

WHO IS QUALIFIED TO TEACH?

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There is a small crisis occurring within the T'ai Chi Ch'uan community in the United States. It appears there are a large number of people teaching T'ai Chi Ch'uan who are not "qualified" to do so.

The most obvious example is the state of the community itself. Instead of being an all-encompassing family freely exchanging diverse ideas, it's becoming a business for profit with divergent factions competing for a share of the market.

This environment is breeding intolerance of the opinions and practices that differ from one's own beliefs.

Students endangered

This has resulted in vindictive attacks of criticism between instructors and their schools. Perhaps as instructors become more mature in their understanding of T'ai Chi Ch'uan philosophy this divisiveness will end.

The biggest problem we must address as a community is that students are being hurt and endangered by unqualified instructors.

The system of T'ai Chi Ch'uan was created to CHANGE a student physically, psychologically and metaphysically, to aid them with their quest for unification with the Tao.

Over time, the common focus and purpose changed, but one constant remained, the master teacher's supervision.

Instructors lack depth

The master teacher prescribed and regulated the teachings of T'ai Chi Ch'uan to insure that the student maintained their physical, psychological and metaphysical balance.

This individual holistic training safe-guarded the well-being of the student.

Instructors, in general, are very incompetent in teaching the physical mechanics of T'ai Chi Ch'uan and ch'i kung.

For the most part, these instructors lack the depth of knowledge to deal with the psychological and metaphysical aspects of the art.

This is almost always the result of inexperience or being trained by an unbalanced instructor themselves. In fact, the psychological and metaphysical aspects are outright ignored in an effort to "demystify" the art.

This is a dangerous position to assume since ch'i, the power of the art, is derived from the mind and metaphysics. Let me cite an example:

In the early seventies, a president of a corporation in a large midwestern city decided to have transcendental meditation taught to himself and his employees.

The president tried the TM techniques and went into a deep state of relaxation. He "awoke" to find himself floating above his body, looking down upon his body and his classmates! He returned to his body in a state of panic, confusion and shock.

The teacher was very experienced and knowledgeable in metaphysics. He interceded, counseling the president to eliminate the psychological trauma and instructing him in techniques to control the phenomenon.

The president went on to practice TM and astral projection with great benefits for many years. Could you have handled that situation?

The methods of T'ai Chi Ch'uan and ch'i kung are far more powerful in their ability to produce phenomena than TM.

Yet, instructors refuse to believe they exist. Some of these phenomena provide tremendous insight into the deepest understandings of Taoism and T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

Is it a responsible action to disseminate these powerful techniques to the mass public in abridged form through ten-week classes, weekend intensives, videos and books? Who is going to insure balance? Who will assume accountability? Someone will get hurt.

Someone will also get hurt attempting to utilize the self-defense techniques taught by most T'ai Chi Ch'uan instructors.

My experiences in my youth in the military, as a paramedic and law enforcement officer have enabled me to acquire a thorough understanding of the psychology of violent fighting.

I also hold a prejudice, as do many others, that no one, no matter what title they hold, is "fully qualified" to teach self-defense until they have fought someone whose sole intention was to kill them!

No one can imagine or simulate in training the force that is generated by the pure intention to kill.

It is a force that enables an untrained person to physically beat multiple police officers, to neutralize the most finely honed defense techniques and, yes, even neutralize the pain and impact of .357 magnum bullets!

Sorry, a joint lock or uprooting technique is just not going to cut it!

Admittedly this is the extreme condition. But one must train for the extreme because if one fails during the extreme, there will be no second chance!

Training for the extreme goes well beyond technique and into the very depth of the defender's psyche; not to discover some hidden supernatural power, but, to eliminate the garbage that hinders what is natural.

Only in this natural state will one know how to deal with the extreme and all lesser levels of violence.

Two questions

The only way to insure quality instruction of T'ai Chi Ch'uan is for the community to regulate itself. Not with credentials, criticism and challenges, but with introspection, humility and example.

As a start, I propose two complex questions that every instructor ask themselves and every student ask their teacher:

1. Am I "qualified" enough to teach the physical, psychological and metaphysical aspects of T'ai Chi Ch'uan and solve any problems my students may have in those areas?

2. What is my real motivation for teaching? Is it mainly altruistic or mainly self-serving? How does that balance affect the welfare of my students and my art?

A person who is honest and open to himself and students about their limitations, teaches within their limitations, has an active plan and commitment to overcome those limitations. He is probably "qualified" to teach. ●