teacher without having to have a second job.

- To do this you need at least one hundred students!

- In order to have a hundred students you have to be willing to move around and teach in a number of different towns. Even once you have a certain reputation, it will be necessary to move about to increase the number of students you have.

- Don't offer additional classes in the same town because that will not increase the total number of students. The same students will come, just not to the same classes.

- It is important to organize workshops around specific themes in order to encourage students to keep coming back.

- To avoid burnout, don't take on too many hours of classes. Personally, I only give about 10 hours of classes a week. On the other hand, I propose about one weekend workshop a month, and one weeklong workshop in the summertime. And that is enough for me to live well.

I should probably qualify my overall optimism by admitting that I actually have two professions, although today my main source of income has become teaching Taiji because it allows me take good care of myself and lead a simple pleasant life. To further reassure those of you who would like to become professional Taiji teachers, you should know I am not the only one who makes a living with this discipline.

To do this you'll need to acquire some solid technical training and the necessary diplomas in order to avoid legal difficulties. Our discipline is increasingly present in various professional contexts, including in the health sector. Certain hospitals provide sessions of Taiji for patients who have undergone heart surgery, the hospital of Saint-Jean-d'Angély being only one example. This profession has a great future, and it is one that leaves enough free time to practice other disciplines such as calligraphy or music. It is a profession that is related to many other disciplines and so requires continuous education. It's a profession that will allow you to meet people and to travel, and to fully realize a life of research and adventure. With time it will bring you towards peace and happiness.

**Tribute to our senior brother
Mr. Lee Jinchuan (李進•**



LE SITE WEB ET LE BULLETIN DE L'AMICALE

LE SITE WEB est un outil important de communication entre nous, il est également la vitrine de l'Amicale vers l'extérieur. Il est régulièrement mis à jour par l'équipe rédactionnelle.

Nous espérons qu'il vous donne satisfaction et que vous y trouvez les informations utiles qui vous intéressent. N'hésitez pas à nous faire part de vos remarques et suggestions.

<http://taijiquan.free.fr>

Pour voir vos informations concernant les stages figurer sur le site-web :

Adresser un e-mail avec éventuellement un fichier attaché au format « .RTF » ou « .DOC », ou, si vous ne pouvez pas faire autrement, envoyer un document papier qui puisse être scanné à :

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LE BULLETIN est lui aussi le signe de la vitalité de l'Amicale et un outil très important d'information et d'échanges entre nous tous, membres de la famille du Yangjia Michuan.

Vos articles, vos courriers des lecteurs et autres informations à faire paraître dans le Bulletin sont à transmettre à notre Rédactrice en chef :

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Pour vos articles et vos courriers, le mieux est de les rédiger sous Word et de les adresser en pièces jointes à Françoise Cordaro. Si vous faites une présentation avec montage photos, n'oubliez pas de joindre le fichier photos **séparément**. Nous sommes obligés de traiter chacune des photos et nous ôterons celles que vous avez incluses. Nous suivrons au mieux vos consignes de présentation.

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