

SPIRITUAL POWER AND THE DILEMMA OF EGO

By Vincent J. Lasorso Jr

One day, while doing some research, I discussed the T'ai Chi Ch'uan training system with a well-known regional psychic.

We discussed life forces and the powers that are manifested along the path of development.

After our discussion, she proposed a rather simple but profound question: "What are you going to do with your power?"

I reflected upon the question for a moment and responded that I would probably use the power to heal and teach, since I had a natural propensity to do so. But, I added, ultimately, I wanted to be one with the Tao.

My answer seemed trite and egotistical. (And not very well thought out.)

No matter how sincere or altruistic I tried to be, my motivation seemed self-oriented and driven by the egotistical drive to be different or special.

I recognized then the Yin/Yang paradox that one must be egotistical to overcome ego.

The grand controller

The purpose of this article is to discuss the function of the ego in T'ai Chi Ch'uan, define spiritual power and intention and, finally, a description and usage of spiritual empty force.

Ego is everything we perceive ourselves to be. It is the grand controller, evaluator and analyst. It is the friend, the confidant and counselor. It reads to us, entertains us. But it is also the cause of all our psychological woes.

The ego is the narrator and clarifier of our lives and will resort to deception to retain its control.

Without egos, we would not understand or comprehend anything. (At least that's what our egos want us to believe.) Which brings up the

questions: Is there consciousness and comprehension without mental verbalization? Do I have to talk to myself in order to think? What is there without thinking?

Evelyn Wood's speed-reading program, and others like it, have proven that comprehension is not dependent upon mental verbalization.

Merely place your hand upon a hot surface and you will have a graphic example of non-verbal information processing.

The verbalization (both internal and external) will come after the effect. Sort of a play-by-play announcer, always a step or two behind the action but current enough to be

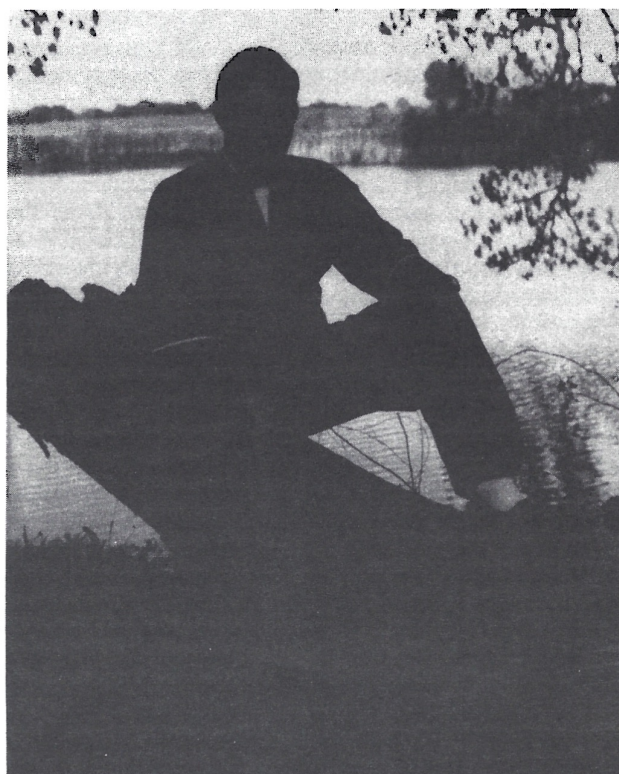
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meaningful.

Every boxer knows that if he thinks about his opponent's action, or even his own, he will lose. Thinking is too slow (about 125 words per minute) whereas action takes place in microseconds.

A boxer learns to read his opponent, and with practice, eventually learns to transcend consciousness and become one with the opponent.

This transcendence is what is meant by the saying, "Be like a cat stalking a mouse." Can you imagine a cat sitting there anticipating a



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mouse's movements by meowing to itself! It would be like a commercial for Meow Mix cat food! And this is precisely what it would need if it indulged in that kind of stalking.

Most T'ai Chi Ch'uan players spend an enormous amount of time narrating and clarifying their practice.

I believe this is primarily caused by the desire to perfect the form, resulting from a misinterpretation or representation that the form creates the benefits of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

Thus, the more perfect the form, the greater the derived benefits. This attitude naturally breeds narration and analysis.

Many players feel that narration is the basis of intention and focus. They mistakenly narrate the complete form including ch'i circulation.

The most perplexing problem is that of the "Monkey Mind Syndrome."

The player will perform their exercise with focus (narration) and suddenly find themselves in a conversa-

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tion with an imagined friend, themselves, or even in a disagreement with someone, all while doing the T'ai Chi form!

Uncontrolled ego verbalization is like talking on a two-way radio. Once you key the microphone, you're unable to hear, or be aware of, any incoming message. The ego interferes with awareness, sensation, and focus so you end up "just doing exercise."

To solve these problems, you must have a clear understanding of intention, focus and the positive use of the ego.

With this understanding in hand, a commitment can be made to learn self-control, which will lead to the obtaining of the knowledge and the powers of the spirit.

T'ai Chi Ch'uan has long been recognized as being a powerful martial art and health-giving exercise.

What is often overlooked is that T'ai Chi Ch'uan is a system and not just a form.

The motivation for practice

The purpose of that system is to develop a physically limited person into a spiritually conscious being, so that oneness with the Tao can be obtained.

The system's beauty is that it is flexible enough to meet the personal needs of the practitioner.

One can choose the direction of health, spiritualism or boxing while maintaining the ability to evolve within the art to higher levels of personal development.

To understand this a little clearer, let us discuss the motivation for practicing T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

As I see it, there are three major factors that motivate practice: self-esteem, health improvement/conservation, and fear of death (or unknown destiny).

Combining this trilogy by prioritizing each them in order of personal need (or intensity), determines the player's direction of focus in the study of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

For example: a boxer's motivation might be higher self-esteem, im-

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proved health through conditioning and preservation techniques, and a very limited fear of death.

A mirror of life

This is a simplistic generalization, which has exceptions.

The motives of T'ai Chi Ch'uan mirror those of life. The motives of self-esteem, health and death, are the underlying forces in life. When we are young, we are fearlessly seeking status and sense of self.

During our next state, we begin to recognize our own mortality and seek to preserve and revitalize. Old age makes our destiny quite clear and certain, so spiritual search becomes paramount in an attempt to accept or overcome reality.

A quick scan of some of the more famous "masters" of T'ai Chi Ch'uan reveals, in most cases, a dramatic improvement in skills and commitment generally associated with a personal health or death crisis. There was usually a shift of focus to the spiritual associated with this crisis.

It takes a radical change in thinking to remove focus from the physical world of tangible feelings and sensations to the void and formlessness of the Tao.

Spirit vs. breath

The recognition of mortality or intense philosophical study are the impetus of that change. There comes a point, as the classics remind us, where you must focus on the spirit and not the breath.

Focus on spirit is a self-regulated activity that is governed by an individual's perceptive abilities, philosophical beliefs and physical skills. The more limitations a person has, the longer it will take.

The T'ai Chi Ch'uan forms and ch'i kung help break down the limitations in a systematic manner. Bit by bit, movement, awareness and personal philosophy are developed so that one can eventually find their spirit.

It's all a matter of thinking. If you continue to think as you always thought, you'll continue to get what you always got. No progress can be made trying to maintain the status quo. So you'll remain within the world of impossibilities.

Much of mental verbalizing deals with the issue of proof. Proving knowledge, validating practice, self-esteem issues, correctness, are all "proofs" that must be obtained.

300,000 repetitions

The ego will deny the existence of intangibles, and supply us with many reasons to disbelieve our intuitive feelings (and even our own eyes) when faced with intangible situations. It will tell us there's a trick to it, or it's an illusion are common rebuffs to our senses.

I have performed well over 300,000 repetitions of an exercise and my ego still wants to narrate the action and validate the practice! This is precisely the reason for the practice: to overcome doubt and narration in order to obtain focus.

It is only the individual's egotistical drive to accomplish the task, that allows him to practice long enough to gain the necessary validation of that practice. Without ego desire, there is no perseverance to overcome ego!