

The innate quality of the martial and remedial arts: from Kung Fu to Qi Gong and the misperception of “trained response” within nature.

For many generations in China and in many other cultures, training in the martial arts of some kind has been the norm, especially for men. It has been considered a process of training and forming the “true” male body structure by many cultures and something that is a rite of passage by others. However in this article I want to focus on the nature of how human culture has skewed natural instinct and these art forms are a very good example of such a situation.

While all of the martial arts have a maxim in common that they are about moving towards “natural body movement and response” this is not very often what happens until someone has so-called “mastered” the art. It is considered “mastery over one’s “self””, which is impossible as what has mastered what? This is profound dualism. However the ideal is when a person has let go and simply responds naturally. In exactly the same way as with monasticism, (which is why they are so closely linked, and also male-dominated), one would think that when one has let go and is “enlightened” that the whole monk hood or martial-arts hood would drop and a person would simply return to nature. But no, there is a continuation of the “tradition”, a process of a teacher teaching a student, and so the hierarchical, masculine-dominated society is perpetuated. There is no real difference in this process than anything else, although it is sold as being something far different from the norm and there are a thousand masters and many thousands of students who would give their lives to “prove it”.

Often what happens is that a “master” has given up the previous ego of being a victim or student or whatever and has moved into another egoic position of being a “master” ...so it goes on. The real life versions of the virtuous martial artist who is at one with the universe and has “mastered himself” and so is now all-compassionate and at peace, is something of an altruist’s dreamscape and it is the same ideology that binds Buddhism to Buddha, Christianity to Christ and so many other masters to students, while forgetting the reality that nature is without intention or hierarchy and utterly innate. The problem here is that it is all for the special few, the “chosen ones” who have the “clarity and wisdom” to follow the “right” teacher to the “source”...but all of this is a misperception of the truth of nature. It looks at nature as if it was in insufficiency, that truth and reality were something of a minute speck in a world without nature and that only the truly “wise” could see through the maze. In actual fact nature is abundant and constantly expounding its bounty, it is just that we perceive through the narrowness of the “self”, blamelessly of course, but then try to find people that “know”, relying on them instead of our own senses.

The martial arts are exactly the same. The peak of the martial arts is a person who has no-form any longer, they have let go of the training and so are the “embodiment of the nature of martial arts”...*but what the hell does that mean?* If we look at the immune system of the body then we should be able to see through this ideological smoke screen. If we consider the immunity to be the martial arts of the organism then where did we “train” to be able to resolve an illness? There was no training that was “taught”, it is an innate quality. Exactly the same is true of the martial arts. All the moves of Tai Chi, Kung Fu in all its different forms, Karate and so many more, are all the immunity of the larger expression of the body. This means that it is within all of

us as these movements are innate. This means that both a person who has done absolutely no training whatsoever in the martial arts and a grand-master each have the same quality of “moves” within the body. So what makes the grand-master win the fight? Simply because he has been more exposed to the martial/ fighting energy and as a result he does not move into a panic state. It is always the shock or panic state that inevitably is the off-balancing point and if this happens then a person can no longer fight. This is why in many martial arts the “fight” is over very quickly after it begins because as soon as one or other of the fighters is off-balance psychologically then it’s all over. The training in the martial arts is therefore nothing to do with the body but is to do with the meditative stillness of the mind that can then allow out natural expression, which is formless. However as ever the mediator is going to be doing the meditation which means he or she is still “in it”. The body only becomes truly natural when there is no-one there doing the meditating. This is not something that is done.... it just happens, and you don't have to do the martial arts...you could be eating chocolate for a living.

In a sense the expression of the fight it is about a challenge of one energy over another as one would see in nature, two energies sizing each other up, but when it comes down to it, one might back off because he feels the energy of the other is stronger. There is no shame, it is just the way it is, this is the “ultimate” martial expression. The difference in the human situation and that of the animal is that the psychology or “self” state over the top of the natural disrupts the senses, so while the martial artist has had training to *control* these states often the non-martial artist hasn't and so loses not because they don't have the ability but that the “self” has got in the way of their senses. The moves and processes of fighting are all superficial and are innate expressions. So it is always the mental state, in a sense the “self” has to die in order to respond naturally.

However the important thing is that for the non-martial artist and the martial artist there is no real difference, the key thing occurs at the point of being surprised or not. If a grand-master is surprised by something, then he/she will be in exactly the same position as the non-martial artist. Hence very often the martial arts will try to make a person hyper-vigilant the whole time, be constantly ready for anything. It is a form of “awareness” training, an approach which is also exactly the same as monk-hood and the processes of mindfulness meditation which is all about “awareness”. Again with all of these there is the idea that “*I have to be aware*” and as a result this drives a tension in the body which for the martial artist usually follows a militaristic vigour by which they do everything.

The problem is that it is all intention-driven. It is all attempting to be “ready for anything” when the very thing that will surprise them they will not be ready for, as it lies outside their ideas. Inevitably this all has to let go and for a person to end the martial form and return to the natural state, which is a state where there is no longer a martial art, nor is there an opponent, nor is there anything separate from themselves, it is a return to the animal state. This does not and cannot occur because of doing a martial art or not, it just happens. For some people it just happens without doing anything at all and for some it may happen while doing a martial art or while washing the bathroom floor...there is no quality about the martial arts that makes it different to anything else that allows one to respond to things naturally, as this is outside of all forms of intention-driven training. Hence what one can do with the martial arts is to

become very good at it within its parameters, or not, just like any other skill. Those who are naturally driven to do so will like it and do it, those who don't won't, that's all. However it does not train to body to be natural as this is already innate. It is impossible to train the body to be natural, and what's more anyone who says that that is so is not only fooling you but himself or herself. It is an expression of total arrogance and lack of true understanding of nature, no matter how "grand" a master they are. There are a billion leagues between the person who can "act naturally" and the person who actually *is* natural. One will be a teacher, the other will not know the meaning of the word.

So again if we consider the immune system as the innate martial arts of the body, a stronger immune system will be when there is no resistance from the mental processes getting in the way of the body's response to an illness. Hence when there is a more natural relaxed state of the body then there is more free flow of energy and this best is seen in children. So do children train in martial art? No, yet their response to potential dis-ease is faster than all adults', their bodies are strong and yet yielding, and they have very vigorous energy and this tells us something about "training" and reality. All of us have this quality within us and it is not for the "I" that is the super-structure on top of this natural state to get involved in killing itself, as this could never happen. It will just run around in circles "trying", even though this is the last thing it is told by the "master" to do...but which the "master" is also doing.

Next let's look at the remedial arts, that of Tai Chi which is a soft martial art and Qi Gong literally "Energy cultivation". Tai Chi can be used as a martial art but its slow movements and concentration on its gentle softness makes it more of a form of Qi Gong. If we consider Qi Gong as a healing process, a process of regulating the body and absorption and going inwards and the martial arts and energy going outwards then we have a better picture of it. Actually they are one and the same thing, there is really no difference, it is just one continuum of the body, one aspect which is about storage and absorption and the other which is about movement and expression. The martial arts are the yang and the qi gong is the yin, not that one needs to do one over the other or indeed any of them, these processes are all already what the body does in its daily cycle, these exercises simply intend them.

Qi Gong certainly is not a prerequisite for training in energy medicine. Medicine is more associated with qi gong and tai chi for obvious reasons, but for some people it is better to have more martial exercise to help the body in some cases rather than the qi gong processes. It could be said that qi gong can be useful at any time as the body always requires consolidation of the energy. In a way the martial arts are representation of the activity day, the qi gong is the absorption night. Or another way of putting it is that the martial arts are an activity of the morning and the qi gong of the evening, although of course this can be contended, but should be experienced.

The point is that in just the same way as our exploration of the expressive processes of immunity, the absorptive processes such as ingestion of food and deep healing happen mostly at night when we are asleep, hence the most profound qi gong of all is deep sleep and this is in fact a form of Qi-gong! So why the great mystical ideologies of energetically throwing people with qi-energy punches and the ability to overpower opponents simply with the power of the qi and the charisma of the auric field that is tied to qi-gong? No doubt this occurs, but why bother? What is the point of this

process? Those who invest time and energy into forming their energy as a kind of fireworks display of showing off the energy they accumulate in the body is akin to urinating for public display. No animal does this, neither does any child. The absorption qualities and abilities to rest when it is needed and to eat just enough and to follow the mechanism of the body is just as it is. This IS qi gong. The intention to do standing meditation for hours and hours at a time is exactly the same asceticism of the seated meditation of the yogis and other various processes of intended self-development or self-improvement, all this same nonsense that has been going on for thousands of years. All are about the intention to change and when that is involved then there is no real foundation to what a person is doing.

If there were spontaneous situations, which do exist, when one would need to stand, then this would be the important basis of qi gong and a person would be naturally drawn to this situation. This does occur and it is because the head is full and the lower body is weak, a common situation in today's world. When this happens a person will be drawn to standing until the energy descends and then very often the legs will shake and spontaneously move until the energy is flowing down again. Sitting can also work in this way. The point is that a child's response within an adult body, this is the only real truth, doing something as a means to an end or doing something because you are told it's good for you, or is expected of you, or because of anything that you don't yourself feel is utterly ridiculous.

Several people in recent times have tried to find the innate qualities of all movements we make and reconnect the human to just an arena where spontaneous movement is possible and the allowance of the body to go through processes it needs to without intention, or very little, and with no notice of "practice". Please see the work of Haruchika Noguchi, Michizo Noguchi and David Berceci. These people had the deep sense that modern and traditional views had missed something un-teachable at the heart of all of the traditions that had been lost in the rhetoric of hierarchical ideologies and stopped the human gaining a sense of reality for themselves. The work of Douglas Harding is also relevant in this context, as is that of U.G Krishnamurti. All of these expressions are about the dissolution and calcification of the misconception and misdirection of most of human culture, inclusive of the ancient culture, and the very simple strand that they were originally pointing at which later got turned into "teachings" and gained value and powerful reverence. In fact they were just to point out what is obvious and natural.

In many tribes the use of spirit-herbs or shamanistic psychotropic drugs would allow people to re-experience that actuality of the child-body and its innate wisdom and to allow for things to occur more naturally. In these cultures there were very few actual martial arts and little observation of arts such as qi gong because the whole of life was seen to be not intended but followed. Nature was accepted more and nature has no need for the rigour of formulaic systems to allow for its immunity and absorption processes.

Another misnomer is that there should be pain with qi gong. So many who "practise" it push the body into experiencing a lot of pain, especially in the beginning, but actually all this is practice which reinforces mind-over-matter. The truth is that no animal would force the body into positions it does not want to hold. So again it is all about feeling the body. In the end just like the martial arts, the natural approach is to

just follow what the body wants to do, not to listen to anyone. There is no one who can tell you how your specific body is, you have to feel it, you have to respond and become only it. The best a teacher can ever do is to ask the question “what do you feel?” This can take you into your own senses and allow you to recognize the qualities of all these formulated arts that actually have any sense to you.

In the end qi gong can be very similar to “cultivation” in the way of modern farming in that is intentionally done and as a result there is no nature involved. When standing occurs because it is necessary and sitting when it is necessary this is no longer “cultivated” energy, it is free energy and this is natural energy. Instead of “trying harder” and “making things better” which is the same old mind-set that has plagued peoples for thousands and thousands of years due to the misperception of feeling separate, we might look to all of these ancient traditions as things that show us simply how the body can potentially move through its cycles of daily expansion and condensing. However to follow these by rote is to follow some “plan” and as a result it builds ego and reliance. In the end the giving up of these things leads one to what is Righteous for the individual in the moment and hence these are all only initial gateways to the innate qualities that are the childlike and animal nature of ourselves just beneath the surface, accessible not in 50 years time when you have “mastered” something but right at this moment. “You” can never get to these things, they come out when we realize the misperception of attempting to train or manipulate this or even try to bring this to the surface and instead we let go of the attempt to control and step away from “leading”. This would be something that would end the cycle of “teacher” and “student”, the “good” and the “bad” and dualism of all kinds and a different world would emerge, one much older than any of the ideologies and cultures made by humanity.

We consider that these arts are ancient but they are nothing in comparison to the natural body. Our bodies have been around for millions for years, before any of the martial arts and qi gong and tai chi. It is vital to know what to have “reverence” for, the only fidelity is to nature, human culture is intertwined with red herrings and red tape, if the red tape is made of Chinese silk and is 2000 years old, it is still red tape.

To the question “how would you respond if someone attacks you?” the only real truthful answer is “I don't know” because actually there is never a known, and it is always in that moment that training or no-training gives way to natural response or moves to panic, both for the experienced person and for the inexperienced. Amazing things can occur in those who have no training and amazing realizations can occur to those with huge experience who in that moment are in shock. There is no shame in any situation, this is all in the human mind.

All any of us require, is always constantly present.

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