

## **In-tensional: The tension created by intention and how this can end.**

Several years ago I wrote an article called “The Myth of intention” but recently I had several interactions with people who were grappling with intention and how to “manifest” things and events in their lives, so I feel the need to re-iterate the points I have concerning intention.

Intent is a process of the “self” willing or deciding to do something and is goal-driven. It’s an ideology that is born of the human belief that “I” am separate and need to be in control, or “I” need a direction. The main difference between intent and unintended action, or what the Chinese call Wu-wei or “empty-action” (i.e. movement not based in the “self” state), is that for there to be intention there has to be a belief in the “I” to intend something, the “self” state is “driving” the body so to speak. This is dualism. In a way we might call “intention” a macro or micro “plan of action” to follow a particular course. As there is always a reason for an intention, intention is set in order that you can “go out and get”, so that you can “move forward”. It is a plan which takes you from A to B. Fundamentally this is based on time and space. It is a belief that I am going in “this direction x” rather than “this direction y”, whether in a metaphysical/ “spiritual” or a physical sense, it makes no difference. Basically it is the plan of action one has in order to “get” what one wants. It is predictive and future-focused.

Those who say there’s something “wrong” with having dualistic expression or that it’s “bad” to have dualistic tendencies and no “sense of Oneness” are not only expressing absolute dualism but they are missing the point! The difference is between suffering and not suffering, as the Buddha explained it. Dualism is a state of suffering and all the processes that come from this reinforce and create more of this spiral pattern. If there is a process of intent then all it does is reinforce this sufferance for as long as there is energy around to do this. When this stops, which it will eventually, there will be a collapse of ambition, a collapse of intent and so a collapse of the “self” state, all these are one continuum.

The whole difference between intent and Wu-wei is that the nature of empty-action is it has no linear direction, it isn’t in time or space and it therefore incorporates all of life. There is a still point at the centre of this mandala. The nature of Wu-wei is “righteous action” for want of a better word, it has no intention and no plan, it simply responds to life as and when it comes. This is the expression of all of life... animals, plants and all of nature have no interest in planning, no time or space exists in that expression and the same is true for human babies. The main difference is the state of the human adult who sees the universe in a very different way.

Once “self” has developed in the human being there seems an inescapable planning process, a compulsion to make sure you get things “right”, that you are doing the “good” thing or the “right” thing... everything is turned into a dualism or right and wrong, good and bad ...and also time and space. The nature therefore of intention goes hand in hand with this dualism. “Self”, dualism and intention are all the same body of energy ...contraction.

We might say that the nature of intention is to return the human being back to nature, but the human being doesn't need intention in order to do this, it is already happening

if you look closely. The requirement to “do” and to “act” with intent is all about the problem of being afraid, wanting to make things secure and safe, for you to be able to hold the fort. The process of intent is so you don’t “drift off” or go down roads that you “shouldn’t”. However, the point is that the body has its own “self-righting” mechanism, its own automatic-pilot that will be able to navigate even when no one is “at the helm” giving the instructions.

Many people focus on attempting to rectify the “Self” and focusing in the problem. However this doesn't help, if it did all the self-development and self-help processes would also help, but they don't, not in the long term. Attempts to use, manipulate, fool, instruct or re-program the “self” state are always going to fail because it is always the “self” that is attempting to fix itself! This same-level type of approach does nothing but reinforce the ideology that there really is something called a “me” there at all.

The other possibility is that the process of “self” becomes so boring that interest moves from it and its process and attempting to control them, to the simple sensations occurring in the body, the body senses. This fundamentally breaks open the “Self” from the inside out, it doesn't engage with the problem and as such there is a possible resolution. When for an instant, not of our own making but because there is a natural ripening, there are only the senses and no longer the attempt to “go” in any particular way, then something different happens. The “self” no longer has the tension of time and space, of right and wrong, or of the function of “doing” and acting with intention.

When there is just flow, no intention is necessary. Intention has had its day, it has seen too many moons, yet still we feel we need to plough on ahead. Practising many of the art forms is often considered to be using “intention”. In the Chinese martial arts Yi, which is commonly translated to mean “intent”, is used to lead the Qi or the energy flow around the body. This fundamentally means that the mental processes are trained to focus the energy in different ways. One can focus the energy into the legs and make them very tough on the outside or inside, the Yi is associated with the mind's ability to concentrate and focus. This is a great trick, and it works, people can do amazing things such as breaking rocks and such using these methods, it's real. But this is only the superficial meaning of Yi, in this way Yi does mean “intent” but actually the truly natural expression of Yi is “righteous action” or wu-wei, ... it is the un-intended action which is quite the opposite of what is generally explained.

The practice of many of the martial arts is said to draw the human being back to the natural body and responses, but training the mental faculties to focus and concentrate is simply an exercise that anyone can train to do at numerous skill levels, dependent on their natural gift. This is why practice mocks perfect... what we intend to practise and what we train to do is always a form of some kind, there's always a “way” involved and as a result it isn't happening spontaneously. And if it isn't happening spontaneously and the human being is “in control” of it, while it is may well create a strong body and a powerful martial skill or someone who's brilliant at yoga, it won't be a letting go of the fundamental position of “self” at the heart of all this intention.

We have everything we need within us, the process of believing we don't means that form is seen as very important and also practice. But while we might like and want to do them, these things do not lead to the letting go of “self”, this is an illusion, for it is

only when one least expects it that this occurs. As Tony Parsons comments “*you can't creep up on Oneness*”. Yiquan is a form of Chinese martial art said to have “no form”. Yiquan has been translated many ways, from “mind-boxing” to “intent-grasping”. But fundamentally although there is no exterior “form” or very little, the form is still in the mind of its practitioners. If there was no “self” at the heart of what they were doing, they would have absolutely no interest whatsoever in the martial arts or its general expression. Why would there be any interest in “improvement” and also why would there be any interest in a martial skill which is already in the body whenever it is needed? If a person is without “self” they are without fear and here endeth the requirement for a martial arts practice!

All this shows is that throughout history, even in some of the older martial arts and remedial arts, the process of directing “intent” is always what we are taught to practice but actually this is unnecessary and in the forms dis-ease.

When it comes to healing we are constantly taught that intention is SO important to practice. However if the “practice” is basically about the practitioner feeling good in their own body and about them being interested and focusing on their own senses, the patient gets better simply because the message of this relaxed energy is passed on. Relaxation occurs for the patient when there is less intent. The less intent there is from the practitioner and the more allowance there is for the patient to feel that they are already enough and they don't need to do anything, that they can relax and just listen to the body's rhythm and follow its way, then this brings great relief. Intent is a dictatorial command of action, from which the body simply recoils.

In the end, when we let go of the language-based mind, all the ideas of what we think we should, could or might be, and we just allow the body to return to its natural order we don't need to know what to do next ...it will be done.

*“Try Not! Do...or do not. There is no try.”* Yoda, from “Star Wars: Empire Strikes Back”

David Nassim  
29/8/2014