

The Tai Chi Classics

There are literally hundreds of ancient statements that contain insights and breakthrough information from those who deeply understood Tai Chi as an art and philosophy. Like all statements and techniques there are several possible levels of meaning. There are also many people that have no idea of the existence of these Classics - yet alone what they mean.

Let's examine a couple of examples.

If you have been practicing Tai Chi for any time at all, you should know that when *"one part moves, all parts move"*. You should also understand that *"The movement begins in the feet, feeding the energy of earth, gravity, to the legs. The waist then directs this energy through the torso into the arms and finally manifesting in the hands"*.

Think about it, if you do not yet understand this, it will come to you. Try the following "enlightenment exercise".

Stand facing a wall or immovable object, place both of your hands on the wall. Push with your feet, feel 1. your ankles, and then as you keep pushing feel 2. your knees. Continue to apply pressure and feel 3. your hips. Next notice the power rising up through 4. your spine. As you continue adding subtle pressure to your push feel 5. your shoulders and then 6. your elbows, 7. your wrists, 8. your hands and then finally 9. your fingers. Play with this exercise in both directions from the ground up and from the hands down. Also practice releasing or yielding subtly from your fingers down to your feet. If you have not already experienced the breakthrough that this represents you have just opened up a door that has enough breakthroughs to keep you busy for a long time.

Ongoing and deepening enlightenment comes from continuous practice and thought. Please continue thinking about and developing understanding of this wondrous art. I mean to continue forward, never stop.

ESSENTIALS OF THE PRACTICE OF THE FORM by Li I-yu

From a translation by Ben Lo in the book "The Essence of Tai Chi Chuan"

Formerly the masters said: "being able to attract to emptiness, you can use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds." And "not being able to attract to emptiness, you cannot deflect a thousand pounds".

The words are simple, but the meaning is complete. The beginner may not understand yet, so here I add some words to explain it. If someone is ambitious to learn this art, they can find some way to enter it and every day they will have some improvement.

Desiring to attract to emptiness and deflect a thousand pounds; first you must know yourself. You must know yourself if you want to know others, you must give up yourself to follow others. If you give up yourself and follow others, first you must have the correct timing and position. To obtain the correct timing and position, you must first make your body one unit. Desiring to make the body one unit, you must first eliminate hollows and protuberances. To make the whole body without breaks or holes, you must first have the 'shen' [spirit of vitality] and 'chi' [vital life energy] excited and expanded. If you want the 'shen' and 'chi' to be activated and expanded, you must first raise the spirit (pay attention) and the 'shen' should not be unfocussed. To have your 'shen' focussed, you must first have the 'shen' and 'chi' gathered and penetrating the bones. Desiring the 'shen' and 'chi' to penetrate the bones, first you must strengthen the two thighs and loosen the shoulders and let the 'chi' sink down.

The 'jing' [intrinsic strength] arises from the feet, changes in the legs, is stored in the torso, commanded by the waist and moved through the shoulders. The upper part connects to the two arms and the lower part follows the legs. It changes inside. To gather is to close and to release is to open. If it is quiet, it is completely still. Still means to close. In closing there is opening. If it is moving, everything moves. Moving is open. In opening there is closing. When the body is touched it revolves freely. There is nowhere that does not obtain power. Then you can attract to emptiness and use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds.

Practicing the Form every day is the 'kung fu' of knowing yourself. When you start to practice, first ask yourself, "Did my whole body follow the above principles or not?" If one little place did not follow them, then correct it immediately. Therefore, in practicing the Form we want awareness not distraction, and slowness not speed.