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Where It All Begun...

350 years ago, Wong Long, the founder of the northern praying mantis style of kung fu, decided after learning the shaolin fighting system that he needed to make improvements. Wong, who was opposed to the Manchurian takeover of China, had joined the shaolin temple in Honan province to learn kung fu in order to become a skilled fighter.

Wong Long was one of 128 monks who survived the emperor's attack on the temple. After he and the other monks felt it was safe, they settled in the Shang Tung province. When their teacher passed away, Wong and his senior brother Feng became the leaders of their group. Feng became the Abbot and Wong the Si-Hing. Over the years, Wong became adept in the shaolin fighting skills but could not best Feng. When Feng left the group for 3 years, Wong was left to practice his kung fu skills. One day after practice, he observed how a praying mantis fought and defeated a much larger cicada. He was so impressed with the mantis that he studied and analysed its movements. To complete his new approach he needed to add strength to the footwork. He accomplished this by studying the monkeys of China. He adopted their efficient movement into his mantis hand skill.

When monk Feng returned from his journey, he and Wong sparred again. This time Wong won easily and replaced Feng as the Abbot. Wong taught Feng his new style and together they called it Praying Mantis. From that moment, Praying Mantis was taught to the top students as the highest level of fighting.

Decades after Wong passed away a Taoist master Seng Sil Tao arrived at the temple. He was not impressed by the mantis style of fighting and

challenged the monks to a friendly sparring match. After being soundly defeated, he asked the Abbot to be allowed to stay and learn this new fighting technique. After mastering the praying mantis system and leaving the temple, Sil Tao Yen taught the complete system to only one student, Lee San Chen. After completing his studies, Lee established a security service. At age sixty, he decided to travel and find a worthy individual to inherit the art of praying mantis. When Lee arrived in Futzang he heard of a local champion called Wong Ywing Sun. Lee met with Wong and asked him for a demonstration. Wong grew angry after receiving a critical assessment and attacked Lee. After a short fight it became apparent that Wong's skills were no match. Wong asked Lee if he could learn from him the fighting style and spent the next several years learning all that his teacher had to offer.

Wong later accepted a student named Fan Hsu Tung, nicknamed the giant Fan. Fan weighed over 300 pounds. Fan gained popularity from an incident with a farmer's two bulls which he killed with his bare hands after being attacked by them.

Fan's student Lo Kwoon Yuk, made a name for himself as one of the ten tigers and also as one of the first instructors in the famous Ching Mo Athletic Association. Our current grandmaster is Kwok Cho Chiu. In the late '70s, one of his students Kwing Fai (Bolton) Kung came to Red Deer to study. While in Red Deer Bolton started teaching 7 Star Praying Mantis Kung-Fu at the Red Deer College. By way of chance, Mike Purnell met with Bolton and decided to join his classes. After years of practice and trips to Hong Kong, to study with Kwok Cho Chiu and Bolton. Mike

returned to Red Deer to teach as our Sifu (Sung Whyte).

Tai Chi Chuan

Tai Chi, a concept in Taoist philosophy, refers to the condition of the universe at the dawn of time. Literally translated as "Grand Ultimate", it is the source of heaven & earth, yin & yang. "Chuan" is indicative of fighting with the bare fist. As an exercise Tai Chi Chuan grew out of the Chinese art of boxing and the movements still contain these elements of self defence.

Whether young or old, frail or robust, the ancient art of Tai Chi Chuan can lead you to a healthier mind and body. Because it combines coordinated sets of movement with deep breathing and concentration you receive a total workout. In time your mental control, your breathing and your body movement combine to form a single unit.

Tai Chi Chuan helps with relaxation and overall circulation, it activates and strengthens muscles, sinews and joints, without stress. Tai Chi Chuan calms, clears and sharpens the mind to help in focusing and centring our daily activities. It promotes good digestion and lowers blood pressure, while improving the function of the internal organs. It is an aid to meditation. Tai Chi maintains youth, improves all over health and slows down the aging process through rejuvenation. Whether looking for sound health of body and mind, a means of self defence, or spiritual awareness, Tai Chi can be a valuable tool to achieve these goals.

By Janice McEwen

Best Offense -

Surprise

Move, Defend, Attack And Broken Rhythm Part 2

This is the second part of a three part series designed to cover the basics of these two topics and then combine them to take your martial arts to a higher level.

Part 2 - Broken Rhythm

Timing is probably the most important factor in determining the outcome of an encounter. Even if your techniques are otherwise flawless (properly executed, quick, powerful), you will never be victorious if they are not correctly timed. The success of a movement, defensive or offensive, depends on whether we perform it at the right time or not. We must surprise our opponent and catch the moment of his helplessness.

The concepts of "doing the unexpected", the "element of surprise", and broken rhythm are all attempts to execute a basic combat strategy which produces in the opponent a temporary psychological paralysis that renders ineffective his/her physical response.

There are four ways to create surprise:

1. Commit To An Action - The objective of this strategy is to upset the opponent's timetable. Either the action is carried to him, or he is forced to initiate his own attack in advance of his plans. There is no gradual escalation of hostilities when employing this tactic. Instead, total warfare is instantaneous.

2. Change The "Motorset" - Ordinarily, two fighters of equal ability can follow each other's movements and, unless there is a considerable difference in speed, they are likely to stalemate each other. The movements of attacking and defending work almost in rhythm with each other. They have a sequential relationship with each other which makes the proper timing of each movement dependent on the previous movement. Although there is a slight advantage in the initiation of the attack, it must also be backed by superior speed in order to land successfully. However, when the rhythm is broken, speed is no longer the primary element in the success of the attack or counterattack of the person who has broken the rhythm. If the rhythm has

been well established, there is a tendency to continue in the sequence of the movement. In other words, each person is "motorset" to continue the sequence. The person who can break this rhythm by a slight hesitation or an unexpected movement can now score an attack or counterattack with only moderate speed; his/her opponent is motorset to continue with the previous rhythm and before he/she can adjust to the change, he/she has been hit.

Conversely, when your opponent is in the midst of making advances or threatening movements on his own account, you may succeed in breaking the rhythm by first apparently reacting as he expects and then suddenly launching a counterattack when he thinks you should be following his feint. You should land, for he/she is motorset to continue with his/her threats and cannot adjust him/herself to the necessity of parrying until after you have scored.

3. Indirect Approach - This tactic can take the form of a feint or a diversion - anything that distracts your opponent momentarily, causing him/her to leave your intended target poorly defended, so that you can attack more easily. This strategy is nicely summed up in the in-chuan adage: "if you want to punch left, punch right; if you want to strike high, strike low..."

4. On The Half-Beat - Any attack performed halfway through the opponent's movement is said to occur on the half-beat. When the fighter falls his/her opponent's rhythm by inducing or performing one full-count movement, he/she may "break the trance" by striking on the half-beat. This broken rhythm method will often catch the opponent mentally and physically off balance for defence.

The perfect moment, to strike, may be seized instinctively or provoked consciously. A good fighter must sense rather than perceive his chance to strike.

Timing has to be felt and mastered as a psychological problem, even more than as a fighting problem, for the breaking of the rhythm relies on the fact that the victim is going to continue for a fraction of a second in the sequence of movements which has suddenly been interrupted.

From a psychological point of view, the moment of surprise and, from the physical point of view, the moment of helplessness are the right moments to attack. This is the true concept of timing - choosing the exact - psychological and physical moment of weakness in an opponent.

From Tao Of Jeet Kune Do, Bruce Lee The Element Of Surprise, Anthony Pallante, Black Belt, July 1992
Attack Timing - The Kung-Fu Mind, Yang Jwing-Ming, Inside Kung-Fu, Sept 1994

Defects Of The Cup

In the study of kung-fu, attention is generally focused on either the physical aspects of training or on chi. However, there is another dimension of practice which simultaneously forms the foundation and the pinnacle of kung-fu. By going beyond boxing techniques one can find deeper tenets which, if explored and diligently practised, set one on a path of self-cultivation, leading to the development of wisdom, knowledge, creativity, kindness and fearlessness. These are the traits of "Superior Man", and when they are present one can handle the various pitfalls and frustrations of daily life with the same graceful ease one handles an attacker on the mat. Only then can it be said that a practitioner truly has good kung-fu.

This course is available only to those who embrace the ideals of kung-fu and incorporate them into their lifestyles. These students quickly discover that self-defence skill is the tiniest attribute their training bestows, and that true kung-fu mastery involves much more than martial prowess.

While striving to attain the virtues of "Superior Man" one must simultaneously be mindful of, and guard against, one's own character defects. Though weaknesses are inherent in human nature, most people casually excuse or even deny their personal flaws. "Superior Man," however, is constantly vigilant in this regard and confronts himself with complete honesty. This stance allows him to rise above the defect and embody the virtue. In doing this the

only true and lasting victory is gained, and the epitome of warriorship is demonstrated. Indeed, it is this orientation which distinguishes the warrior from the fighter. While a fighter aims at overcoming others, a warrior fixes his sights on transcending his own limitations. The fighter creates discord; the warrior harmony.

Shortcomings found in each of us are eloquently articulated in the classic teaching on the "Defects of the Cup." The image of the teacup is a metaphor for the self, and the defects symbolize unconscious psychological obstacles to learning. Thus, the teaching shows us how, like the cup, the self must be a worthy vessel to receive, hold, and perhaps pass on the teachings. Understanding this we can begin to study the lessons of the cup.

THE CUP ALREADY FULL

A full cup readily holds what is already in it but can receive nothing more. The closed mind illustrated here is cut off from fresh insights and innovative concepts; it stops learning and growing and becomes stagnant. Worse, one who zealously clings to old ideas and rejects new ones can become dangerous. For it is this mind set that says, "My style is better than your style, and I'll fight you to prove it." Substitute religion or form of government for the word "style," and the possible consequences of this defect become clearer.

The "Full Cup" is the most well-known and frequently cited of the defects. In its most commonly told form, an eager young student visits an old master. He is welcomed and treated as an honoured guest while the master himself prepares tea.

Eager to impress the old teacher, the would-be pupil begins a monologue about his knowledge, experience and opinions. Listening quietly to his guest, the master serves tea. He fills the student's cup and continues pouring as tea overflows and spills across the tabletop. Noticing this, the aspirant is shocked and yells "Stop! Stop! Can't you see that my cup is full?"

Righting the teapot, the sage calmly replies, "Yes, I see, and like the cup, you too are full. Because you are full of yourself and your ideas, you cannot

receive anything I would give you. Thus my efforts to teach you, like this spilled tea, would be wasted."

Though some say the remedy to this defect is emptying the cup, another, perhaps better solution, is enlarging it, for it is not necessary to discard what is already known to open the mind to new thoughts. There is always more to learn. Even when one is called master, this must be viewed as a term of respect rather than a literal statement of fact. There are natural learning plateaus in every endeavour; the defect of "already full" evinces itself when one mistakes a plateau for the mountaintop.

THE CUP WITH A HOLE

While this cup can receive, it cannot hold what is put into it. Thus the same lesson must be endlessly repeated, boring and frustrating teachers and classmates alike. Trying to learn with an unfocused mind, like using a net to carry water, is a futile effort.

Discipline, mental discipline in particular is the key to overcoming this defect. There is an expression in Buddhism about "riding the steed of thought," a reference to undisciplined mental processes. Without conscious control, the mind flits from fear to fantasy to memory to current reality and back again. Completely stopping mental chatter is virtually impossible, but with training the chatter becomes less distracting. As one pays less attention to internal dialogue and more attention to the here and now, more of the lesson will be absorbed.

The key to discipline is work over time combined with a sacrifice of non-essentials. Although this is not a complex formula, it usually proves difficult to embody. It can be made easier by having a worthy goal, a good learning environment and a support system which encourages continual focus.

In the effort to develop mental discipline, meditation is the corner stone upon which everything else rests. It increases the awareness, focuses the mind, and is without doubt the most powerful and effective remedy for the defect of "the cup with a hole in it." Traditionally, meditation was an integral part of kung-fu practice, but sadly, it is not a major focus in most

modern training halls.

THE CUP TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

At first glance this defect may seem similar to the full cup, but upon closer examination a fundamental difference becomes apparent. While the full cup can receive nothing because of its contents, the upside down cup is cut off because of its position. The mind set isn't one of already knowing; it's one of not wanting to know or not caring. So, though the structure is sound and potentially useful, nothing can be put into the cup.

It is part of the human ego structure not to recognize the reality or value of anything until its effects become personal. Just as cancer and hunger are seen in a different light when they directly impact us, so too is the value of information. "Why do I need to know this?" and "What good will it do me?" are relevant, normal, and essential questions.

Righting this cup requires the student to recognize the value of the lesson, this recognition precedes interest, and interest precedes learning. A good instructor will facilitate this process by revealing or demonstrating a lesson's worth.

Overcoming this defeat cultivates the view of "Superior Man." That is, each interaction, each moment, is a lesson, and each lesson has value. With this outlook, life becomes an endless learning opportunity.

THE CUP HELD ABOVE THE SPIGOT

Like the upside-down cup, this vessel is sound but improperly positioned. One who thinks he's better than the teacher will have difficulty learning anything. To justify and strengthen this view, any real shortcomings an instructor may have are concentrated on and magnified.

The most common strategy for overcoming this flaw is to "lower the cup." This means humbling the students by bringing them face to face with their shortcomings and demanding acknowledgement of them. However, this tactic often backfires. It creates resentment, and rather than being humbled, the students may become

angry and defensive. They may also take the moral high ground and say they were unfairly picked on, or because of their fundamental view, may even believe the teacher is attacking them out of jealousy or envy.

Simply tolerating a student with such an attitude is difficult enough for a teacher; trying to change it requires a Herculean effort. This effort involves the more difficult approach of "raising the spigot," thus demanding the utmost from oneself as a teacher. Deficiencies must be eliminated or at least minimized, and the student's attitude must be taken as a challenge to improve rather than as an insult. Then, successfully raising the spigot, the teacher rises above the problem student in a real way, clearly and undisputably demonstrating personal excellence.

To eradicate this defect in ourselves, we must cultivate humility, remembering that everyone knows something we don't and has something to teach us. Being courteous and respectful toward everyone brings tremendous rewards. If one strives to learn from each interaction, valuable lessons may come from surprising sources.

THE CUP TAINTED WITH POISON

This is the "Darth Vader" syndrome featured in the *Star Wars* movie trilogy. Vader was a one-time Jedi knight who mastered "The Force." This mastery gave him tremendous power, but personal impurities poisoned his heart and corrupted him, allowing him to manipulate and dominate others, and transforming him into a cruel, cold-blooded killer capable of virtually

any atrocity.

The poison symbolizes hatred, selfishness, a lust for power, and the ability to dehumanize others. These traits give humans the capacity to bully, rape, and wage war on each other.

A student with the defect of poison will pervert any teaching to serve his own selfish ends. This is the reason for testing a student's character and ethics before teaching him martial arts. This testing, like many other facets of traditional kung-fu, has fallen prey to modern business practices.

Obviously, pouring "tea" into a poisoned cup is foolish and dangerous; if the poison cannot be washed away the cup must not be used. To cleanse this defect a compassionate view and a policy of kindness must be instilled and practised. The first step in this process is to think of one's problems and suffering, then consider that everyone else shares similar hardships. Consciously cultivating this perspective is vital in developing the virtues of "Superior Man."

THE FIVE CUPS

It is important to recognize that none of the defects listed here are limited to a martial arts context. They will surface in virtually every aspect of life, and certainly in every learning situation, both singly and in combination. The challenge is to recognize and root out the defects in oneself.

Rising to this challenge places one in a never ending battle; a battle in which resting equals surrender and in which each success brings a greater challenge. It is this battle which gives rise to the oft quoted martial arts maxim that, "The true opponent lies within oneself." Fearlessly accepting this challenge is the first step on the path of "Superior Man."

About the Author: Bruce C. Hayden has studied martial arts and meditation for the past 15 years. He teaches privately in Arvada, Colorado.

Congratulations

Wong Dai (Yellow Sash)
Michael Daneluk
Cynthia Daneluk

Jarred Compton
Jason Compton
Roman Eisner
Cameron Rowan
Corey Lowes Level I

Luk Dai (Green Sash)
Derek McEwen

Dear Parents,
Do you have a hardworking grasshopper deserving of recognition? We are looking to start a new feature in the Hong Kong Times designed to acknowledge the school, Kung Fu, sports, hobbies and extracurricular activities of your children. For details on content, length, format and deadlines please contact Scott 343-6039.

Coming Next Month:

More on stretching

Move, Defend, Attack -
Broken Rhythm (part 3)

Chinese Zodiac

Article by Frank Chu

Merry Christmas
and
Happy Holidays!

from
Scott Barnaby, Artur Mroz and
Mike Punell

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