

The Newsletter of the
Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio
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Wu-Dang

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June 2006

www.tctaichi.com
email: tctaichi@minn.net

Complimentary for studio members.
\$6.00 subscription for others.
Please send requests to address at left.

NEW SCHEDULE

Beginning June 15 our schedule will have new classes and openings for classes. Saturdays, 11:30-12:30 will be a T'ai-Chi review and practice class. In this class, time permitting, we will begin with a Solo Form, progress through the Two-Person Form and review as many weapons as time permits. For the 12:30 Beginner Class, we will have a rotating group of tutors who are looking for more teaching practice. If you are interested in teaching sign up with Ray at the beginning of the month.

Monday night, 8:30-9:30 a Liu Ho Pa Fa class will begin a cycle of Mother and Sons followed by 12 Animals, followed by main form. See Paul for more details.

Wednesday night, 7:30-8:30 will be Hsing-Yi 12 Animals and 8 Styles. You must have completed the four prerequisites before attending this class.

Monday and Thursday, 12:30-2:30 Solo Form classes will continue with the Fan and progress to the Sabre, as well as Solo Form Applications in addition to the regular curriculum. If you have any questions about the new schedule, please ask.

DOOR REMINDER

Please remember the doors to the building will now be locked throughout the day and evening. Our Studio is able to unlock the door when we are holding classes. We will be unlocking the door before classes and locking up at 1:15 for the day classes and 7:30 for the evening classes as we've been doing.

2006 SUMMER RETREAT

The title of this year's retreat is The Human Landscape. We will explore the inner and outer structures of the body, and have presentations on classical painting and spiritual pilgrimage. Additionally, there will be a special session on men's and women's health issues.

We will again have body workers for hire. We are not sure about which campus we'll be using but will post notices at the Studio as plans develop.

The retreat will be Friday, August 18 through Sunday, August 20. The fee this year will remain \$185 per person. This amount includes Instruction, Room, Bedding, Towels, and Meals.

A sign-up sheet can be found at the Studio, but you must submit a deposit of at least \$50 to hold your place. Deposits are due by July 1 and the remaining fees must be received by August 1. We will hold all checks until the first week of August to cash. Please place a note with your check if you have special needs/wishes (specific roommates, etc.).

ARMS & ARMOR FIELD TRIP

Friday, June 16 7:00-9:00pm

Come see a presentation about weapons and armor and tour the Arms & Armor workshop. \$5 gratuity suggested. Their address is 1101 Stinson Blvd, SE Minneapolis 55413. Park on north side of bldg, door is on west side of bldg, half way down. For more information about them see www.armor.com

REMEMBER SILENTLY

By Ray Hayward

I would like to relate to you a line from the T'ai-Chi Classics and explain some of the concepts. In the T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Treatise by Wang Chung-yueh, there is a line which says "*After you have learned to interpret energy, the more you practice, the better your skill will be, and by examining thoroughly and remembering silently, you will gradually reach a stage of total reliance on the mind.*" I will relate to you an experience which happened to me over 25 years ago pertaining to the part about examining thoroughly and remembering silently.

When I was first learning T'ai-Chi, I became friends and practice partner with one of Master Liang's senior students. We practiced together and shared everything and it was a very good relationship. At one point, I was able to move into a private class offered by Master Liang, which my senior classmate could not attend because it was a closed class and he worked nights. I would meet with Master Liang on Friday nights in the private class and then get together and practice with my senior classmate on Saturday mornings before the group Solo Form class. One day, Master Liang saw me teaching my senior classmate the lesson of the previous night. Master Liang took me aside and said, "Don't teach him that, it's for you right now."

The following week, no sooner had my private class begun, than Master Liang criticized me and asked how I could be teaching someone else a lesson or concept I had just learned myself and had no time to digest, understand, or perfect. He said to me, "The Classics, The Classics, you must remember The Classics. The Classics say '*Examine thoroughly and remember silently.*' Examine thoroughly means you must understand the lesson from your teacher and practice hard so you can get it. Remember silently means until you understand exactly what it is, you should not tell anyone or teach anyone what you are working on."

The next day my senior classmate asked me what I learned in my private class the night before. In a very untactful and disrespectful way, I said, "I can't tell you." He pressed me for a better answer and I said, "Well, actually, I learned that I can't share my lessons with you anymore." Seeing him become angry, I explained the line from The Classics and told him that Master Liang had expressly forbidden me from teaching anything that I hadn't been practicing, or understood, for a long time. My classmate became very angry and confronted Master Liang, who then fired back at my friend saying he should take private lessons of his own if he wanted to learn.

The next week I got together with my senior classmate to practice as usual, but the damage had already been done. We began practicing Pushing-Hands and it quickly escalated into a very aggressive and competitive situation.

We stopped practicing T'ai-Chi way and practiced like two bulls fighting. We ended that practice session, our last, in silence and enmity, never to be friends again. If I could go back in time, that situation would not have ended that way. My conclusion was far from Master Liang's teachings and T'ai-Chi's philosophy.

Sometimes from a very bad experience, you can learn a very good lesson. This particular line in The Classics has become a rule and guide for me. *Examining Thoroughly* has been a lesson about my relationship to myself and whatever particular lesson I am working on. *Remembering Silently* is about my relationship with my practice partner. How can I teach something I just learned myself and have not had time to explore or catalog or digest? I have also learned that a facet of human nature is that if I tell my partner a particular thing I'm working on, it seems that is the one thing that is avoided and won't get worked on. For me, *examining thoroughly* also sums up the learning philosophy of my other teacher, Master Wai-lun Choi. Master Choi, at different times in my lessons, either encouraged me to "go to research" or at other times to "go to analyze." For Master Choi, the word analyze means going to a teacher, learning the lesson, figuring out what it is that you are going to practice, "making sense of what you are going to practice," and then taking it home and practicing. Research means all the study, insight, discovery and skill that you will get from your practice and "practicing to find out what you will get from your practice." I made a mistake for many years by considering them the same. I have gone back and researched all my notes, and I now have a deeper meaning of his teachings.

At our studio, we are fortunate that there are many senior students now, able to give good instruction. It is also in such an open atmosphere that students feel free to ask questions of other students. I would not discourage this. I would suggest that if your teacher were standing right next to you, it would be more convenient for you to ask the teacher your question, than the person you're practicing with, who may or may not really understand what you're doing. Be careful that you get good, solid answers to your questions. Time is precious and The Classics are very clear in telling us that "*If you do not seek carefully in the direction indicated, your time and effort will be spent in vain, and you will have cause to sigh with regret*" and "*a slight error or deviation results in wide divergence from the true way. Therefore, the student cannot but thoroughly discriminate the right and wrong. For this reason, the Classics have been made.*" In the Classic called "Song of the Substance and Function of the 13 Postures," one line tells us to "*Examine and investigate carefully and thoroughly.*" I hope you examine thoroughly and remember silently this article.

WHAT IS "CH'I"?

By Douglas Allchin

In t'ai-chi ch'uan, or *taijiquan*, one is invited to feel the flow of ch'i, or *qi*. Welling from the ground to one's center. Radiating from one's center to the extremities. Or circulating along pathways on the surface while breathing.

What is *qi*? Often translated as "vital force" or "internal energy," the concept baffles most Westerners. It seems at best woefully antiquated, at worst dangerously mystical. *Qi* certainly does not seem scientific—or real in any meaningful sense. When one accepts this view, however, one must puzzle how an effective martial arts system could ever have evolved using such an apparently mistaken idea.

One is supposed to feel *qi*. But what does *qi* do? In traditional Chinese views, *qi* transforms. It is a "force" of change. According to one dictionary, *qi* denotes (in Chinese medicine) "the power within the human body which can regulate the functioning of various organs." In other contexts, the same Chinese character also designates "gas" and "breath."

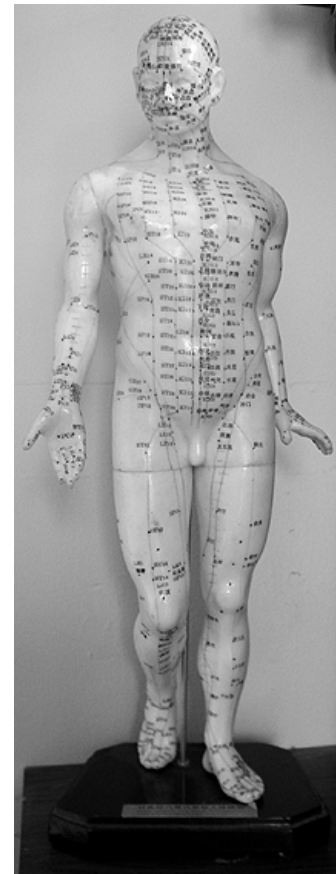
Qi might seem pretty ethereal and vague. What might "power" or "force" mean? Here, a Westerner is handicapped if she relies on thinking about the world in mechanical and physical terms. *Qi* is not a material thing. Nor is it a form of energy, akin to magnetism or gravity. Consider how we might say that oxygen has "life-giving power." We do not mean that oxygen has a soul. Nor that oxygen *causes* life. It's just a molecule. Still, oxygen is essential to burning food and to processing the energy that fuels our bodies. Without oxygen, our lives cease. Oxygen matters because in certain contexts cause and effect are linked. Interpret *qi* as a very broad abstraction about the conditions for change. Crudely, *qi* is about the potential for transformation, not about physical forces or energy. It is about change and what guides change. Immanence? Propensity? The edge of action? The wavefront of causality?

Westerners tend to view the world as fundamentally static. It stays the same unless some force acts on it. Newton's law of motion that "things at rest stay at rest" reflects a much more general cultural conception. In Chinese and Daoist perspectives, the world is essentially dynamic. It is always changing. Always in flux. Understanding the nature of change is central. *Qi* is an intangible thread that precipitates each next instant, flowing from moment to moment.

There are no *qi*-meters. Still, from a Chinese perspective, one can feel *qi*. What does one feel? It is

surely notoriously difficult to describe without a sample of the experience. By comparison, when someone feels elation, or a sense of respect, what does one feel? We might point to the electrical or chemical activity in some part of the brain, yet we would likely also consider that a poor indicator of the experience itself, a poor measure of the feeling. In *taijiquan*, one learns (ideally, perhaps) how to recognize *qi* and to respond to its flux. At the most basic level, one needs simply to be attuned to one's body, intimately aware, not just "doing."

At first, *taijiquan* may seem primarily about movement. The physics of mechanics would seem an appropriate framework. Yet the motion is also controlled. The mind is just as important. Indeed, conceiving mind and body as distinct—another Westernism—becomes awkward. The role of *qi* will remain invisible if one regards it as "only" a feeling, a mere mental phenomenon, of no "real" significance to the body's movement. The reflective practitioner of *taijiquan* guides the flow of *qi*, ideally with no differentiation between mind and body.



Acupuncture model showing *qi* meridians

In standing meditation, a major focus is stillness. To an outsider, it may seem inactive. Yet the constant flow of *qi*, when felt, marks impending action, perpetual "becoming." The body is "energized," full of potential. Still, yes. Static, no. The difference is *qi*. Standing meditation is thus one way to foster mindfulness (mind-fullness) of the body and sensitivity to *qi*. Awareness of—and immersion in—the mind-body hybrid. So it functions as an apt prelude to *taijiquan* activity.

In the particular tradition honored at this Studio, Western interpretations of *taijiquan* have a special role. Most principles that govern understanding and instruction have been "translated" from terms using *qi* (and *yin* and *yang*) to terms using balance, gravity, vectors of force, breathing, etc. The practice thereby becomes more accessible to a Western (and habitually skeptical) culture. The "modern" student, imbued with a Westerner's sense of progress, may even develop awe for the ancient sources of knowledge, now apparently validated by "scientific" standards.

The modern student might thereby tend to discount the Chinese concepts as redundant. *Qi* may seem a vestige of outmoded cosmology. Yet having a translation does not necessarily eclipse the original rendition.

For me, this is most clear in the practice of acupuncture. In traditional Chinese conceptions of the body, *qi* flows over the surface of the body along a set of meridians. These are not nerves or blood vessels. It is a different map of the body. When *qi* flows irregularly -- too much, too little -- well being is compromised. Needles are inserted into the skin, ostensibly to impede or facilitate the flow of *qi*. Because the meridians flow across the whole body, the needle may be located quite remotely from the place of the intended effect. For example, a point between the thumb and forefinger, known as *hegu*, helps alleviate headaches. Through clinical studies Westerners have documented that much acupuncture is effective, but they cannot explain fully

how it works or why only certain points seem important. Someone may prefer to dismiss the meridians and *qi* as fictions. Yet they are indispensable to the acupuncturist's practice. In that pragmatic sense, they are quite "real." They help map cause and effect. One of the world experts on acupuncture (who I interviewed last summer) indicated that acupuncture without meridians and *qi* was (to her) unthinkable. A young colleague, also trained in Western medicine, agreed. To interpret acupuncture, one needs to appreciate a non-Western map of the body.

A Chinese map using *qi* does not thereby replace Western maps. Rather, in the spirit of the Chinese concepts of *yin* and *yang*, one may see them as complementary. Different maps of the same territory are possible, each highlighting particular features. Western and Chinese perspectives of *taijiquan* need not be mutually exclusive. Each may offer insight. A student may ideally learn to be bilingual.

Still, while Western principles help enrich understanding of *taijiquan*, I cannot help thinking that they will also be somehow limited. *Taijiquan* originated and developed using the fundamental concepts of *qi* and *yin* and *yang*. Instruction was framed directly in terms of what the practitioner experiences, not what an external person observes or measures. Respect for the heritage leads me to seek understanding through the historical concepts, however challenging they seem.

The Westerner ready to dismiss *qi* as "magical" might pause to better appreciate how all ideas have cultural context. Appreciating *qi* requires engaging a different conceptual gestalt. Ultimately, if *qi* is felt, one must "listen" for it in one's body. A full understanding of *qi*, as with *taijiquan*, may well be found in the experience itself.

Further Reading: [The Web That Has No Weaver](#), by Ted J. Kaphchuk (Contemporary Books, Chicago, 2000)

Grandmaster Chan Yik-yan's

Dit Da Jow ~ Bruise Juice Formula

is now available for \$10 per bottle

Graduation News

Solo Form

Dennis Asmussen
Rondi Atkin
Tom Douglass-White
John Ganapes
John Hennen
Tim Johnson
Larry Klueh
Scott Lund
Jim Matthews
Rick Okada
Eve Wolf
Scoggin Zimmerman

T'ai-Chi Sword

Angela Amado
Bill Carone
Tom Crable
Nick Cronin
Bob Diaz
Jason Eaton
Brian Hoskins
Inez Jennings
Ralph Jerndal
Chris Knudtson
Tim Kurth
Josh Lynch
Vickie McCurdy
Dan Miller
Rich Palmer
Chris Sorman aka
(Wang Lai Fu)
Karen Taylor
Scoggin Zimmerman

5 Element Change Form

Tim Behm
Rob Crandall
Nick Cronin
Jason Eaton
Yaseen Hayward
Josh Ingram
Inez Jennings
Dan Nelson
Rich Palmer
Sarah Quimby
Laird Sourdif
Scoggin Zimmerman

2-Handed Sabre

Tim Behm
Rob Crandall
Nick Cronin
Jason Eaton
Yaseen Hayward
Josh Ingram
Inez Jennings
Dan Nelson
Rich Palmer
Sarah Quimby
Laird Sourdif
Scoggin Zimmerman

Items for Sale

Books

Lessons with Master T.T. Liang - \$17
Collection of years of notes. By Ray Hayward
String of Pearls - \$13
Collection of articles written by Studio members.

DVDs

Farewell to the Master: 1988 Demo for Master TT
Liang's retirement - \$35
Solo Form Class Basics - \$20
(Warm-ups, Chi-Kung, 1st Section)
Hsing-Yi 5 Elements - \$35
T'ai-Chi Fan Form - \$18
Fan DVD plus a Fan - \$30
Praying Mantis: Jai-Yao Epitome - \$20
Praying Mantis: Beng-Bo - \$20

T'ai-Chi Silk & Bamboo Fan - \$15

Dit Da Jow Bruise Juice

\$10 per bottle

Studio Logo Shirts

(Sizes M, L, XL – 2X cost slightly more)

100% Cotton T \$8
100% Cotton Long-T \$12
50/50 Sweatshirts \$16

We have many in stock, but other colors, styles, shirt-types can be ordered. See order sheet in Studio office.

COMING SOON:

THE NEW
150 ~ POSTURE
SOLO FORM DVD

FEATURING SINGLE
POSTURES, SECTIONS,
COMPLETE SOLO FORMS,
AND APPLICATIONS IN A
VARIETY OF VIEWS AND
PERFORMANCES.

Class Schedule for January 15 – September 15, 2006

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Saturday
12:30-2:30 Solo Form			12:30-2:30 Solo Form	10:00-11:30 Eclectsis
6:00-7:30 Solo Form Refinement	6:00-7:00 Pushing-Hands: Drills/Methods	6:00-7:30 Solo Form Instruction	6:00-7:30 Solo Form Refinement	11:30-12:30 T'ai-Chi Review & Practice
7:30-8:30 Weapons Cycle 1: Sword	7:00-8:00 2 Person San-Shou	7:30-8:30 Hsing-Yi Ch'uan Level II: 12 Animals & 8 Styles	7:30-9:00 Praying Mantis Level III	12:30-2:00 Solo Form Instruction
8:30-9:30 Pa-Kua Basics / Liu Ho Pa Fa Mother & Sons	8:00-9:00 Praying Mantis Level I			

NOTE: The Studio will be closed Tuesday, July 4th, the week of August 19-27, and Monday September 4th for Labor Day.

TWIN CITIES T'AI-CHI CH'UAN STUDIO
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FIRST CLASS MAIL