



Wudang

2/18

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER



From Sifu Paul

Greetings everyone,

Happy New Year of the Dog! This is a yang earth dog year, to be precise. Chinese New Year begins Friday, February 16, so we have a bit of the fire rooster left on the calendar. In this issue: a special birthday and graduation news, revisiting the five stimulations, studio T-shirts have arrived, class updates, and more. Stay warm and keep moving.

Happy Birthday, Master Liang

T.T. Liang was born in 1900 in China. He came to America in 1964 and marked his birthday on January 23. This past January would have been his 118th birthday. He and his teacher Cheng Man-ching gave the first official demonstrations of T'ai Chi at the United Nations in 1964. He taught T'ai Chi in New York, Boston, St. Cloud, and Tampa before retiring from teaching. He estimated that he taught more than 3,000 students over the years. Remembering him fondly with a few of his favorite sayings: *"Imagination becomes reality"; "Don't make enemies. Make one thousand friends, but don't make one enemy"; "Health is of the utmost importance and all the rest is secondary"; "Life begins at 70"; "Relax. Go slowly."*

T-Shirts Are Here

The white-on-black shirts and the new red-and-black-on-white shirts have arrived and are available for pickup. If you ordered a shirt, please see Paul during the week and Drew on Saturday to pay and pick up your shirt(s).

Thanks to Drew Johnson for the production and delivery of the shirts and Todd Nesser for the beautiful design.



Graduation News

Congratulations to LaVonne Bunt, Bill Card, Nick Cronin, Tom Hautman, Kim Husband, Chad Kaufman, and Patrick Schilling for completing the first section of the Liu Ho Pa Fa Main Form. This is the original form of Liu Ho Pa Fa created by Li Dong Feng. It is an intricate, beautiful, and difficult form to learn. It contains hundreds of techniques and holds the essence of all the other forms in the system. The form, called Zhu Ji or foundation builder, is sometimes called Six Harmonies Eight Methods Fist but most commonly is referred to as the Main Form. It is constructed in two sections, the first being slightly longer than the second. Well done, everyone.

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Dog carving at the
White Cloud Temple,
China

Dues Due

It's a new year and a new quarter. Please pay your quarterly dues.

Class and Schedule Changes

The Saturday 43 Postures Form class (11:30–12:30) began learning Symmetry 7 on February 3. We will review Symmetry 6 for one month in addition to learning number 7. You may join the class if you have finished the Solo Form. The Tuesday night 43 Postures Form Class (6:00–7:00) is another opportunity to begin learning the form from the beginning symmetry.

There is now an open practice time on Wednesday mornings from 11:00 to 12:30. Come and practice solo or partner forms.

T'ai-Chi Ch'uan, Meditation, and the Five Stimulations

The chi should be stimulated and the spirit of vitality should be retained internally.

—T'ai-Chi Classic

T'ai-Chi Ch'uan is an art belonging to the internal school of Chinese boxing. This means there is a marriage between the external movement mechanics of the style and the inner qualities of meditation. This article explores T'ai-Chi as moving meditation and the energy-stimulating properties of the movements themselves.



Meditation

The three essential components of meditation are posture, breath, and a quiet mind. In the posture of meditation, the muscles and bones are harmoniously aligned with the force of gravity, thus creating a body that is relaxed and free of tension. As we begin to experience gravity as a source of support rather than a source of tension, the body's energy is naturally stimulated.

Breathing is both a voluntary and an involuntary action. This means that the breath is controlled by two sets of nerves: the voluntary (central) and involuntary (autonomic) nervous systems. Therefore, the breath can act as a bridge between the two and begin to have an influence over what are generally believed to be involuntary processes in the body. When the breath is deep and slow, utilizing the abdomen as well as the chest, more oxygen is drawn into the cells to nourish the body as the nervous system both stimulates the circulation and calms the body down.

When quieting the mind, it is important to learn to control mental activity and the emotions. To do this, the mind is brought to a single focus utilizing a variety of possible techniques such as visualization, sounds, breathwork, and the cultivation of emptiness. Any of these techniques can interrupt our emotional patterns and bring our electrical brainwave activity to a lower frequency. When the three elements of posture, breath, and quiet mind are brought together in a practice, the chi is stimulated and becomes active. Master T.T. Liang has said, "The chi in and of itself is not sufficiently forceful to increase the flow of blood, but if the chi is persistently stimulated, it produces heat and becomes

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Master Liang's 118th
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powerfully effective in activating the circulation of blood throughout the whole body without any discontinuity. The same principle is illustrated by the conversion of water into steam: the latent invisible power in water is made active enough, effective enough, to drive the pistons of a powerful engine.”

The Five Stimulations

The T'ai-Chi Classics state, “In resting, be as still as a mountain peak; in moving, act like the current of a great river.” When T'ai-Chi postures are held, the three essential elements of posture, breath, and quiet mind combine together to stimulate the chi as if igniting a piece of charcoal. Such is the power of stillness. In moving from posture to posture, the energy is further activated and circulated as if fanning or blowing on the hot coal. This increase in the flow of energy takes place primarily because of five basic actions or stimulations inherent in the movements themselves. These actions are:

1. Expand and contract
2. Rise and sink
3. Full and empty
4. Turn and twist
5. Fast and slow

A closer examination of each action will reveal the hidden power of the Tai-Chi movements to increase the flow of energy in the body for health and self-defense.

Expand and Contract

From the smallest atom to the far reaches of space, expanding and contracting is the fundamental rhythm of the universe. When we examine the movements of the solo form, we can see the manifestation of this rhythm within each individual posture and from posture to posture within the entire sequence. For example, the postures Single Whip, Lift Hands, and Shoulder Stroke illustrate this idea well. From beginning to end, the posture Single Whip is a series of expanding and contracting gestures, as are Lift Hands and Shoulder Stroke. The finished position of Single Whip looks and feels more expanded

than Lift Hands, which looks and feels more expanded than Shoulder Stroke, and so on. To experience the stimulating power of expand and contract, select a posture from the form and perform it repeatedly with or without footwork as if doing Chi-Kung. Soon you will notice that the movement and breath combine together in this rhythm of opposites to stimulate and mobilize your energy.

Rise and Sink

There is a general principle in T'ai-Chi practice that states that the form movements should remain at an even height throughout the sequence (with the exception of the stand-up and squat-down postures). Although this principle is designed to keep a practitioner from arbitrarily bobbing up and down, there are numerous places throughout the form where subtle rise and sink actions stimulate energy and enhance the practical use of a posture. In most postures that finish with the forward hand and forward foot opposite each other, such as Brush Knee, a subtle rising action occurs at the end of a posture, caused by the straightening of the rear leg and a slight opening of the chest. In most postures that finish with the forward hand and forward foot on the same side, such as Ward Off, a subtle sinking action occurs at the end of the posture, caused by bending the knees slightly and relaxing the chest. In postures that stand up, such as White Crane Spreads Its Wings, the legs are straightened, the chest is opened, and the spine is lengthened. In postures that squat down, such as Needle at Sea Bottom, the legs are bent deeply, the chest is relaxed, and the back is rounded, and then the body rises up again into Fan Through the Back. In all of

Beginning Posture

*To begin, I first
do nothing. Then like a tree,
I wait while Above
and Below both reach through me.
I become Mover and Moved.
—Morgan Grayce Willow*

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“Beginning Posture,”
a poem by Morgan
Grayce Willow



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Statue of
Lao Tzu at
Hang Gu Pass

these examples, the rise and sink actions correspond to the posture applications but also stimulate the movement of cerebrospinal fluid along the spine. Most postures utilize the actions of rise and sink; one or more of the other stimulations governs those that do not. Select a posture with an obvious rise and sink component, such as White Crane Spreads Its Wings, and perform it repeatedly left and right. Soon, the energy along the spine and elsewhere will begin to flow.

Full and Empty

In Tai-Chi practice, when stepping to advance, retreat, or turn left or right, the weight must be shifted from one leg to the other in a gradual and deliberate manner. When the stepping foot is lifted and placed in position, it is in a state of emptiness, leaving the leg that bears the weight completely full. As the weight is slowly shifted from one leg to the other, the status of full and empty in each leg is reversed. This interchange is continuous throughout the form and applies a steady on/off pressure to the Bubbling Well points on the soles of the feet—one of the most significant energy centers of the body. In addition, there is a full and empty aspect to the movement of the arms as well as the breath. Together, they unite and stimulate the circulation of energy in the body. Select a posture from the form such as Push and perform it continuously, paying special attention to the full and empty aspects in the feet, legs, arms, and breath.

Turn and Twist

In T'ai-Chi, it is the waist and legs that direct the movement of the postures. There is, however, some confusion as to what is meant by the waist. The pelvis consists of the bones

of the hip and sacrum. The lowest section of the spine, the lumbar, is attached to it. Unlike the middle (thoracic) and upper (cervical) sections of the spine, which can bend and rotate in all directions, the lumbar vertebrae cannot rotate or twist very much. Therefore, when the pelvis turns, so do the lumbar vertebrae. This unified movement of the pelvis and lumbar make up what is referred to as the waist in T'ai-Chi.

A common principle in T'ai-Chi is to move the body as a unified whole. When the waist directs the movements in turning side to side, this unity is preserved, and the spine is gently stretched and massaged. A small amount of rotation or twist beyond the movement of the waist is acceptable, even beneficial to the spine and nervous system. If the twist comes before the turn (in other words, if the shoulders and chest, not the waist, direct the movements), the movements become segmented, the breath becomes shallow, and the benefits for health and self-defense are diminished. Select a posture from the form such as Cloud Hands and perform it repeatedly, letting the waist turn guide the movement. As the waist reaches the limit of the turn and a subtle twist of the upper body moves a little past that point, the stimulation of turn and twist will become apparent.

Fast and Slow

Training forms at different speeds is a traditional and beneficial practice. Slow-speed training in T'ai-Chi develops chi by allowing the practitioner to observe, correct, and control those elements that interfere with the essentials of meditation and the five stimulations. Training at faster speeds allows one to express that energy for martial purposes. When practicing T'ai-Chi slowly, there will occur natural shifts in tempo in individual postures and various sections of the form. These subtle shifts in rhythm have a stimulating effect on the body, providing they follow the general principles of the classics. Practice a posture, a section of the form, or an entire round of the form at a slow, medium, and fast pace and note the different feeling each produces.

In Conclusion

When the essential elements of meditation—posture, breath, and a quiet mind—are integrated in T'ai-Chi practice, and the movement of the five stimulations fully realized, the body's energy will be full and flowing and ready to obey the dictates of the mind. As Master Liang said, "When the mind mobilizes the intention, and the intention mobilizes the chi, and when the chi mobilizes the body (circulates throughout the entire body), then the energy of stimulation, which is latent within, will be created. When the mind and chi are joined and linked together with the variations of substantial and insubstantial, the energy becomes so very strong and fast that it is like a howling typhoon and fearful waves, or passing clouds and flowing waters, or a flying hawk and a leaping fish, or a hopping rabbit and a swooping falcon, now sinking, now rising, suddenly appearing and suddenly disappearing. The stimulation of the natural greatness of the chi is inscrutable like the winds and clouds."



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Migration signals
a season of change