

INTERNAL DIALOGUE ANTHOLOGY



Through the years, most
been communicated in
Much of it has been
written form in such

written by Ralston and in the Internal Dialogue. This anthology is a consolidation of articles from a five year period beginning in January 1981 when the Internal Dialogue was first published. Included are some of the most insightful and thought provoking articles from that period.

of Cheng Hsin has
one form or another.
communicated in
places as the books

This issue is an educational forum, with many different views of the study of Cheng Hsin. I encourage you to go beyond simply understanding the material contained herein. The material should be contemplated. What is being communicated needs to be experienced on a very personal level.

Through the experience that is actually being communicated in the various articles, one can gain a deeper experience of the basic communication that is Cheng Hsin.

Enjoy this issue, and may you find it to be a useful tool in your understanding of Cheng Hsin.

Clint Boerner
1986

INTERNAL DIALOGUE ANTHOLOGY

Table of contents

1. **A Brief History Of Cheng Hsin** Doug Chambers March, 1981
2. **The Art of Listening** Peter Ralston February, 1986
3. **Choosing Cheng Hsin** James Kapp October, 1983
4. **Contemplation on Study** James Kapp February, 1984
5. **A Cup of Tea Zen Story**
6. **Facing The Beast** Kathryn Drahn September, 1984
7. **From Peter With Love: "On Ability"** Peter Ralston May, 1984
8. **From Peter With Love: "Assumptions"** Peter Ralston December, 1981
9. **From Peter With Love: "Addition Isn't Transformation"** Peter Ralston Feb. 1982
10. **Being the Body** Peter Ralston December, 1985
11. **From Peter With Love: "Questions"** Peter Ralston July, 1984
12. **From Peter With Love: "Source And Resource"** Peter Ralston July, 1984
13. **From Peter With Love: "Courage"** Peter Ralston August, 1982
14. **Going Out Of My Way** Clint Boerner August, 1983
15. **A Poem** Martin Heidegger
16. **Huan Sheng Corner** An Apprentice Instructor July, 1984
17. **Effect or Reflection?** Peter Ralston February, 1985
18. **How Can Anyone Be So Ignorant?** Clint Boerner May, 1984
19. **Interview With Ralston** Doug Chambers October, 1981
20. **The Apprentice Instructor Program** John Nieters August, 1983
21. **Life, A Multiple Choice Question?** Clint Boerner July, 1984
22. **Life With No Questions** Clint Boerner September, 1983
23. **The Non-Thinkable** James Kapp July, 1984
24. **Gaining Perspective** James Kapp August, 1983
25. **The Way To Success** James Kapp September, 1984
26. **August 1983 column "From Peter with Love"** Peter Ralston August, 1983
27. **Southern Notes** Marcel Legendre February, 1983
28. **The Box** Joseph Crandall May, 1984

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

29. **From Peter With Love: "Who's Responsible?"** Peter Ralston April, 1983
30. **Why Reason?** Clint Boerner September, 1984
31. **From "Zen Flesh, Zen Bones"** by Paul Reps
32. **Free Fighting** Ladye Montgomery October, 1982
33. **From Peter With Love: More Metaphysics** Peter Ralston December, 1985
34. **From Peter With Love: On The Nature of Changing "Self"** Peter Ralston Dec. 1985
35. **The Degree System** Scott Jensen February, 1986
36. **From Love With Peter: "Distinctions In Experience"** Peter Ralston May, 1984
37. **From Peter With Love: "Questioning Being"** Peter Ralston December, 1985
38. **Inside the Empowering Transformation Workshop** Karl Zeise May, 1986
39. **The Nature of "Being Calm"** Peter Ralston September, 1985
40. **Freedom from Mind** Jef Edwards May, 1986
41. **The Challenge of Being: The Cheng Hsin Principles of an Effortlessly Effective Body-Being Course** Jef Edwards May, 1986
42. **No Matter What** James Kapp September, 1985
43. **The Cheng Hsin Apprenticeship Program** A composite by James Kapp and Jef Edwards September, 1985
44. **Going For the Extra Stuff** James Kapp May, 1986
45. **Freedom In Not-Knowing** Karl Zeise September, 1985
46. **Why Isn't Anyone Listening To Me?** Peter Ralston February, 1985
47. **Huan Sheng Corner** An Apprentice Instructor December, 1983
48. **The Joy of Being** Peter Ralston
49. **The Gentle Rain** James Kapp December, 1983
50. **Private Territory** Bob Smith December, 1985
51. **T'ai Chi Sword** Kate Bishop February, 1985
52. **The White Part** James Kapp September, 1985
53. **Unsought in the Heart** Ralston
54. **The Insightful Eye of A Master** Hagakure, Seventeenth century
55. **What Are We Up To?** Peter Ralston February, 1985
56. **A Message From The Master** Peter Ralston October, 1981
57. **The Art of "Giving Being" to Another** Peter Ralston May, 1986

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

1. A Brief History Of Cheng Hsin

And now the curtain opens; it's March of 1981, and Doug Chambers is looking into the history of Cheng Hsin

Cheng Hsin is a teaching sourced by Peter Ralston. This teaching is what we are constantly attempting to penetrate through the vehicle of martial arts, consciousness studies, and the Apprentice Instructor training program. Cheng Hsin is the direct experiencing of the True Nature of all things. What is it that changes the focus of one man's career in the martial arts from gaining total mastery of an already existing system to creating a different study incorporating not only many martial arts, but other disciplines as well? For the answer I spent half an afternoon with Peter Ralston. From 10:00 a.m. in his office sipping hot beverage and answering telephones through tagging along on a College Avenue errand to 2:30 p.m., we talked. I emerged from this session with several pages of notes, new insights on subjects ranging from handguns to waking up in the morning, and a resolve to use a tape recorder the next time I interview Peter.

His first answer when questioned about the history of Cheng Hsin still stays with me: "There's no history to the truth." The facts behind the founding of this Way are, however, quite interesting.

Well before his teen years, Peter began the study of martial arts with Judo. He then continued through Jujitsu, Karate, western

fencing, Kung Fu, western boxing, T'ai Chi, Aikido and several others. Some he found satisfying, others were disappointing to him, but no art offered the whole of what Peter was looking for.

When he found a teacher with something worthwhile to share, he "juiced" him for as long as he could and then moved on. Such as with his teachers Wong Chia Man and Chen Chi Cheng. Peter studied with them for many years, doing some teaching, which he continued to do with their encouragement after leaving their formal instruction. As much as Peter enjoyed practicing and teaching these systems (Jing Mo and T'ai Chi), he also realized this was not "it."

So, in 1973 he started advertising the instruction of Natural Boxing (a term applied to free form martial study coined many years ago.) A quote from the Natural Boxing promotional poster reads: "Emphasis of this Path is outwardly devoted to the understanding of relative relationships through the practice of physical encounter (Martial Arts), but with primary concern for the understanding of "Mind" and the superior method of 'boxing' and living that comes from the "Natural" approach that this teacher emphasizes." The name Cheng Hsin came a year later, but this poster was the beginning of the communication of Cheng Hsin.

"Before that time," says Peter, "my experience of Cheng Hsin was incomplete. I was aware that something was missing, but I didn't

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

know what. In 1974, I realized unity (integrity) to be the fourth ingredient, and it all fell into place." This was a gratifying realization for Peter because no one before or since has put forth these qualities in this form.

The principle of unity or inclusion is largely what sets this Way apart. No matter how profoundly we adhere to one principle, that adherence does not cause us to exclude any of the others.

The Cheng Hsin School of Internal Martial Arts opened at 6601 Telegraph Avenue in March of 1977, adding at that time the study of Pa Kua Chang to its existing curriculum of Tai Chi Ch'uan, Hsing I Ch'uan and Northern Sil Lum Kung Fu. One year later, Peter won the World Martial Arts Tournament in Taiwan.

My own impression of Cheng Hsin is as of a tree that, now complete with its leaves, branches, roots and trunk, will continue to grow, but will always remain a tree.

Doug Chambers
March, 1981

2. The Art of Listening

I have observed lately that most people really don't know how to listen. Which is to say that they do not know how to learn or bring new transformative insight into their experience of being through listening, which

is truly hearing. Most people, it seems, don't make a distinction between listening conceptually and listening experientially. Some people think that, because words are symbols, listening is restricted to concept.

Much of the time people only listen for information, or answers, or merely to contrast what's being heard with what is believed by them. Judgment, belief, disbelief, thinking, figuring and the like are conceptual responses to the stimulus of words. When someone speaks, do you think something and assume through this that you know what they are saying? From this, do you quickly classify and box what they mean, and begin to make instant decisions about that? What I'm speaking about now most people do so habitually and rapidly that they don't know what I'm saying. They assume I'm talking about a procedure other than the one that's going on for them this very instant. That you would turn your attention to what is so for you right now with openness to something new being the case, is the first step towards a shift in your listening.

When your listening is founded in a true base of not-knowing, then you have a chance at hearing experientially. One danger that is always present is assuming that you know what is being said. If an experience is being called for in the speaking, and you do not have an experiential shift in your relationship to reality, chances are that you

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

indeed do not know (we could say experience or hear) what is being said.

Most people think that because they understand the language and have an idea that is related to what is heard, that they "know" it already. They may even recognize conceptually what is spoken and remember having had an experience which matches this way of speaking, but this is not hearing what is said.

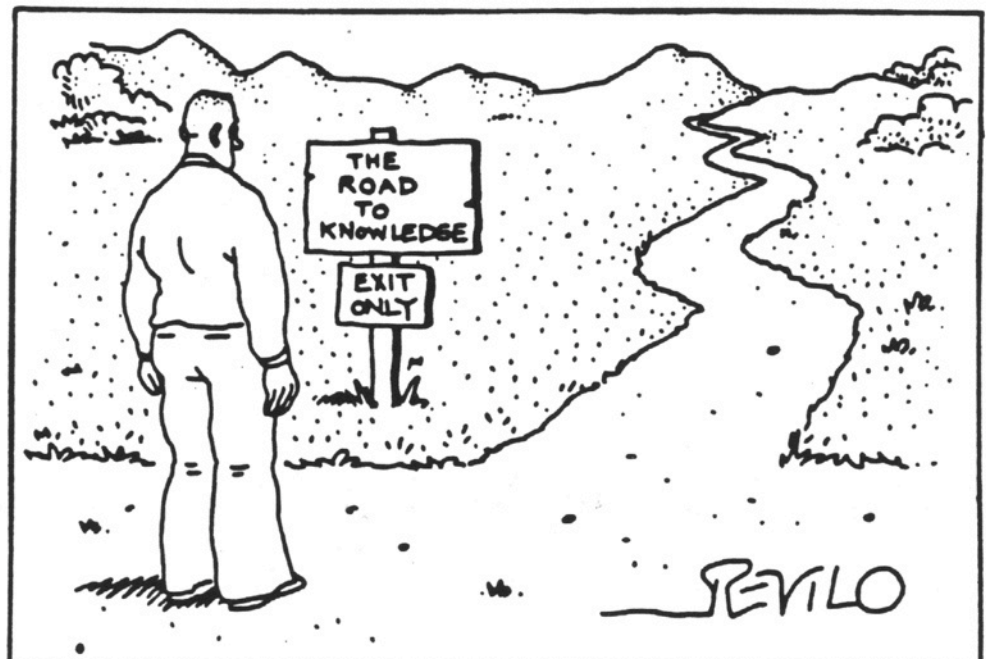
It is difficult for most of us to come to grips with the fact that no matter how accurate our memory or understanding is, it is not the experience that's being spoken. Getting what is said as an experience is completely different from having a memory or from merely understanding the meaning of the words. What's being said may be identical before and after such a shift, but you will indeed be listening to something else. And it will make a difference.

You must question the purpose behind your listening. What are you listening for or listening to hear? Are you listening for the experience that's there? In order to experience the presence of something you must create the experience - someone else's experience, not yours. This can only be done

by listening to the experience of what's being communicated, which is what is truly there for the speaker.

Of course this means that the two of you must create the very same experience. This may seem impossible and, in a conceptually objectified linear reality, it is. Yet working both within and beyond this limitation, you can learn to hear in such a way that you experience the experience of another. This is the art of listening. The key to this irrational but radically simple act is not knowing. While contemplating a profound communication, allow yourself to be bodily and mentally transformed in the very moment of listening. Be open to experiencing a shift in reality in the very process of listening. This is called HEARING and is the result of experiential listening.

Peter Ralston
February, 1986





3. Choosing Cheng Hsin

I had a choice to make. Would I come from the principles of Cheng Hsin Body Being or not? It was free fighting class and I was matched with a partner who radiated intention and presence. I felt overwhelmed. He was so willing to be involved, committed to our relationship, that I felt his energy of attention totally envelop me. I was feeling out-boxed, defeated, and yet no punch had been thrown. (Huan Sheng perhaps?) I noticed that I progressively had thoughts about keeping him away from me, that I wanted to not be here, that I didn't want to be involved with relating. A critical point for choosing had emerged. I chose the challenging way of real courage.

I simply empowered the reality of Being in my body in accordance with my understanding of Cheng Hsin principles. I

became calm and unified from feeling my center. I let go and relaxed my arms, my legs, and my mind. In a large sense, I recreated the experience I have of being in my body when I do my T'ai Chi set. This had a profound effect on the relationship with my partner. My perception of our relationship shifted into an orientation arising from my experience of Body Being.

I continued to make the choice to empower this moment with my understanding of Cheng Hsin. I realized that to maintain my Body Being and be involved required that I simply give my full commitment to listening and following him. I abandoned all notions of punching, of "doing" my side of free fighting.

I recall the disappearance of that sense of wanting to be apart from him. The feeling of being overwhelmed was transformed. When I started coming from my Body-Being I felt a willingness to include him in my experience. It was OK with me for him to be there, to have his intention and his commitment. I felt expansive, receptive and open to my experience.

Our match was over. I did not win, I did not lose. I felt satisfied, not gratified. In some ways I felt I had come closer to being at the moment of authentic relationship. My partner had given me a gift. Out of his commitment to being with me I found my way to being with him. My experience of the principles and functional characteristics of Cheng Hsin had expanded. Although I had

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

heard from Peter that this was a powerful way of being, I had not brought that into reality for me. I realize that I'm always at a point of choosing, and choosing to come from my understanding of Cheng Hsin is a real option. No matter how many Principles or Functions courses I attend, I still have the ultimate decision of whether I will allow myself to expand and make real the teachings of Cheng Hsin.

James Kapp
October 1983

4. Contemplation on Study

I choose not to, or perhaps cannot, ever disengage from my study of Cheng Hsin. Doing so would be a step into oblivion. Or worse yet, a never ending denial of my very existence. This is a realization grounded in my recognition of the nature of true involvement in the teaching.

A friend related that she studied karate for five years. She competed in tournaments, won medals, was awarded one belt after another. And then she stopped. In my experience of studying the Cheng Hsin Teaching, I don't have a notion of stopping. This engendered a contemplation, a questioning: What is stopping? What is real study? Why is this concept of stopping foreign to my attitude of participation?

I practiced my T'ai Chi sets looking for the real relationships I promoted. Was this entertainment, fuel for fantasies of martial

ability, a hobby that would in time drift into memories of days gone past? No, indeed not!

As a child I learned to stand upright and walk. Something of great awareness and consciousness occurred. I experienced a real connection between my body, gravity and the surface of the planet. Beginning with awkward attempts, encouraged by cheering relatives, I soon became so adept that I could arise from a crawl to a near run into the arms of a beckoning father. Years came to pass. I became quite skillful in this ability. I could run very fast, dance and even scale mountain sides. End of story. From this awesome capability to learn of a simple condition, my life was forever transformed.

And so, what of the moment when an awakening first takes seed? Is it the private domain of the child? Does the achievement of adulthood signify the endings or the beginnings of such moments? God have mercy on my soul when it is the endings.

The Cheng Hsin Teachings, Peter Ralston and T'ai Chi are my terms of grace. I have embraced a study that brings me to those moments like the first quiverings on newly found legs. I am finding the event of experiencing simple relationships. Relationships so aligned to the conditions of reality, so profound, that upon realization I leap into new realms of power, ability and consciousness.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

How could I disengage, stop, take time off for awhile? I am addressing my life; intimately.

James Kapp
February 1984



5. A Cup of Tea

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. "It is overfull. No more will go in!"

"Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

6. Facing The Beast

Peter asked the apprentices at our last meeting to tackle and challenge our "Beasts." I realized that the first step to doing this is identifying the sucker. Not so fun to do. Peter introduces the Beast as the stuff you say you don't like about yourself. It can be dullness, confusion, fearfulness, arrogance, anger, stupidity, or anything else that's your main way of "showing up" in the world, your primary means of expression that isn't what you want to express and isn't what you feel you are underneath your bullshit - powerful, loving, open, creative, alive.

Your Beast is what drives you, controls you, leads you by the nose. Feeling "incapable of life" is at the heart of everyone's Beast, but we each have our own particular way of being that supposedly enables us to cope with or get around our incapacity, or, often, to just avoid acknowledging the feeling of incapacity altogether.

I had never considered that there might be one core way of being that I do habitually, albeit with variations, in order to "survive," though I continually observe many habits and reactions that I judge as contractive or

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

constricting. It hasn't been easy in the past week to keep looking for a common thread in the fabric that makes up Me. I want to keep believing in my complexity.

It was so hard to decide what to write for the I.D. this time that I thought there must be something about that difficulty that had to do with my Beast. I never want to put myself out in writing to anyone. I also felt the Beast rear its head when at our last staff meeting at work the President unexpectedly asked me if I had anything to say about an event my supervisor was attending that day and the only thing that came to mind was "No." I sensed later that my stage fright and inability to "think on my feet" were part of the same syndrome as my unwillingness to express myself in writing.

The more I look into it the more clearly I see how many of my habits spin off the same core. Procrastinating, doing my shy act and my little girl act, going unconscious, feeling

that I don't really know anything worth sharing and am not capable of "making it in the world", being unable to decide what I want (let alone make a commitment to getting it), all come from a strong fear of putting myself out, of risking failure, rejection or judgment by others or by myself. The closest I've come to naming this Beast so

f a r i s
"Paralysis." [Or would it be more inclusive to just call it "Anonymity," "Playing it Safe" or "Mediocrity?"] The payoff is "safety." The price is my life.

I see that I've "killed my Beast" many times; more often and more powerfully in the past year than ever before, with the support of the people who are the Cheng Hsin Apprentice Program. I've killed the Beast when I've caught myself in "the act" and refused to play it

out in my usual way right then. When I've gone ahead and done something I didn't



illustration by Lester Ralph

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

really feel capable of doing. When I've accepted responsibility for creating my life. But Beasts can and usually do rise again and again and must be challenged over and over.

Naming your Beast is probably very helpful in challenging it; once you see that you have a pet Beast and you've identified its major traits, you can start to see how much of the time it's there by your side, pulling you by the hand when you aren't looking. And the only time it can really be challenged is when it's hanging out with you, when it's exposed. That's the easiest time to catch it.

Peter pointed out to the apprentices that you must kill the Beast many, many times. Perhaps it rises up less and less frequently. Perhaps it rises up more and more and with greater ferocity as it faces your challenge. Perhaps one day it decides to never get up again. But maybe it doesn't. I don't think it matters ultimately whether you put it away once and for all or not.

"In the challenge itself you take back your right to your life, your freedom, your Beingness." (Ralston)

Is there anything else to do?

Kathrynn Drahn
September 1984

7. From Peter With Love: "On Ability"

I would like to look at the question, "What is ability?" First, let's notice that ability is not an object. Now I know you may think this is a silly thing for me to say, but I want you to really look at how we actually hold ability.

Don't we relate to ability as if it's something that we can "have"? Certainly. Well, I propose that it's not. And that holding it as we do prevents us from demonstrating ability to a much greater degree than we do.

Before we go into "what" and "where" ability is, we should note that we might have some say in whether it shows up or not in any particular moment. If this is so we must look to see if we have decided for it to be or not from moment to moment. Since ability is not a thing and it shows up only in process, and process only shows up now, or in the present, then ability can only arise in this moment. It is then "known" by us only in the next moment, since it can be seen only as ability when we look at the historical relationship of process to accomplishment. When I say "historical" I mean before this moment, even if only an instant before. (See the "From Peter With Love" on history is a concept, to further your understanding of this.)

Therefore deciding to have ability show up in this moment must be of a different nature than most of our decidings. First, to decide such a happening, where would we look? If

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

we can listen to the sense (of feeling-action) that tells us what appropriate action would yield accomplishment in this circumstance, then we know what must appear to produce a result. Given this, we must then lend ourselves to its appearance. So this decision is not made by a reference, but by the lending itself.

[What I have just said, is not easy to understand and impossible to presence or make real if you only read through the words. Please go over it again and stretch very deeply to understand what is being said, then experience what is being said in reality.]

Once you "decide" to have ability be in a certain area, the ability comes as taking-to-action the actual "lending" (or "yielding") to the listening of what must be lent to this condition, as a process, to have a particular result appear. If the listening is unclear, then ability must come as a question to the listening, an openness to receiving what it is that must be heard. This is always outside of what you identify as "you."

We must remember also that you never create result, you can only lend your "self" to the coming of the process, part of which is what we call the result.

Ability isn't. It only appears in the lending of Being to process. Those that frequent the lending and allow the listening, no matter what else they may bring along, we say "have" ability. This way of speaking and

thinking is dis-useful, is disempowering. We must begin speaking and living closer to the truth.

Peter Ralston
May 1984

8. Assumptions

Because we have encountered a variety of difficult circumstances and misunderstood events throughout our lives, we have developed extremely complex and habitual mind, body and energy patterns. We have made an assumption that the founding beliefs and opinions that determine our personal patterns of mind, and thus total life orientation, are correct.

In an overwhelming percentage of the time, they are not.

So much of our work, no matter what level or area we are working on, is the process of becoming more conscious of our very "person," and the mind patterns and quirks that this person is founded on. It is only in changing our basic mind and its fundamental and unconscious assumptions that we change our relationship to life and personal power. By changing our very makeup we can change our real ability for enjoyment.

One of the central pursuits at Cheng Hsin is the systematic discovery of these core fundamental mind assumptions and their

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

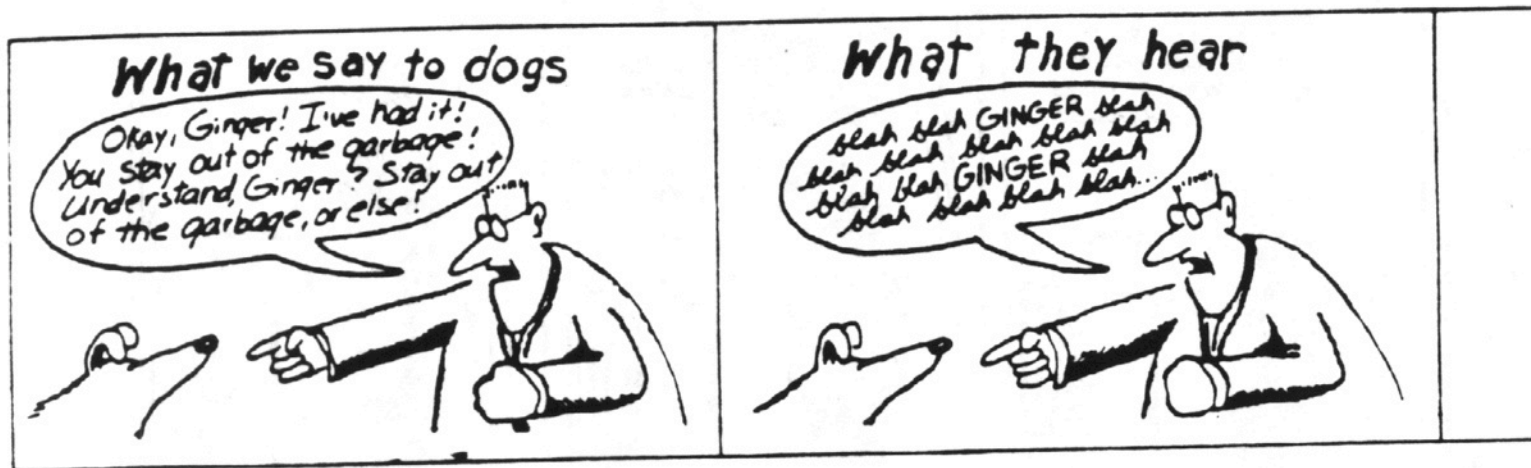
undoing. Through freeing ourselves of internal and relational habits of mind, we automatically change our energy orientation and habits, and thus those of our body.

So we must look to our relationship with our body, our mind, our subconscious and our energy, and immerse ourselves in the study of what those actually are. This study hits close to home, and is not always easy, but underneath any obstacle that may arise, you begin to sense YOU, and that's worth going for.

Peter Ralston
December 1981

light, rather superficial, approach. This is so because additions are used as a protection and a massing of identity. Cheng Hsin offers a total and transforming opportunity. If one follows it to its end, its fullness, its completion, then just as a matter of course due to the nature and demand inherent in Cheng Hsin, all things about oneself will be revealed. Nothing can be avoided in the movement toward complete understanding of Cheng Hsin, since Cheng Hsin is you, and to understand it is to understand you.

Peter Ralston
February 1982



9. Addition Isn't Transformation

Most people's approach to Cheng Hsin, as their approach to everything they do, is as an "addition" to them; something to add to the accumulation of things that identify their character. However it is more often a very

10. Being the Body

Since we observe the body-mind as a thing within, and call it ours, we not only separate it from all that it isn't - called the world or reality - we also abstract ourselves from the

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

body and fixate our awareness as an "observer." Having reduced our physical identity to a concept of our own body and sense of life, we feel separated, out-of-touch and anxious. The world can then only be held abstractly, conceptually, and as foreign to us. Since it is only "observed" as if through a periscope our sense of isolation and indirectness is only increased, and so, I imagine, our sense of incapacity, disassociation and fear.

The radical shift from living as an abstraction, an observer, to being the body itself, is more dramatic than one might imagine. We may think of this as merely shifting abodes, yet it is actually shifting dimensions. The context for our experience is not the same as before. For one thing, there is no more self-as-observer. Our identification as an abstraction is shifted to that of being the body which suddenly moves us into the position of "being in" the world, not merely observing it. This is not what we conceive it to be. It is "being" the presence of this body being in the world, and so being "in" the presence of what is perceived "as" the world in this moment.

All that was once only observed is suddenly felt as vibrant pressure that its presence is pushing forward. The immediate environment is felt as closer, right up next to the body-self, and completely filling every inch of three dimensional space. Since you are the body, "you" are felt to be actually part of the world, not merely in it but of it and

identical to it.

Since 'what is' is body itself, abstracted thoughts of the body don't exist. The inwardness associated with conventional reflecting and judging fades to a mediocre gesture of no real substance or value. Only the felt function that arises as the presence of bodily existence and organic life occupies awareness. Such an experience feels alive, vibrant and present, without recourse to conceptual reflection.

Peter Ralston
December 1985

11. From Peter With Love: "Questions"

Why do we practice? What do we practice?
These are good questions.

Obviously we practice to develop a greater understanding of our body and energy, and the dynamic of conceptualization (commonly called the "mind"); and to develop our skill in functioning with, and being with, all of this. We are not trying to get around or avoid what is obvious; we want to turn into it, experience it, grasp it, master it.

One thing we look into at Cheng Hsin is
"What is learning?"

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

The way to do that is to learn. While you learn, you ask what is it that learning "is?" What allowed you to actually get better?

What sense of things empowered you and what held you back? When you actualized ability, grasped something for the first time, or got the presence, the experience, of something, what was there? What actually occurred that had that happen? When you want to get it again, demonstrate it, or presence it, what must you lend yourself to? What is "lending over"? Does it show up in your life as a whole, in your being? And, if so, in what form? Is it so, simply in being you? What would or does it take, what must "be" in order for it to be in your living?

With such questions, your ability to learn and master should increase and your relationship to Cheng Hsin and living should take on a geometric progression, moving faster as you get more deeply into it, not slower. If you are slowing down in your breakthroughs and openness you are most likely not asking these questions, or you are not looking in the right place.

One aspect of our practice is the study of condition-effect, or being at the effect of, or reacting to, conditions. We find this in our solo work when we are at the effect of our judgments about ourselves, and how it should be. Another place we get stuck "at effect" is in looking into our collection of "answers" to determine what is so, or in an attempt to improve. As hard as it may be for you to believe, your collection of answers,

which is where you go to try to figure out or understand something, is a closed system, and no true growth or mastery is possible there.

The study of condition-effect is also found very much in our functional work. Whatever the condition, the circumstance from moment to moment, we tend to react to it, instead of experiencing it and responding. At a very rapid rate, we cognize and judge, and get pushed and pulled around by the effects that arise in us due to what we are cognizing and giving meaning to. The meaning and cognition is determined from the same place we get stuck in solo work, our collection of answers.

So you react with fear, anger, frustration, a twinge of any kind, fright, confusion, trying harder, your own thoughts and projections, or anything that is in reaction to, or separation from, the apparent condition. We study this dynamic of being at effect, and we practice to master first the realm of cognition-effect. The only way to master something such as this is to "know" or experience (make present and live) a context greater than condition-effect; to be free of or "outside" of this dynamic.

Presencing the Cheng Hsin body-being is creating this context, since the Principles of being can only show up and remain in a context greater than one of reaction. Such Principles as calm mind, centering, relaxing, and others, are only possible in a context, a way of being, outside of being at effect. So in

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

this way, our study is grasped as so much more than merely adopting a set of beliefs and "imitating" a way of being. It is actually creating and understanding a way of Being that is truly being, and being alive, by realizing (making real) the context for being and experience, rather than just being what is at the effect of cognized conditions and so being mere mechanism, not life.

You must contemplate this in order to grasp the significance of the Cheng Hsin Body-Being and Principles of Being and Function. In the same stroke you develop the presence

of a Principle and the context in which it, and life, can "be."

Peter Ralston
July 1984

12. From Peter With Love: "Source And Resource"

The technical aspects of Cheng Hsin are very well outlined and detailed in the Cheng Hsin teaching. However, the total detail and power of the technical side of Cheng Hsin cannot be found in any manual.

Although some very important points are listed, the full scope of the detail and workings must be sought out by applying the principles to the form.

Questioning me about any detail is a very good way to receive an answer. Technical matters can be handled very quickly when a specific question has been isolated. You must always consider the principles and apply them to your form, and ask questions when you either don't know how the principle applies, or you find any part or parts that you aren't sure of.

I'm probably still the best source for the comprehension of technical "rationale." However,



Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

the spirit and attitude of Cheng Hsin can be found alive and well in the apprentice instructors. And this valuable resource should be used fully and deeply by every Cheng Hsin student. The apprentice instructors are involved directly in discovering and understanding the Cheng Hsin Teaching, and so each sources the spirit of Cheng Hsin, which is openness to the truth of the way things are. Now, when I say the way things are, I mean "you," and the apprentice instructors are about you. They realize that the discovery of you and the facilitation of you discovering the Principles, is equal to the discovery of their own self, which is also equal to the discovery of the way things are. After this is grasped, and simultaneous to its being grasped, the rest is simply technical. If I am the source of the Cheng Hsin Teaching, then they are certainly great re-sources and should be used as such.

We can only offer, you must take. We can only point, you have to go there. We can only tell you there's treasure buried here, you have to seek it out and dig it up! We'll assist you as much as we can but if you do not take on the responsibility to find out what's available and to get it, to make it yours, then there's nothing we can assist! Resources must be used to be useful.

Peter Ralston
July 1984

13. From Peter With Love: "Courage"

I want you to know that I understand the courage it takes to be a student, especially to be a student at Cheng Hsin. This is not so because you are in danger of injury, but because you are faced with transformation. Growth often associates itself with discomfort or a sense of "dangerousness." This isn't a result of the growth, it's an item in resistance to growth. When we are met with expansion of any kind, which is movement outside of our limits as an individual, fear often arises. We don't know what is on the other side, not really.

This fear may show itself directly as such. It may simply arise as uneasiness, laziness, sleepiness, anger (mild to strong), sarcasm, confusion, frustration, or many other forms that show themselves as discomfort. Even when the learning is most joyful and exciting, it is accompanied by courage and commitment, whether known by us or not. This allows an openness, which gives room for expansion.

Growth need not be uncomfortable. The more willing you are to go beyond your limits, to fall into that which is not known to you, and therefore does not support you as you are (or think you are), but does support your aliveness and creativity, the easier your growth will be.

Since by tendency this is not our "habit," courage is always a requirement. To be at the Cheng Hsin School and participate fully on

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

the levels the school affords is a courageous affair in itself. Simply to persist in an atmosphere that "supports "you" and not your bullshit" is a courageous act!

truth, to go beyond themselves, always have my deepest respect and love.

Peter Ralston
August 1982



So I want you to know that I appreciate and admire you for that. People willing to do what is necessary to grow, to experience the

14. Going Out Of My Way

A while back I was thinking about what I need to do to really master Cheng Hsin. I realize that I have to go out of my way to practice and study more than I've been willing to before now. I started looking at the concept of "going out of my way." If you're like me you've always looked at going out of your way as a bit of a hassle. I've noticed that to master Cheng Hsin, or anything else for that matter, I have to go out of my way to an extreme degree. I literally have to go out of my way of being. If you don't go out of your way, the only thing you master is your way of doing things, and you've already mastered being you, the way you are now.

I've noticed that many people have stopped or slowed down in their growth because they are unwilling to go out of their way. They may be very good at what they're doing, but they have stopped in their growth. They have gone as far as they can doing it their way, and they don't want to do it differently. You can't have it your way and do Cheng Hsin.

We have to be willing to continually go out of and beyond our way. That's what growth is all about, going and growing out of the

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

way we are, so that we have more choices and freedom in our lives. Without growth and the freedom to choose, we stay the way we have always been, and nothing but the scenery ever changes. When things aren't growing they are decaying. So, let's grow out of our way!

Clint Boerner
August 1983

15. A Poem by Martin Heidegger

When the early morning light quietly
grows above the mountains
The world's darkening never reaches to the
light of Being.
We are too late for the gods and too early
for Being. Being's poem
just begun, is man.
To head toward a star -- this only.
To think is to confine yourself to a single
thought that one day stands still like a star
in the world's sky.
When in the winter nights snowstorms
tear at the cabin and one morning the
landscape is hushed in its blanket of
snow
Thinking's saying would be stilled in its
being only by becoming unable to say that
which must remain unspoken.
Such inability would bring thinking face to
face with its matter.
What is spoken is never, and in no
language, what is said.

That a thinking is, ever and suddenly-
whose amazement could fathom it?
When on a summer's day the butterfly
settles on the flower and, wings
closed, sways with it in the meadow-
breeze....

All our heart's courage is the echoing
response to the first call of Being which
gathers our thinking into the play of the
world.

In thinking all things
become solitary and slow.
Patience nurtures magnanimity.
He who thinks greatly must
err greatly.

When the little windwheel outside
the cabin window sings in the gathering
thunderstorm...

When thought's courage stems from the
bidding of Being, then destiny's language
thrives.

As soon as we have the thing before our
eyes, and in our hearts an ear for the word,
thinking prospers.

Few are experienced enough in the
difference between and object of
scholarship and a matter of thought.

If in thinking there were already
adversaries and not mere opponents, then
thinking's case would be more auspicious.

When in early summer lonely narcissi
bloom hidden in the meadow and the rock-
rose gleams under the maple

The splendor of the simple.
Only image formed keeps the vision. Yet
image formed rests in the poem.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

**How could cheerfulness stream through us
if we wanted to shun sadness?**

**Pain gives of its healing power where we
least expect it.**

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

16. Huan Sheng Corner

In the past year, and especially in the last few months, my studies at Cheng Hsin have become increasingly real and exciting. I have been struck by the Cheng Hsin Teachings being so apparently true, so totally simple and so readily accessible. This is largely due to my participation in the Huan Sheng class with Peter and two other apprentice-instructors.

Previously I didn't realize the extent to which I experience the world through concept, and how simple it is to step into a presence of what is. Often, in Huan Sheng, Peter will show us something that he wants us to learn and use in functional practice. The skill itself is always very simple and straightforward, but seems to presuppose superhuman abilities on our part. The demand is unreasonable, and yet Peter assures us that it is completely within our capability in this moment.

We have all been baffled by tricks or riddles which have seemed unsolvable. The magician's art of sleight-of-hand is testimony to this. Through the cunning use of skillful

deception, the practitioner can draw our attention to his showy, dramatic movements and away from the subtle activity which creates the result directly.

The requirement of playing a trick is simply that the trickster be open to more possibilities than the trickee. In Huan Sheng, rather than using deception to narrow the mind of the opponent, one opens to an experience of what is. Hence, in Chinese the word for trick also means "key." To master tricks consistently demands that we drop our fake naiveté and become open to the true magic of the world. It's astounding!

Normally we look for answers in a certain "place." If the answer doesn't appear within



THE ADVENTURES OF THE CHENG HSI WARRIOR

ONE DAY, THE CHENG HSI WARRIOR WAS SITTING IN A PARK WHERE IT HAPPENED THAT KAO TUNG, THE MASTER OF A THOUSAND AND ONE STYLES, WAS COACHING HIS STAR PUPIL, NEW AGE.

MASTER KAO TUNG! I'VE ALMOST SUCCEEDED IN MASTERING THE EIGHTEEN ESOTERIC OPPOSSUMS STYLE! WITH MY EST AND REIKIAN WORK AND TWO WEEKS OF TAI-CHI, I'LL BE A SIFU IN NO TIME!

YES, NEW AGE, WITH MY COMBINED PISING I, PA-KUA, TAI CHI, SHAO LIN, MANTIS, CRANE, RABBIT, ANT-EATER AND DRUNKEN COWBOY STYLES, HE'LL BE UNBEATABLE.

LOOK MASTER! THERE'S THE CHENG HSI WARRIOR!

INDEED! LET'S IMPRESS HIM, NEW AGE! YOU TEST HIS ABILITY WITH THE JADE BADGER EATING INSECTS STYLE! ATTACK!



Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

the framework we are operating out of at the time, or if an answer comes up which is not the one desired we say, "I didn't get an answer." The question becomes a problem, a hassle. That gets so old, doesn't it?

Working with Peter in the Huan Sheng group, we create an openness that takes us deeper into the question. We move in and out of bigger frameworks, and answers are a dime-a-dozen. The trick turns out to be a key to new realms. Involvement in such a purposeful atmosphere is truly exciting. Joy often appears spontaneously, and an overwhelming sense of aliveness permeates the body and mind through a more active participation in being.

This doesn't mean that you can't create joy and aliveness right now without being in the Huan Sheng class. Please do. All that's taught at this school points the way. Your practice of body-being through set classes and Principles course develops a base for open exploration. The only limits I've encountered in Huan Sheng are those areas where I habitually ignore the Cheng Hsin teaching.

Expanding your reality now won't spoil the surprise. The more you put yourself into your practice now, the more that will become available to you in Huan Sheng.

An Apprentice Instructor
July 1984

17. Effect or Reflection?

I have asserted that for the most part we are "at the effect" of everything. This is to say that we react to or are in some way affected by whatever circumstance or condition comes our way, such as what others say or do, or any other situation that we perceive. Since many of these effects are experienced as unwanted or unpleasant, sometimes we try not to be affected by things, or we refuse to allow our experience to be the effect of someone else's will or of circumstance. But we must ask ourselves: What is actually occurring when we take a stand that we are not going to be at the effect of something?

When we "choose" to have a different effect, or to not be affected by something, it should be clear that we are already at the effect. Our "decision" to be unaffected or differently affected is actually just another effect of being at the effect. Isn't it an effect of the desire to be unaffected by the condition the way that we are? Since our desire to be unaffected is a result of our relationship of being affected by the condition, we are still in the same loop.

How can we get free of this loop? It seems like it should be simple but it is not since our very attempts to get out exist within this same dynamic. We need to understand the relation of concept, perception and experience.

If everything is held conceptually and we are at the effect of everything, then the effect is

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

conceptual AND conceptually produced. Since perception is the non-conceptual reflection of encounter, it has no meaning; it is only a "mechanical" phenomenon, although a psycho-physical one. Meaning is therefore applied conceptually, and so nothing has meaning, not even the concept of meaning itself.

What comes to us as a presence is not conceptual. Even the presence of a concept is non-conceptual since it is itself and is not a representation. It comes as the presence of whatever it "is." We pick up this presence through perception which, although an indirect encounter, we can assume it is a consistent reflection of the presence and not a representation. By consistent I mean that since perception is a "mechanical" event it serves to reflect in some many what is there, even if it is not a direct experience of what is there. At some point we must leap beyond perception, distinguishing the reflection from the as yet unknown presence. This leap is called "direct experience" and is not conceptual, yet is also not provable as something that "is."

It is as if the dynamic of conceptualization (commonly called the mind) is a representation of Consciousness. Consciousness is necessary in order to grasp concept as a presence, since it can then serve as the medium and context for "grasping" without concept. However, grasping the presence of a concept or even the entire domain of "mind" is still only a reflection of

Consciousness. This suggests that the step to a direct experience of the present condition and the step to a direct experience of Consciousness are each possibly a step into the same "place." This step is totally irrational.

Peter Ralston
February, 1985

18. How Can Anyone Be So Ignorant?

It's been becoming quite obvious to me how extremely ignorant I am. I first started to put my finger on it when Peter was talking about one-dimensional as opposed to three-dimensional thinking. My thinking is very linear, my thoughts always go from point "a" to point "b," and I ignore anything that is outside my line of thinking. Like when I'm fighting or doing a set, I think of doing step "a," then step "b," then step "c," and never include anything in between or any other possibilities.

My tunnel vision and mechanical approach to reality don't allow any possibility for learning or ability to show up. How can I learn anything if I only see what I expect to be there? Sometimes my stupidity amazes me, I don't notice some things which are so obvious. Like the fact that when I'm fighting with someone they can and will hit me if they get the chance. I never allow for the fact that the person I'm fighting with is skilled, I

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

always assume that I must be doing something wrong; it never occurred to me that they have a say in how and when I get hit. How stupid can I be?



"Curses! ... How long does it take Igor to go out and bring back a simple little brain, anyway?"

My linear way of thinking shows up everywhere in my life. If confronted with a problem, I come up with very few ways of dealing with it, often ways which aren't very workable. When dealing with life I either force things into my predetermined ideas of the way life is, or I use confusion as a tool for ignoring the fact that things aren't quite as I'd hoped they'd be. I won't even allow for

the possibility of 3-dimensional thinking without diving headfirst into confusion.

The only real ability I have in my fighting lately results from not figuring things out, but just being present with my partner. If I think I have some formula or thing I do to win the fight, I immediately lose any presence I have, and my concepts destroy my fighting ability. I have to be aware that my ability doesn't come from anything I know; it occurs in process, when I stop being stupid.

So don't be as dumb as me. Open up to a world beyond you and learn something new and have any ability.

Clint Boerner
May 1984

19. Interview With Ralston

The following interview was conducted in Ralston's office while one person was shaving, one reviewing the school's books, one vacuuming, and several others passing through the room on their way to various destinations. In the midst of this uproar, Ralston and I established a contact through which were transmitted some fundamental truths about self-presentation, self-improvement and the presentation of one's experience.

ID: What are you doing when you lead a set in class?

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

Ralston: Three things occur, the most superficial of which is considering that the students' observation of me is part of their learning process. I'm demonstrating something to them. Often what I'm demonstrating to them is not just the movement; although I am demonstrating that, I'm demonstrating something about the sense of it, the feel of it, the energy of it. Another thing that occurs much more frequently is I am training myself. It's also my time to practice. When I'm running through the sets, what is also occurring simultaneously is that I'm practicing. I'm not experimenting at that time usually; sometimes I do, but most of the time I don't experiment simply because of the first consideration; I'm teaching, I'm not there to experiment.

Mostly it's a demonstration of what's to happen. The third thing, and what I think you were referring to because, when you first asked me this question on the floor, I was doing something very specific and that was probably from whence the question arose - then I was doing the movement for me, reproducing an experience of what it is like to be total, integral, manifesting in that way and I was not defining myself by others. When you asked me the question at that time, for example, I realized that one of the fundamental things that was going on there was that I wasn't defining myself by other beings. That's why you said, "Where did you go?" You know?

ID: Yes.

Ralston: I didn't go anywhere; I wasn't defining myself by the other individuals in the room, so that shift made a difference in the appearance of things through your observation. Rather than doing that, I was creating an experience of Being, through the manifestation of doing the art; enjoying the movement and the power. Creating the movement and the power without consideration about "Is the movement good?" or "Is this movement gonna be good for them?" Just, "Ah, this is what's happening, I'm gonna do this (gestures) woosh!"

ID: That sounds like what I saw. In teaching, is it best to demonstrate physical forms and energy forms, or to shoot for recreating an experience fresh each time? From my exposure as an apprentice instructor, I realize the latter to be much more difficult.

Ralston: I prefer the latter. I have time to demonstrate things individually while I'm teaching individually. Sometimes my main motivation for doing it for myself is as a demonstration. If I don't experience the power and joy of, say, T'ai Chi, for example, then I'm not going to create that in my experience to communicate to them. By creating an experience I'm actually teaching better, or preparing myself to teach better, because I'm producing the experience of the art that I'm going to teach, so that when I start to teach I have that in me. I'm coming

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

from present experience rather than from memory.

ID: It sounds like more of an effortless way to teach, if nothing else.

Ralston: More real.

ID: It also sounds like a valuable skill for students to learn to create experience.

Ralston: People see different things, and people learn in different ways. Some people learn through feeling, some people learn through visual observation, and some people through hearing. Sometimes I'll address their intellect, sometimes I'll address their body, sometimes their feeling or their sense of something. I'll hit all those areas so that people have a better chance of learning.

ID: Yes, I have noticed that.

Ralston: Sometimes somebody is ready to observe energy, so I'll demonstrate the energy because they can get more of the communication of what I'm doing when they observe energy rather than when they just observe the body moving. So I have to do the energy for those who will see it, to see it. And sometimes someone who's been hung up in the body, just learning the movements, learning the mechanics, which is a very valuable thing to do, all of a sudden starts to notice that there's something different about the way, say, I do the mechanics versus the way a beginner does the mechanics. Even if they can't notice any difference in the movement itself, they may notice a difference in the way it feels to

them. Noticing these differences may come as a sense of things. "That person's doing something different; I can't identify it. It feels different to me, but I don't know why." That's their first sense of energy, see?

ID: Yes.

Ralston: You notice something about the look of it, the feel of it to you. It might come as an animated quality, a sense of wholeness, sense of power, or you might notice that something else is going on for that person other than simply moving through the air the way most people move through the air. People notice different things. I really appreciate when someone notices things that I truly enjoy and am very close to. The other day someone was relating to me her experience of watching me do the T'ai Chi set. She was talking about watching energy, but she talked about it in her own way. One thing she said was, "Oh, is that what it's like for a person to actually go into the planet?" She's a student of body movement.

ID: A kinesiologist?

Ralston: No, more in the neighborhood of observing and defining through physics the way bodies move.

ID: Does she use computers in her work?

Ralston: I think that's an interest of hers.

ID: Computers are one of the newest tools to be used in sports medicine. By filming an athlete with markers attached to parts of his body and logging these into a computer as

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

various locations in space, a very specific model of how this person moves can be generated. Such models are invaluable for correcting a golf swing or a running form or retraining an injured limb.

Ralston: That's beautiful. There's so much stuff to be done with the body, it's incredible. If they wanted to and had the time and

think about themselves, the way they feel about themselves, and the way they feel about the world. When you change people's thoughts and feelings about the world you change the way they are. It increases their power and their ability to relate openly.

Someone said that several times she had to keep from crying out of joy of watching that

energy move. Now that to me is an extremely wonderful acknowledgment, that somebody actually feels the joy, that someone actually feels the wonder that I feel when I do that sometimes. Sometimes not. (Laughs) Sometimes it's absolutely incredible to me, it's so splendid. Now that's noticing energy. So I must demonstrate that, at least from time to

time, so people can get a better hit on it and to encourage them to do it themselves.

Doug Chambers
October 1981

interest, we could get everybody on this planet moving with absolute grace and beauty. Which is to say a lot more than just having the enjoyment of watching people move that way or the enjoyment of being able to move that way. Like Feldenkrais said, it changes one's self concept very, very much. When you change the way someone moves their body, you change the way they



20. The Apprentice Instructor Program

By the time this article is published, a new group of Level I Apprentices will be seen working their magic to keep the Cheng Hsin School a conscious environment. So why do these people volunteer themselves, apprentice themselves, to Cheng Hsin for five months? For the same reason that people have apprenticed themselves throughout history: to learn the truth, the "secrets" that their teachers have mastered.

Artists, silversmiths, carpenters, martial artists, and saints have apprenticed themselves because it is the fastest, easiest and most complete way to learn an art. In this case, the art is the teachings of the Cheng Hsin School. Those of you who have been at Cheng Hsin School for a while realize that the vehicle used is martial arts, but those arts are just that: a vehicle, a way to learn and to measure our degree of growth in real personal transformation.

We are here to experience a constantly expanding sense of Self, and to increase our level of Freedom and Capacity in the process. The most direct way to facilitate that here in the school is through the Apprentice Instructor Program.



The first level of that journey takes place in the Level I Apprentice program. We deal with many basic, key elements of ourselves, laying the solid foundation for our growth here. The purpose of this stage is to develop personal power by defining and developing clarity, intention and responsibility. The Apprentices use everyday, direct examples to honestly see their level of personal power and integrity, and then work with the Apprentice Trainer, Level II and Level III Apprentice Instructors to stretch and move beyond any limitations that arise that prevent their further growth. The next levels use this clarity and personal power as a foundation.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

It is my feeling that the essence of the Cheng Hsin teaching is more readily available in the Apprentice Instructor Program than anywhere else. All serious students of Cheng Hsin owe it to themselves to consider the value that the Apprentice Program will have in their lives. If you have any questions or considerations about the program, you owe it to yourself to have them answered. Any Apprentice Instructor can answer your questions about the program.

John Nieters
August 1983

21. Life, A Multiple Choice Question?

I've become very aware lately of the way in which most of us live our lives. When confronted with life we tend to look at it as a multiple choice question, and we react to it as if the only thing we can do is a, b or c. Someone says something, and we say to ourselves, "Well, I have to do either this or that." We have a variety of answers to any question, we have a list of emotions for any situation, and a list of feelings for any activity we (might) find ourselves in. Did you ever notice that you tend to react a certain way to a particular type of situation, or that you have certain emotions that you know are appropriate at a given time, and you always do it that way? Don't you feel that the way you do life is the way it has to

be? What most people don't realize is that we live life as if it is a multiple choice question that we have all the answers to. And what we are living is the answers and not the question (of life).

Every time we see persons or things, what we usually see are the answers or judgments we have associated with them. It is unbearable to us to see everything newly and to entertain the possibility that maybe we really don't know what is going on. When confronted with something that is not easily answered we use an old standby answer like, "I am confused," "I am angry," "I am frightened," etc. At least that way we know there is an "I" to be confused, angry or frightened. If not-knowing went too far we might become too loose in our definition of "I."

We might say that it is just the way the "mind" is, that has it that we need all the answers. I think it would be more accurate to say that "mind" is a name we give to one's personal accumulation of answers. The mind is nothing but answers. Maybe that's why we are so afraid of losing our mind: "There go all of my answers out the window, and after all the time and energy I spent making them up and maintaining them!"

When contemplating the effect that knowing has had on the aliveness of humanity, I flashed on the Book of Genesis in the Bible. Remember how Adam and Eve had to leave paradise after taking a bite of fruit from the "tree of knowledge." Maybe the Bible was

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology



trying to tell us something; maybe "knowing" is man's curse.

Lately I've been reading some books by a man named Martin Heidegger. He has presented a good argument for the possibility of a thinking that is beyond the mind. He calls it meditative thinking (not to be confused with any concept you have about meditation). When talking about thinking in this way he brought up the concept of "waiting." This surprised me because months before reading this book, Peter had talked about waiting in this way. Waiting is an activity which lends itself to meditative thinking, you must wait openly, never waiting for "something." Wait, but don't await any answer.

What is thinking without the mind? Wait and see.

Clint Boerner
July 1984

22. Life With No Questions

I'm just starting to realize the value of true questioning and wondering. Most of us hold questioning as something we do to get answers, but there is no power in this type of question.

There is a certain kind of questioning in which it is impossible to "think" or "language" an answer, there is just no place for an answer. The power of this type of questioning is in coming from "not-knowing" and actually experiencing the question. The question itself throws you deeper into your experience of the unthinkable truth. If the truth were "thinkable" it would be an answer, and answers themselves never really make much difference.

Many Zen koans, tales and riddles, involve this type of questioning. One which has perplexed me is from "The Ronin." It goes as follows:

"In a forest there is a pool and in the pool there are three golden carp. One lists and swims in downward circles. Soon he lies

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

weightless on the bottom sand, and he is relished by the water snails who also want to live as he did. On the surface under a lily pad, dart five golden babies protected by the mother carp and threatened by the hungry father carp. Two of these escape and grow to maturity and themselves make young. One of these lives to a grand old age because he has been clever in sneaking babies away from their mothers. But he tells himself "I have made the swift ones swifter"..... Knowing none have left the pool..... How many fish are in the pool?"

The Ronin was obsessed by this and other questions and later in the book he states, "I know a riddle that has an answer is no riddle, and a life with no questions is no life, but these (questions) pound each of my seconds into dust and with them that squirming little core I call Myself."

This type of questioning is extremely valuable. There are intensives that involve nothing more than asking the same question over and over again, for up to six weeks, and

these intensives can have a profound effect on the participants.

Here are a few of my favorite questions of this type; if you know the answers you're not asking the questions.

What am I?

What's in control?

What is Cheng Hsin?

What am I doing here?

When was time created?

What is love?

There are other questions scattered throughout this issue. I would like to invite you all to question and not know, and contribute any questions, tales, poems or koans that empower questioning to our next issue.

Clint Boerner
September 1983



23. The Non-Thinkable

I have found that I can have valid understandings that are unreachable through the power of conceptualization and reason. It is the ability to presence that which is non-thinkable. The communications given in the Mastery workshop, the Apprentice Instructor II/III meetings, and the Possibility of Encountering Reality course (PER), are bringing me towards perceiving that which lies beyond the realm of thought.

My awareness of this came about when I challenged my habit of only considering that which lends itself to concept, thought and reason. I have participated in the communications of the Mastery workshop on two occasions. During my first encounter I reached a point when I could no longer reason and think about the communication; I became flustered, lost and backed away from even simple questioning. At that time, I compared myself to the other participants and noted how they seemed to be getting everything. I concluded that I simply wasn't clever enough. Fortunately, the workshop continued and allowed me to penetrate depths which brought clarity and freedom in this area. And an important step towards noticing how I limit myself had taken seed.

I was to fully learn of this habit months later during my second encounter with the workshop. Once again, almost at the same time in the workshop, I noticed that I was feeling overwhelmed. I was even talking to

myself in similar words about how I just lacked the skill to participate in the realms being pointed to. And I sensed how familiar this was all sounding. I remembered that I had been this way before. I turned into my sense of feeling overwhelmed rather than having the sense be a signal to back away. I grasped the reality of what I was doing. I found my habit as it was unfolding and gaining power. Any time I confronted the threshold of my ability to conceptualize I backed away. I never allowed for existence outside of my thoughts. And in simply being with this condition I experienced the possibility of beyond thought.

This situation revealed my tendency to limit, confine and establish boundaries on what is real and possible. Grasping this truth, as it was occurring, has allowed for a profound sense of freedom. Huge areas of possibility, experience and expansion immediately become available simultaneous to my recognition of this habit as it takes place. I have a new sense of freedom to live beyond the boundaries of the thinkable.

James Kapp
July 1984

24. Gaining Perspective

Imagine you're stuck in Nowhere, U.S.A., namely the hayfields of Kansas. Tulsa is 90 miles south, Kansas City 165 to the north. There is an approximation of civilization, a

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

thin thread perhaps, yet a mailbox sits out front. You have been digesting the June issue of "Inside Kung-Fu" since Mr. Johnson's early morning delivery. You ease back into your favorite chair and begin reading an article entitled "The Principles of Cheng Hsin." Just as you reach the part about "being calm" your older brother yells through the screen door, "Melvin, get your ass out here, the pigs got loose!" You toss the magazine aside, alas, soon to become the next delectable of canine pleasure for your Labrador puppy. And so, farewell to the words of Cheng Hsin, come and gone in a wisp.

nobody from Kansas, could be spending an hour with the likes of Peter. He is a powerful human being and I was afraid to be confronted directly during an hour private lesson. Maybe he would find out I didn't know my head from my asshole. Then I realized that I am here, and Peter is available. This was an opportunity too great to neglect. And if I did I would regret the decision to my grave. So be it, I began.

One of my first realizations about Peter was that he didn't come from "I'm powerful and you're not." Rather, he came from "I'm powerful and so are you." And throughout



But enough of this nightmare! We're not Melvin, and this isn't Kansas. We are a group of exceptional people fortunate for the opportunity to be students of Cheng Hsin. And we can go no further in realizing this good fortune than by having private lessons with Peter Ralston.

I hesitated to do this at one time, believing I was undeserving of this golden opportunity. I simply didn't have an image that I, as a

the ensuing lessons we would look at the things I do in T'ai Chi Ch'uan and boxing which stand in my way of experiencing this power. Peter has the ability to perceive where I am, in my personal understanding of Cheng Hsin, and thereby say just the right words for me to assimilate my experience with greater clarity and insight. As for the expression "food for thought" goes, I have

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

been feasting at a banquet of rare and sumptuous goodies per each lesson.

It is easy to forget how precious the teachings of Cheng Hsin are. Peter's creation of a school that highly regards communication allows us to reach understandings of an awesome nature simply by attending a class in the Principles Course. And likewise, it is easy to overlook the fact that Peter is of a stature rarely occurring in the history of martial arts. Sometimes I sit back and consider what an incredible acknowledgment of my personal power this is, that somehow I set it up to have the experience of Peter and the Cheng Hsin Teachings.

James Kapp
August 1983

25. The Way To Success

During the past 18 months I have been taking private lessons from Peter. I have noticed remarkable changes in my perceptions, attitudes and functional abilities. Prior to this involvement with Peter I never considered or even conceived of the possibility of achieving true skill in the art of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Working with Peter has allowed me to experience the presence of mastery.

Peter is a very capable teacher. He is able to direct my attention to the study so that I can

get it for myself. This often appears as his revealing the obvious and simple, as it occurs in present time. When I have the presence of that which Peter is pointing to, I often have a sense of "Why, of course! It's so simple." I recognize this as a real tribute to Peter's ability to join me where I am in my understanding, and gracefully lead me to an expanded sense of what's true.

There is a lot of power in being in the presence of a master. More than just words gets communicated. Frequently I have felt that the bulk of my lesson with Peter was happening on levels that were way beyond words. In a sense, my Body-Being really receives the lesson and only much later does my cognitive mindfulness catch up and give words to what took place. My Body-Being learns from Peter by experiencing him presencing mastery.

Most of my work with Peter has been in the area of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. However, I have also learned aspects of Judo, Hsing I, kicking, sword, boxing and even stretching routines. The fact is that Peter has a lot of experience in the martial arts. Now I have a much greater sense of the functional powers of T'ai Chi Ch'uan from the exposure in these other arts. And I realize that Peter is available to work on anything. We even once spent an hour working on the subject "Nothing."

I recommend private lessons from Peter. When I consider what I have learned I really don't feel I would have reached the same understanding for years, if at all, had I not

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

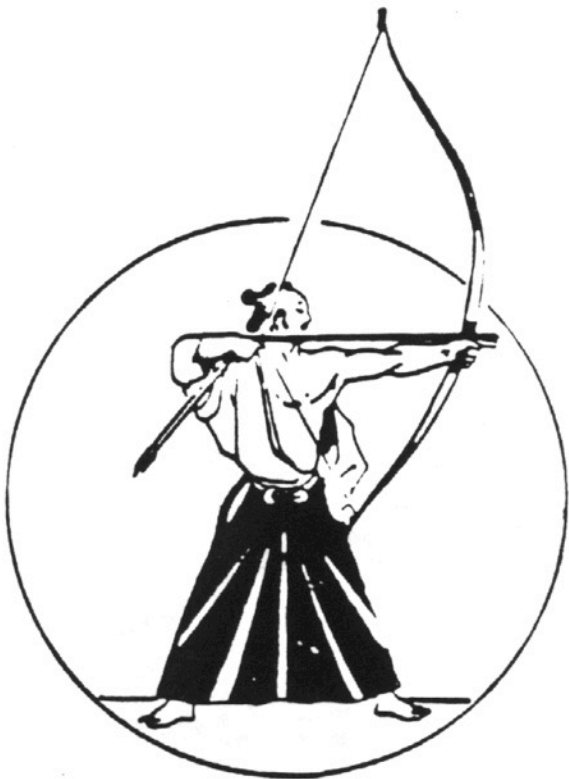
taken private lessons. It is the way to success. It is one of the best ways to progress at the school and receive Peter's first hand attention for a full hour. Private lessons are available to all students. Many students have studied every week in private lessons and their skill level has gone up rapidly. If you want more information or want to schedule a private lesson, talk to Peter Ralston.

James Kapp
September 1984

26. Aim for the Source

"...When you shoot the arrow, shoot at the Self. Aim for and hit the source of the aiming, and the source of the hitting."

Peter Ralston
August 1983



27. Southern Notes

I've been asked on several occasions, in a mildly incredulous tone, "You've come all the way from New Orleans to Berkeley just to study at Cheng Hsin?" My reaction to that question is usually a feeling of, "Sure, wouldn't you?" To make it more clear, here are some of the whys and wherefores of my coming to Cheng Hsin. During the spring of 1980 I watched as most of my closest friends made plans to move on to different places, bigger things. I was feeling similar yearnings. After living almost seven years in the "big Tomato," New Orleans wasn't doing it for me any more. True, it offered color and charm, history, good food and good times. Not to mention the Mardi Gras. Still, after seven years I knew it was time for me to seek something else. The question was what to look for and where to find it. My friend Henry Griffith gave me an opportunity to answer that question.

Henry runs the Tao Academy of Healing and Martial Arts in a charming Arkansas Ozark Mountain town called Eureka Springs. I learned from Henry that Peter Ralston was slated for a T'ai Chi Ch'uan workshop there in July. I'd read about Peter Ralston and was quite impressed. What an opportunity, to do a workshop with the genuine article, a for real, "in person" T'ai Chi Master. I wasted no time in conjuring up images of what he would be like. Surely, I thought, he would be like the old Chinese masters I had read

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

about. He would be self-effacing and probably tell you Zen koans. Okay, so I wasn't even close.

The workshop went very well. Peter's instruction was clear, precise and enlivening. Especially enjoyable were his demonstrations of "chin" (intrinsic power). I recall him launching Henry across the floor with a dish towel. As if to erase any skepticism, he repeated the demonstration, this time uprooting him with his nose!

By this time I was thoroughly frustrated. I was captivated by Peter, and yet I kept myself at a distance. Intuitively, I knew what he had to offer was valuable and I felt strongly pulled towards him. Yet, I couldn't reconcile my inner experience of him with what I was outwardly seeing.

He just didn't fit into the image I had constructed. Here was a T'ai Chi Master wearing a gold chain and designer jeans, saying things like "go for it" and "nifty keen." Moreover, when he talked about boxing and fighting, he actually seemed to enjoy it! It was all too much. Sure the workshop had been fun. Peter would return to Berkeley, and I would probably stay in Eureka. What I hadn't counted on was Peter leaving a Cheng Hsin manual as a parting gesture.

I spent the two days following Peter's departure reading the manual. Surprisingly, it wasn't the technical information it contained that made the difference for me. It was the interview with Peter in the second

half of the manual. Here was an entirely different aspect of Peter that I had somehow missed! As I read on, it was like all of the switches had been thrown, and the lights were all coming on at once! Wow! How had I missed this when he was here? Could it have been my preconceptions stopped me from seeing what he really was and what he was about? I decided I had better go to Cheng Hsin and find out. I knew more what I was looking for now. I didn't know what I would find.

I was a month at Cheng Hsin studying T'ai Chi when someone asked me to stay for a preview of the apprentice program. Why not? After the preview, I felt that the apprentice program was the heart of Cheng Hsin. Whatever could be realized studying here would best be accomplished in the program.

To date, I am about halfway into Level I of the apprentice program. Some of my reactions are that it has been one of the most challenging things I have ever done for myself. It has also, at times, been one of the most rewarding. I still create much resistance to it and I experience many of the tasks I am called upon to complete with annoyance. Yet each task affords me an opportunity to examine my attitudes about it and my relationship to it. For me this holds unlimited value.

The next time someone asks me, "You've come all the way from New Orleans to Berkeley just to study at Cheng Hsin?" I'll

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

probably smile and say, "Sure, wouldn't you?"

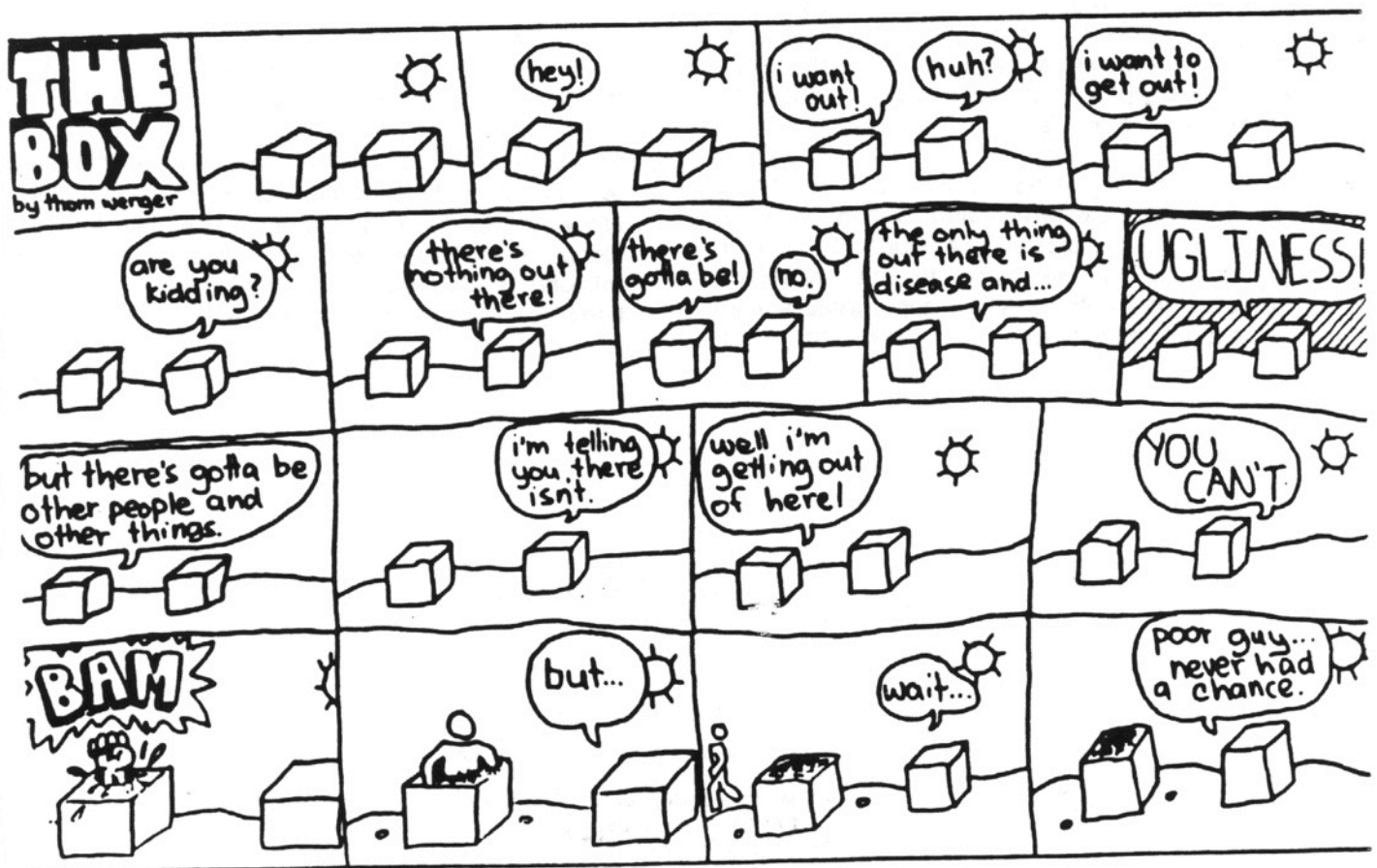
Marcel Legendre
February 1983

28. The Box

Often, there are times in our development where we get stuck, though we may not recognize it right away, or ever. Then, one day we notice that we haven't learned anything new in a long time. I don't mean new sets or techniques but rather new insights, or new understandings of what we already know. It's like living in a box; we see

four walls a ceiling and a floor. Over and over, all that we get are the same blank walls. This is the time we usually consider dropping our art and picking up something "more interesting."

Actually something "more interesting" is breaking through the barriers of the box and exploring what is beyond, though some may equate this kind of "interesting" with "frightening" and "terrifying." If we want to do justice to our study this is the way we should go. Of course it takes a lot of courage. The box represents our world and there is no way to conceive of what is beyond, what is outside of our reality. To do this barrier-breaking is very difficult by oneself, but



Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

sometimes we meet people, like Peter, whose box is bigger than ours, and they are willing to assist us in breaking free.

If we summon our courage and make the effort, sometimes the task is easy (I've found it so), and again sometimes it's impossibly difficult; I've found that to be true too. But breaking through is worth it because of the freedom that comes with it. It becomes laughable when we realize how we've kept ourselves so limited before, and how much room we have to move now. So I encourage us all to look at our walls and ask ourselves, "What is beyond?"

P.S. I would like to say also that once we've broken through our walls, what we see around us is another set of walls. They need to be broken, too.

Joseph Crandall
May 1984

29. From Peter With Love: "Who's Responsible?"

Many times people relate to things that they do in the areas of learning, improvement, growth, and the like as if "placing" themselves in the hands of another, a teacher, an organization, is enough. By making someone else or something else responsible for your growth it ensures that it won't happen, since, even if they wanted to, they cannot do it for you. The Cheng Hsin School is designed with this in mind. I have

always come from the point of view that anyone who wants to learn would reach for what is offered, would be responsible for finding out what's necessary to grow, and to ask, practice, study and make it theirs! So this is the way I teach and the way Cheng Hsin is set up. It's up to you.

Allow me to clarify something about Cheng Hsin: there is really only one study here, although it looks like there are so many different things happening.

Basically, the fundamentals of the Teaching break down into two parts. The first and ongoing practice addresses the study and transformation of the Body-Being, all the work that we do with our own body and energy and state of mind. (The Principles Course, Set classes and Mind Course are devoted to this study.) The second practice is one of function and includes the first practice. (The Function Course, Mind Course, T'ui Shou (outreaching hands), Choy Lin (to pluck the right flower), and Free Fighting Classes are devoted to this study.)

We work with ourselves and with how we function, or relate to life mastery. This isn't always easy. If your study and approach is true and genuine then there will be times that are most difficult, and you will want to turn away. This is so because it reaches into the very heart of you, and so also the things you fear, or want to avoid or ignore. Breaking free of these, however, is truly worth doing, and life becomes ecstatic and powerful. Until, of course, the next limit is

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

reached that needs to be broken through. Each limit is greater than the one before it, but life continues to become increasingly powerful and worth living.

Have you ever noticed that when you back off from whatever limit or obstacle that is in front of you, either because it seems like it's too much or you pretend it's not necessary to confront, that life seems to drag on in mediocrity, simply a rehashing of the same old routine no matter how hard you try to ignore that fact? Well, the bad news is that each time you move through your limitations there's another one waiting to be discovered, and it's bigger and more profound than the one you just got through. The good news is it's the only thing that makes life worth living and you are totally capable of doing it!

Beyond anything that we do here, our true purpose lies in Understanding through direct experience what all of this is.

Peter Ralston
April 1983

30. Why Reason?

"GREAT MINDS HAVE PURPOSES, OTHERS HAVE WISHES. LITTLE MINDS ARE TAMED AND SUBDUED BY MISFORTUNE; BUT THE GREAT MINDS RISE ABOVE THEM."

WASHINGTON IRVING

Why is it that we need a reason for everything? We feel obligated to have an answer when someone asks why we did something, even if we have to make up a reason. Our reasons don't make us happy. As a matter of fact, there seem to be more reasons for being unhappy. It seems to me the purpose for having reasons is to allow me to "know" what's going on, and give me an answer for everything I do. As mentioned in a previous issue of the I.D., it is questionable whether there is any "life" in answers. When you have life "answered" there is no openness. Life is then "written in stone."

I've noticed in my life that when I'm really experiencing happiness and love for others I don't have a reason. When there are reasons for happiness and love, the feelings are filled with doubt because I'm afraid my reasons for feeling good will go away. It always feels like a lie when I use my reasons as excuses for feeling good or bad. It feels like the truth when I have feelings simply because I choose to have them.

I'm not saying there is no purpose for having feelings. There could be a purpose for feelings and a purpose for reasons, but I think that our reasons might not have a whole lot to "do" with what we do.

There is a section in one of Carlos Castaneda's books that deals with "doing things for the hell of it." I'm starting to understand what Don Juan was getting at. When we always need a reason for what we

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

do, we find it hard to do anything outside our way of doing things. There are lots of "reasons" to do things the way we always have.

Consider the possibility that there is no reason to be powerful, no reason for love, no reason to live, and no reason for anything.

Maybe all our reasons are made up.

Clint Boerner
September 1984



31. The non-candle candle

Tokusan was studying Zen under Ryutan. One night he came to Ryutan and asked many questions. The teacher said: "The night is getting old. Why don't you retire?"

So Tokusan bowed and opened the screen to go out, observing:

"It is very dark outside."

Ryutan offered Tokusan a lighted candle to find his way. Just as Tokusan received it, Ryutan blew it out. At that moment the mind of Tokusan was opened.

by Paul Reps
from "Zen Flesh, Zen Bones"

32. Free Fighting

It is no coincidence that in so many diverse cultures, people seeking enlightenment have followed the way of the warrior; the discipline required for developing skill as a fighter is uniquely suited for developing certain mental qualities as well. Although we at Cheng Hsin do not carry the contest to its ultimate conclusion, we are still able to experience the advantages of making fighting an integral part of our spiritual training.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

Fighting offers an excellent opportunity to test the extent to which one has mastered the principles, as well as actually accelerating the learning process. It is one thing to be relaxed and centered when doing forms, and quite another to be relaxed and centered when someone is hitting you. You can feel perfectly calm, and still you will find that you will blink your eyes and your body will flinch away from the blow. Finally, however, you get to the point where you can watch the punch coming and sometimes even move out of the way - and it feels wonderful! Also, by forcing you to relax, fighting also increases your endurance. If you are very tense, you will be exhausted after ten or fifteen minutes of sparring, but once you learn to relax you can go for hours.

In the same way that fighting develops physical stamina, it develops the power of concentration {i.e. being present}. Just as the body instinctively wants to avoid being hit, the mind, when subjected to pressure, wants to turn off and go somewhere else. Even under ideal conditions, the mind will wander off without our being aware of it; for instance when we're doing zazen or standing meditation and suddenly realize that for the last fifteen minutes we've been thinking about our boyfriend, or planning our rock garden. In fighting, this cannot happen. If



"That can't be no combat man. He's lookin' fer a fight."

your attention wanders for a split second, you get hit. In this way, fighting keeps you in touch with reality; it tells you exactly how relaxed and present you are. (Incidentally, the concentration you develop in boxing will carry over into and improve your other forms of meditation.)

For me, though, the most important aspect of fighting is dealing with fear - fear of being hit, of being hurt, of being damaged, of losing in general, of being humiliated, and so on. You learn that on one hand, you don't

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

have to get hit, and that on the other hand, it doesn't matter if you do. Hit-not-hit, winning-losing, boyfriends, rock gardens, and all the other "stuff" gets absorbed into the total concentration on the present moment.

Of course, this is all very basic. Once the techniques are mastered, I imagine that there will be a much wider scope for growth and experimentation. In any case, the Cheng Hsin free fighting class offers a relatively safe opportunity to play with several aspects of martial arts training, and to actually test out your progress in situations where there is direct and immediate feedback.

Also, I almost forgot to mention - fighting is fun! It's like riding motorcycles, making love, or watching Bruce Lee movies. I recommend it.

Ladye Montgomery
October 1982

33. From Peter With Love: "More Metaphysics"

Metaphysical considerations such as the ones I've been presenting in this issue of the I.D. (including what follows) should be held not as abstractions but as the base of our very psycho-physical living. If you fail to make the translation into the reality in which you live, these considerations will not be useful, nor will they be true. If you fail to grasp any of the communications in their

pure form, without adulteration or interpretation, you will also miss what is truly being said. It is the nature of the truth that it must be the way that it is, rather than fit into what we are capable of hearing or understanding. It is the nature of observation that what is observed can only be known authentically (and so truly known) if it is gotten as it is rather than how we want it to be or what we want to use it for.

Peter Ralston
December, 1985

34. On The Nature of Changing "Self"

"I" appears as a real thing. As if the object of myself, my body and the processes within, are a particular way. This can be likened to a machine that works in a particular way. Perhaps it is coarse in action, breaks down when heated, has a smooth and shiny surface, and sputters when it's on. We say the machine "is" that way. We can fix, replace, or change the machine and it would actually be another way. Not so with self. Everything done with self appears over time to be only a patch job, a cover up, or at best a shift in some of its directional or functional programming, yet the self more or less remains or appears the same.

This is interesting since the self never appears; only reactions appear. Some

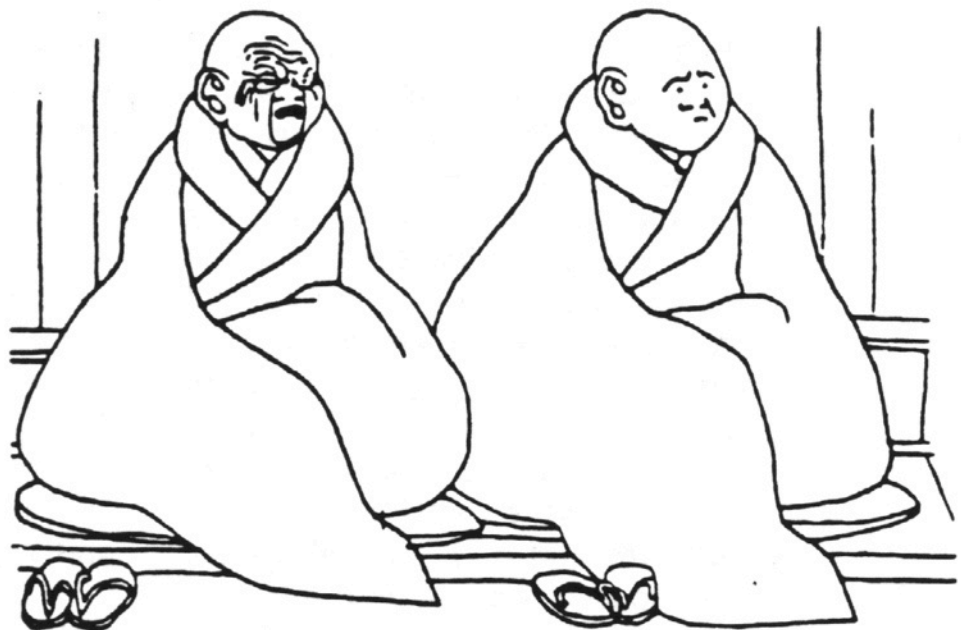
Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

reactions seem non-reactive, such as merely reflecting the demand that our self "is," and is "not that." Yet the way "I" is, is found in consistent reactions to various conditions. In these we say I is and I is "that way," but it is some reaction that appears, never a self. Nevertheless, since we are objectified, we presume an I behind all of this. Even if we found no I, we would say the reactions themselves are what self is, and that self is that way. Now, if the reactions themselves are what self is, then consistency in reactions is consistency in self. Familiarity in reaction is recognition-identification of self.

What if we wanted to change self? Where would such a notion arise? It seems it could only arise after formulation of the basic reaction patterns seen as self. For example, as an infant, perhaps reactions to things came as an impulse not distinguished from any other stimulus. Through observation and distinction between condition and effect, the possibility of manipulation arose, more and more cognizantly. Through the development of reactions to things, a particular individual was defined. How would you know, define or identify what

is you and how you are, without something particular and consistent appearing? If you made no distinction in stimulus, how could you know what was you? If you had no effect or feedback in conditions, how could you get you as a condition, an object?

Consider that an infant makes very few distinctions between anything that appears within its perception. Any feeling, thought, perception, reaction of any kind is only what is or is appearing. There is no "it is mine" or "it is not mine." What distinction is there between a sensation in its belly, and a sensation on its skin, or in its eyes or concept? It is all what appears, without knowing or considering, "it comes from me," or "it is me," or "it comes from other than me."



"Nothing happens next. This is it."

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

Making these distinctions seems to be how an individual knows it is in a room, existing "as" something. By use of self-consciousness, cognition of a separate thing called "I" is created, and the way "I" is. Other than this, it may only be a function not distinctly given to anything, and so not appearing as any "thing."

So about this notion to "change" or "improve" one's self, first we have to have a one's self to change. And this self must be a certain way or there is nothing to change. I propose, when self was arising or being defined in particular, pre- and/or post birth, that changing it was not an issue. That change can only take place when one develops and contrasts what is witnessed as mine, or that way, with what could or should be, with what is good or bad. So at adulthood, it is what has come before, usually as a child, that is held as that which must change or be made better about self. If circumstance is seen as what needs to change and not self, then I suspect that it is the taken for granted child-defined self that is determining that change is wanted in circumstance - to fit circumstances into accommodating one's more "primary self."

So it is the "adult" that wants to change the "child," and the "child" that wants to change the circumstances of the adult. When change is not held as possible or available, the "adult" then suppresses the "child," and this is what normally passes for change or mastering (controlling) our relationship to

the situation.

You need to know now that when I say "child" I'm only referring to what came before - what presently defines or has been identified as the character or way one's self is. It could be any time in the life of the individual. Just so, "adult" is what comes after, what is active in present circumstances, with actions determined by what has been defined. It is self consciousness. So I'm not speaking of adult or child in the usual sense, although I'm not excluding the usual sense. Hear "what comes before" when you read 'child,' even if it's only a moment before. Hear "what comes after" when you read 'adult.' This moves the communication from a psychological to an ontological consideration.

If we are going to speak about working with this self, then it seems imperative that we continue to realize the dynamics on which it is founded and held.

Peter Ralston
December, 1985

35. The Degree System

The degree system created by Master Ralston for the Cheng Hsin Arts provides insight into the elusive natures of these arts while producing an exciting series of goals. The T'ai Chi Ch'uan and Hsing I - Pa Kua degree systems each contain eight degrees.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

Each degree represents a distinct development in students' Body-Being, as well as formal recognition of their knowledge of the material and their ability to demonstrate the material correctly. Understanding the demands of the degree system - development of Body-Being and ability expected at each degree as well as the relationship of the various parts to the whole system - yields a penetrating and exciting look at the arts we study and our goals as students.

The following is a breakdown of the requirements for each degree.

I. Degree One: "Cheng Hsin Body-Being"

Degree One acknowledges students for learning the basic set(s) of their art, some absorption of the Principles, and doing a little basic work with a partner. Degree One mainly acknowledges learning postures and making a basic shift towards having the principles show up in one's Body-Being and postures.

This first goal of the student can be reached within six months or so. At a Degree One examination, Master Ralston will watch the candidates perform their sets and look for a correct series of movements with no glaring omissions in the Cheng Hsin Body-Being.

Make sure to keep a balanced center and eight attitude awareness; be aligned with gravity and have relaxed tissues; keep your knees pointing with toes, and your feet firmly on the ground; drain the marrow into

the ground where there is a "ball and chain," and extend energy out the limbs. Do these and passing will be a simple matter.

Then he will look at the Intro. T'ui Shou material. To pass this part of the exam, feel your partner, keep a good Cheng Hsin Body-Being and do the correct postures. Last, Master Ralston will ask to see Cheng Hsin Body-Being demonstrated free form. That means moving around without using any movements from the set, but maintaining a good solid Cheng Hsin Body-Being. At this point everybody gets a great opportunity to show off their newly developed energy skills.

II. Degree Two: "Basic T'ui Shou Techniques"

Degree Two acknowledges students for learning their first T'ui Shou techniques, and for improving the sets they learned for Degree One. Keep in mind that all degrees are cumulative and that to pass the next degree the material from all the previous degrees must be brought up to the level of quality of that degree.

See the basic set(s) and make sure to be ready by practicing the sets as often as the T'ui Shou techniques. At this level the postures of the sets should be clear, and the principles evident. The T'ui Shou techniques need to be clear as well. Keep a good Cheng Hsin Body-Being while listening, outreaching, and using intrinsic or effortless strength.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology



To prepare for the T'ui Shou part of the exam, find a partner and practice all your techniques with them before the exam until your techniques flow smoothly, and both partners feel confident in their ability to run down the list and perform each technique. This level may take a further year or so.

[The time estimates are based on what a committed student attending 5-6 times a week might accomplish.]

III. Degree Three: "Principles of Function"

Degree Three acknowledges students who have begun to really work with the Principles of function, and who can demonstrate them while performing a wider variety of techniques, and while engaging in non-competitive freeplay.

Remember that although this level fundamentally concerns the development of functional ability, it includes the first two degrees. Therefore, it would be wise to exert considerable care in the training of one's Body-Being and sets, for this degree has a higher requirement in these areas. To pass

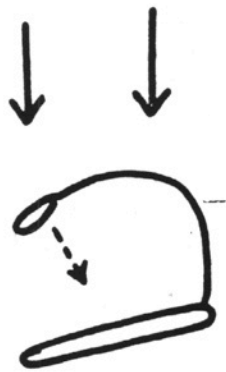
this exam, all students must take the Function Course and learn to apply its principles to all of their techniques.

Each T'ui Shou technique has a distinct energy: a spin, drop, pull back, etc.. This degree acknowledges students for learning the energy of each technique, developing the ability to perform the technique with a solid Cheng Hsin Body-Being, while clearly listening, outreaching and using relaxed effortless power to achieve their results. At this exam, Ralston will ask for sections of the T'ai Chi set or a selection of the Hsing I - Pa Kua sets to be demonstrated, so you need to know the names of the movements of the sets.

Ralston may ask for a demonstration of your effortless power in striking as well as in your T'ui Shou, so begin work in this area.

In addition to a thorough examination of the T'ui Shou techniques, Master Ralston asks for demonstrations of Function Course exercises. These include the "Walk At" exercise, where two people walk at one

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3

another and one executes a non-specified attack while the other blends smoothly and continues walking. Also required is blending with non-strategic attacks, taking the attacker to a breaking point. This can really be exciting.

Lastly, all Degree Three candidates play non-competitively, using the techniques of their art. This is where everybody gets to demonstrate their skill in moving, blending, outreaching, effortless power, using a variety of techniques and above all presenting the newly developed skills from the Function Course. Expect at least one to two more years of training to reach Degree Three.

IV. Degree Four: "Functional Skill and Correct Sets"

Degree Four acknowledges a large jump in the students' ability. Showing precise sets, numerous skillful techniques, a powerful presence, and some real functional ability. What this level really demands is quality. There are now more difficult sets in addition to the old ones, and all must show a clear

powerful alignment with the principles, a precise knowledge of the movements and real skill in their execution. A mature, stable Cheng Hsin Body-Being should shine through as each candidate seems to effortlessly issue power and respond with grace to various attacks.

Degree Four candidates are capable of handling more competitive freeplay, where the partners do not cooperate and take turns as in Level Three, but both seek the advantage simultaneously, without struggle and without neglecting the principles. Students at this degree must read and feel their opponents' energy and intention. They must realize when they are losing the Cheng Hsin Body-Being or Outreaching and they must be able to drop right back in. During the "walk at" exercise, attackers may throw from zero to three attacks. During the blending with a non-strategic attack exercise, they use a variety of techniques to blend with and "break" their partners' movements. In addition, students blend with non-strategic attacks from multiple attackers, as

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

many as five other people! They must demonstrate their intrinsic power in their striking techniques by hitting an armored partner; in this action, smooth effortless use of alignment, timing and power should be apparent.

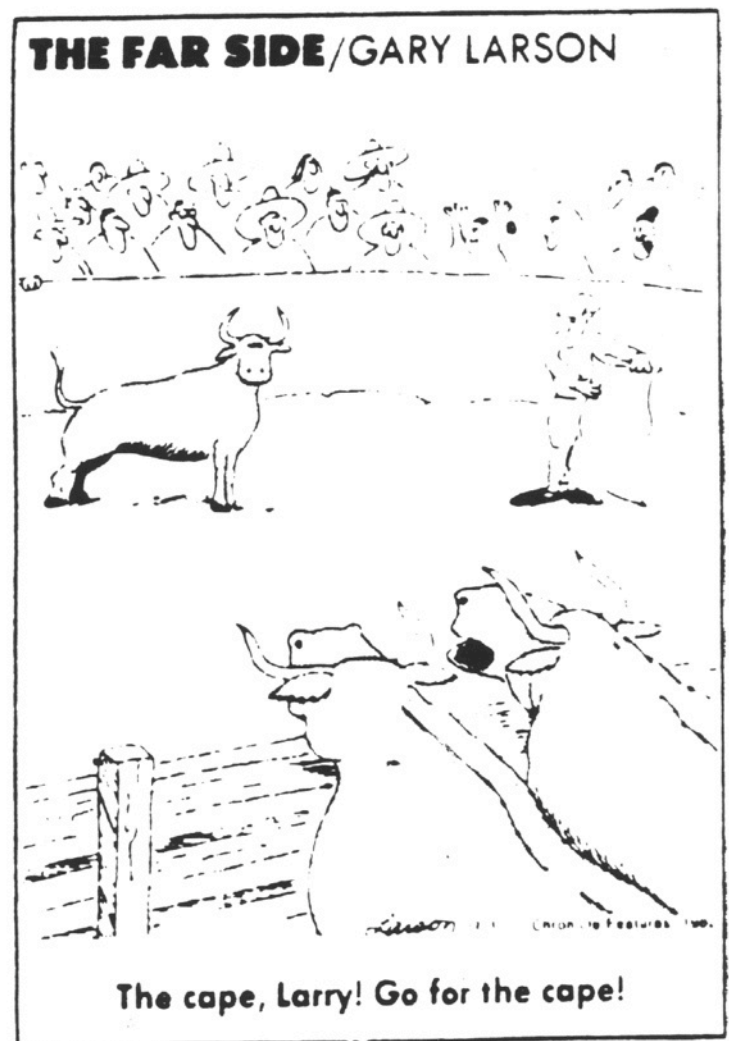
Degree Four exams are a real pleasure for spectators and an adventure for the participants. For this degree, expect at least two more years of training.

V. Degree Five: "Bringing It Together"

Degree Five acknowledges students for completing the sets of their art and honing their functional skills, touching for the first time the "outer fringe" of possibilities in their art. Degree Five could be viewed as a further maturation of and extension beyond Degree Four. Here students can employ a full scope of techniques (punches, pushes, kicks, knees, elbows, shoulders, etc.) powerfully without effort in a competitive situation. Degree Five students can easily handle Degree Two and Degree Three students. Their sets should be close to perfect and even the most difficult sections should be executed powerfully, easily and with excellent Cheng Hsin Body-Being. At this stage they must be able to exhibit effortless power in both striking and projecting/throwing while engaged in relational activities of various sorts. Expect a further two years of training.

VI. Degree Six: "Beginning Completion" of the Art - "Black Belt"

Degree Six acknowledges the first real stage toward completion of the art. Here lies the Cheng Hsin "black belt." Degree Six people can say with confidence to anyone "I know this art." They should be able to handle almost anyone in the field and fare well with all other martial artists or fighters. The degree six examinee must demonstrate every aspect of the art, from sets to skills, and show an understanding and development of



Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

all the principles of Cheng Hsin. They will be required to show some ability in weapons play (usually sword), boxing, competitive T'ui Shou, all energy exercises and games as in the Function Course and classes, and show some capacity to adapt the skills and principles to unfamiliar situations or encounters. Master Ralston has a secret test of the Mind Course he does not reveal to anyone, but obviously it's a make-or-break, pass/fail challenge. The exam basically takes into account all that has come before. He looks for the ability to "put it all together" with a depth of experiential understanding. At least two more years will probably be necessary to accomplish this level.

Degree Seven: "Esoteric Possibilities" - Mastery

Degree seven goes beyond the form of the art. A grasp and demonstration of Huan Sheng is required, as well as a demonstration of internal power (developed during earlier degrees). An understanding of the essence of Cheng Hsin as the source to all this teaching is striven for, and in a way that transforms one's view of the art and relational ability. It is a level of "Mastery" in one's art. Expect another four years and a lot of involvement to reach this stage.

Degree Eight: "Maturity"

This final stage represents "Maturity." It is gotten by teaching or communicating to at least one other the ability and understanding necessary for them to reach degree seven.

What is required of you in order to do this will mature you in your art and understanding. Beyond any of the form, you need to experientially grasp what Cheng Hsin is. At this point, time is not an issue.

Scott Jensen
February 1986

36. From Love With Peter:

"Distinctions In Experience"

(The following communication was the first "From Love With Peter.")

I offer this with great demand and in all seriousness. It is presented to be grasped deeply, to touch you in such a way as to alter your sense of reality and self, and so empower your ability and living. If it takes discipline on your part to get it, then so be it. Discipline yourself. I want you to read the sentences singly; pause after each and contemplate until you directly experience what is being said. It is "not" what you think! It is not easy to do. Please observe, look into, open up to, diligently fix your being and feeling-attention on the subject until you realize the truth of the matter as a presence, not as an idea. Be honest. Become the authority in this.

From time to time I will use the Internal Dialogue for some rather uncommon communications. They will most probably tend to be about the nature of reality. In order to use these talks properly you should

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

know that what I'm saying must be experienced as presently and always the way it is, as an observation of existence at a deep level, yet an available level. I'm not interested in whether you agree or believe in what I say or not. I'm only interested in your experience of it. So we must look into some distinctions.

The field of belief, agreement, thought, interpretation, and most of what we use to encounter something, is conceptual. In other words, arising out of the unnoticed and taken for granted sense of being you, come words, pictures, images, and notions, all of which are very familiar to you, and this is the field of concept.

It is not an experience of the "thing" encountered; it is a reaction or application to the thing encountered.

Most of us fail to make this distinction. In the following talk it is a very necessary distinction to make, and not conceptually distinct, but experientially or actually distinct.

These "applications" or associations that arise in place of directly encountering something are always familiar to you. Even when it looks like something arises that you have not previously conceived, it is held as familiar, and cognized at concept.

Anything cognized at concept must be familiar, since it arises out of what you have already established as conceivable.

Concept by its very nature is always familiar, except in the case of truly experiencing a concept; this is very rarely done and is non-conceptual itself.

To see how this is so, use the following talk as a test. If what arises in you is conceptual it may spark such reactions as boredom, interest, confusion, blankness, a thinking-that-you-understand, etc., yet all of this will actually be familiar to you, and will not touch, truly touch, the being of you. On the other hand, if experienced, it touches directly the very being of you and alters your present sense of reality. Many reactions may arise and undoubtedly the experience will slip into concept in due course; all of that is separate or distinct from the experience itself.

I have spent this time orienting us and preparing us for what is to come. If you have not realized (made "real" or grasped "as real") what I've already "actually" said, go back over it. In this talk those of you who are closest to me should grasp this deeply and immediately. If not, look with greater attention into your orientation and relationship to me. So let the message be out for my Apprentice Instructors: it is time to live your work, not just conceptualize it! Now, the talk:

In the past I have communicated that history is where we come from in relating to the present.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

It has also been observed that the more we hang out or relate historically, the less power we have.

I have made many references to history, what it is and our relationship to it; and in alignment with, or identical to that, we've looked into what memory is, and what or where ability is.

We notice that ability is a function of the present, not of the past. You also know that I call history all that was before this instant, this moment, and have stated that what most of us call "now" or the "moment" is in fact only history.

All of this has been said before, I'm only filling you in to get us up to date. I want to continue to clarify that, so I offer the following contribution.

Please notice, any experience in this moment exists only now. In the next, whatever was the experience in the last moment "is not." It does "not" exist, therefore does not exist in the present. It is and can only be retained conceptually; it is represented or symbolized, not lived.

Since a moment ago does not exist now, how do you maintain it or remember it? What is it that "is" now, in relationship to that moment? It is the concept of it! A picture or notion or image and/or thoughts and feelings "about" it. It is not it! Most of you will find this difficult to truly experience, yet it is true.



Now, if you conceptualized that moment at the time it was, or existed, then conceptualizing it in this moment will seem a lot like your encounter of it the first time, since it wasn't actually experienced even when it was.

If you do not make the real distinction between what is experienced or openly and directly encountered outside of history, and what is conceptualized, then this talk will have no power or reality. It will only be concept for you.

What I am saying is that which does not exist as a presence can only exist as a concept, and history "is not" present!

So all experience must fall into concept in the next instant. And we neither notice,

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

distinguish, nor understand this, so we are not "living" reality, we are conceptualizing it.

If we were together now, I would probably go on to lead us through and open us up to what is necessary to simply grasp the said observation of reality. Since you have this to read again I will simply let you do that until you experience the reality of it presently touching the being of you, and altering your sense of being and reality.

Peter Ralston
May 1984

37. From Peter With Love: "Questioning Being"

Although we all experience pain, discomfort, failure and the like, and we say it is unhappiness or suffering in nature, if we look, we can see that the scope is larger than we admit. We have pains that we learn to live with, that just fade into "life" and are ignored or not noticed, like never having found that "special someone" - just a good substitute - or the realization that your career has not achieved lifetime dreams, or, having achieved them, finding that they have no inherent happiness giving qualities and do not give you what you had hoped.

When we look, we usually can find a few such conditions that go mostly unnoticed or suppressed.

In an open or vulnerable moment we might admit to ourselves that we are actually not happy about these conditions. I want to suggest, however, that we suffer a much more constant condition than these singular events. Consider the constantly apparent necessity of protecting yourself, your emotional vulnerability, reacting to little incidents such as things said, fears. Also, we tend to ignore the pain inherent in being controlled by forces we consider good, such as lust, desire, love, need.

When we contrast all the things we want and don't want with an intuited or imagined sense of deep satisfaction, joy, and freedom, it appears that most of our life is not lived in ecstatic freedom or wisdom. The very notion and longing for that "supreme" state is only pain - since we don't have it. Even hope, that which we cling to as "holding the place" of how it could be, is a confession of the fact that life is not that way for us.

Since suffering means to carry on as a burden - to be "underneath," to survive or maintain something as a demand, a need, a necessity - we can see that indeed we are suffering life and self. What impresses me is the force, the tremendous power with which this is done.

What is also amazing is how absolutely ignorant we are of what this force, this tendency, this demand, really is. When we put a lot of free attention on what appears to be, we notice "that" it is. Yet we are no closer to knowing "what" it is.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

If I am correct about assertions that I have made in the past, we are to believe that our fundamental sense of being us, as individual beings, is founded on two diametrically opposed "realities," or core underlying beliefs about our most basic sense of self.

These are: that we are absolutely necessary, and that we are incapable of life. If we hold that we "need" to be, and are, at the same time, incapable ourselves of creating being (even though we appear to be), we are certainly stuck in a dilemma. If this is always so, then certainly a sense of burden must always be near.

If we fundamentally feel incapable of having our own self be, and continue to be, and we are stuck with having to carry on as a burden this one, this mechanism that we are - not knowing what or how it truly is and not being master of it - then surviving "I" is suffering.

On a daily basis, we successfully ignore the eventuality of our bodily death, yet I suspect that the inevitability of it creates a context for our living which, though not acknowledged, influences every aspect of our lives. No matter what is accomplished said, thought, built, or avoided, it all makes no difference in the end. Personally, we must end as a failure, and lose all that we've been trying to survive and be. By saying our success is measured by what we "leave

behind us" is quite inane since it can only be measured by someone else. You no longer "be," ergo no longer are party to the event called you, or anything you managed to be. It no longer "is" for you, or is you. You have failed to survive.



More practically, and perhaps more importantly, is the moment to moment or day to day stuff that you keep alive. The beliefs, opinions, judgments, desires, self-images, emotions, reactivity, and all that appears mentally, emotionally and psychically, as you and yours. When we watch ourselves from moment to moment,

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

we notice that there is a sense of holding something (everything) in place. Usually this is accomplished by a particular mood, self-image, and an overall judgment-assessment of our surroundings. All of this almost always goes unnoticed. This very holding is felt as necessary for you, whether felt as good or bad, to carry on as a burden (something you are underneath). Not noticing it, of course, it would seem like simply the way things are, or "caused" by the conditions of the present. Yet when we do notice our enslavement to having to be, think, and feel a particular way - our demanded habit and "need" to hold the world or any event or condition as we do - we still do not find a ready capacity to shift this holding, or be free of the burden of living out our self as a pattern, a habitual reactive response.

Requisite to going deeper into this is the demand that we fully grasp what is so for us, without doing so to further some end that will, beyond a doubt, cloud the truth of what we encounter.

Therefore I'm not going to offer anything that could be used as an answer, or as where it is you think I'm going with this. I want you to notice that more than likely you read this for the purpose of getting to the "good" stuff, the stuff that will save you from having to really confront what has been said up to this point, or the truth of the way it is for you. Notice if it seems unreasonable to leave what we have just looked into, without

a way out or a resolution. Obviously we only look into such things for the purpose of "fixing" them or getting out of them. Never for the purpose of knowing them, or deeply experiencing the truth of them.

Well, what're you gonna do now?

Peter Ralston
December, 1985

38. Inside the Empowering Transformation Workshop

Last month, Peter Ralston and the Level III apprentices facilitated a Empowering Transformation Workshop. The workshop was powerful. The apprentices had the responsibility of being in front of the room and "running" the workshop, with the commitment that the participants get value. The participants made tremendous movement, and Peter got to watch someone else run "his" workshop. I would like to share this experience with you.

Peter led us through an intense 12 week training, so that any one of us could run the entire Empowering Transformation Workshop. This involved weekly meetings, studying the ETW Manual, asking questions, running mock workshops, but most of all, coming to grips with what the Empowering Transformation Workshop "is." To be able to teach or communicate the work, I had to be able to come from the experience of what I was teaching. Not talk about it, or read from

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

a book, but communicate the experience, for the purpose of everyone in the room "getting" the experience.

Ridiculous. Incredible resistance came up, I wanted to quit, run away, be sick, get thrown in jail and have motorcycle accidents, "anything" but be in the front of the room with the responsibility of communicating some aspect of mastery. I continued to study.

So, the weekend arrives. The workshop is underway, other apprentices have been facilitating, and then, after a break, my turn comes up. I find myself sitting in the captains chair, looking out at a sea of expectant faces. I'm scared shitless. I say "welcome back" and start.

Now, my "purpose" for being there was for the participants to have an experience of what I'm talking about; to dialogue, to lecture, to draw, to do anything I need to do, to get the experience across. The more committed to my purpose I am, the simpler and easier it gets. At first, it's a struggle. I'm REALLY self-conscious, scared, and not with the group. I'm with me. Now what Peter pounded into us about what it is to be a facilitator began to emerge. As I was taught to do, I allowed my commitment to "take over," and as this happened, I dropped being scared. That's not what I'm here to do. Really. There's no place for fear about me when I'm totally on purpose. My purpose is for "them" (the participants).

I find myself speaking clearly, eloquently, without effort or fear, and speaking from the experience of what I need to say. Instead of feeling constricted I feel fluid, like what I'm doing is water gushing out of a pipe -no effort, simply moving. Time doesn't seem to exist, except that Peter writes me a note saying "move faster," and I do that. Suddenly, three hours later, my turn is over. I thank the participants, and step down.

The experience of facilitating is exhilarating and powerful, terrifying and joyful, really joyful, more so than anything else I've done here at the school. I'd like to point out that I'm absolutely terrified of doing it again and that the experience was absolutely satisfying. A lot of what I do at Cheng Hsin is this way for me. I want to welcome all of you to step into the unknown of Cheng Hsin. The apprentice program, the workshops, courses and classes are all designed for you to grow.

Karl Zeise
May, 1986

39. The Nature of "Being Calm"

When we speak of being calm what are we speaking about? We tend to think of calmness as feeling a certain way, and having some sort of control over our feelings. When you feel like "this" and think these kinds of thoughts and act in a manner consistent with those thoughts and feelings,

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

then you are calm. That's how you know you are calm, isn't it? Well if so, this is limiting in at least one way: without those kind of thoughts and feelings you cannot be calm. But of course, you say, that's paramount to saying if you're not calm then you can't be calm! Actually I'm suggesting that this is the way we hold calm and is not calm itself. By so regarding calm, we severely limit our access to the possibilities of being calm.

Perhaps Calm isn't a feeling or a concept. Perhaps it is the presence of the base in which things arise or be. When you are calm and know it because you have certain thoughts and feelings, isn't it true that fundamentally you feel unaffected, not controlled or upset by what is arising - and so are getting the effect you call calm? Just so, when you feel or think in modes assessed as upset or disturbingly affected by whatever is happening for you, you say you are not calm. This latter being the case, you have no access to calmness without somehow

"controlling" yourself and eliminating one set of thought-feelings and replacing it with another. If you are successful you appear calm. How many times, however, is this simply a suppression, or a "getting under control," beneath which you are not in fact openly and freely calm? Tell the truth. Aren't

you often afraid at these times that you might "lose control," might fall, be pushed or devoured by the suppressed forces of uncalm? And the times when you can't control it, you then have no access at all to calm.

Although most common, perhaps this is not the only way to hold calm; perhaps it is not even the truth. When we look, the possibility arises that the "base" or

context in which movement occurs is stillness. Thoughts arise from no-thought, and emptiness. Without stillness, no-thought and emptiness, how would we know or distinguish movements, thoughts and feelings?

In the domain of stillness we have to admit that there is no disturbance. There already is



Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

no disturbance. Disturbance arises from or is "known" in contrast to stillness, so there can be no disturbance in stillness, no-thought, or emptiness itself. This is not something we can change, control, stop or start. It simply is that way. I propose that calm is the presencing of this that is naturally so. It's what calm "is." Access to it is not determined by the presence or absence of any thoughts, feelings, manner or disturbance. It is simply shifting into what's true without changing anything. This creates the possibility of "being" calm, or lending oneself and thus lending or giving being to calm, even in the midst of great disturbance in thought and upset in feeling.

As an example of a similar kind of shift, let me share with you something I've found to be quite useful: Love is not a feeling. For most of us, this is a foreign notion at best. We hold love the same way we hold calm - as a feeling accompanied by thoughts and actions that are compatible with our beliefs and fantasies about that feeling. I'm asserting that love is not a feeling or anything else; it is an experience only.

At this point we reach an impasse if you do not know what I mean by experience. Since I spend days in workshops communicating this distinction, I will only say here that it is not the cognition of concept or feeling; it is prior to or contextual to thought and feeling. Love and calm are context, are experience, not feelings.

When on the occasion of feeling something like hurt, anger or fear in relationship to someone, and finding this feeling "basing" or influencing my free relationship to that person, I can shift to the "experience" of the love that is so, without changing anything in my feelings. Instantly I experience love for them even though the only feeling may still be something quite other than what we call love. Of course staying with this experience, and noticing it is simply true, my thoughts and feelings begin to adjust themselves to align with what is now the context. They don't seem to do so out of demand or force, or any request. They simply begin to lose their charge, their emotional orientation, since they find themselves arising "out of context," indirectly expressing what's there and, most often, inappropriately. Although nothing has been done to change them or have them not be, the feelings evaporate like a mist when the sun comes out.

So when we grasp calm like this, any inconsistent thoughts, feelings and manner tend to dissolve. If, however, we apply one ounce of force in an attempt to make them go away, we will become bound to them. On the other hand, if we let these incongruous thoughts and feelings float and shift to the experience of simply being, then calm is already present. Without attempting to change anything, any thought, feeling or action, we find ourselves in the presence of calm. If things change, fine; if not, fine.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

When I find myself in an embarrassing moment, just shifting to the presence of calm allows me to let the embarrassment itself be. It usually fades quickly, but while it is still active as residue from lingering conceptualization, it can turn into a kind of enjoyable or exhilarating experience of exposure that shows itself over and against the calm.

It seems that one word has repeatedly presented itself in our talk on being calm, and that word is "presence" or "present." When we look at it more closely we notice that being calm, as I have defined it, is paramount to being present. Since it is the experience of the "base" or context in which disturbance exists, now and always, it is also the base or context for "what is" or what is "present." Therefore simply being present, or getting into the presence of what is, is being calm.

Disturbances such as fear, and all that is fear-related, are only possible with some concept of an unwanted event, and a concept of a future in which that event may arise. Being based on the future, it is not relating to present time. It is not an experience of the presence of what is. Likewise all anger and related disturbances are based on the past, and so are also not a function of being present in the moment. If all disturbances are similarly based on concepts of the past and future (which I assert they are) then no-disturbance, or calm, is found in being present. So when you look at the principle

alluded to by the words "being calm" you should also, or as well, see being "present." The principle of being calm exists merely "as" presence, and so "in" presence.

So we could as easily say that this principle is as much being Present as it is being Calm. You may begin to grasp that this is not an offhand belief or simple rule for you to adopt. It is a profound shift into the truth, a doorway into the multi-dimensional presence of being, as are all of the principles. Do yourself a favor - experience them, study them, understand them. All.

Peter Ralston
September, 1985

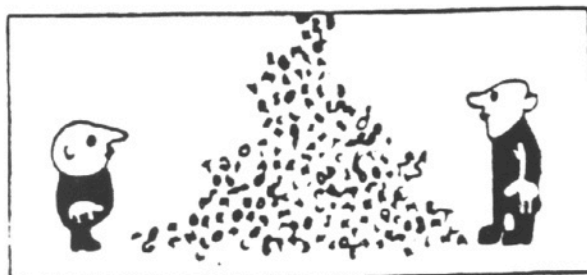
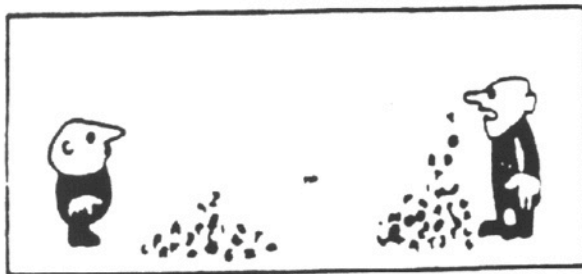
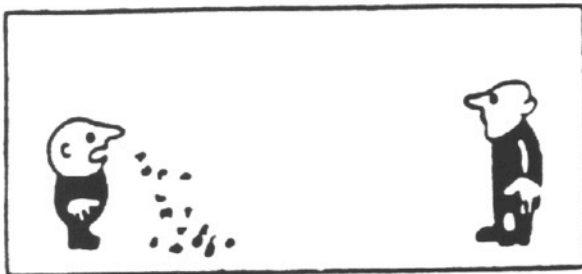
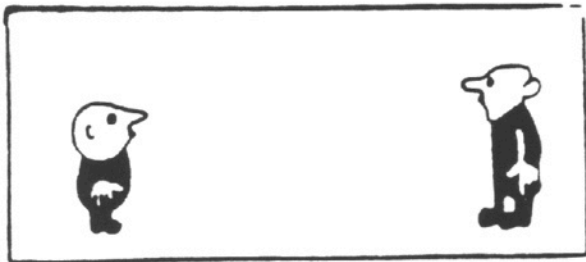
40. Freedom from Mind

When we are ignorant of the workings of what we call "mind," there is nothing that can be done which does not already fall under its set principles. No change can take place as long as the nature of "what is presently" cannot be grasped. Just as posture cannot be corrected without an acknowledgment of poor alignment, there is no freedom from mind until one realizes that everything we do, every facet of our lives, and our experience of the world is a habitual formulation of mind.

Although it is possible to follow intellectually the most extreme notion of the workings of the mind or to grasp a radical philosophy on the nature of

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

conceptualization, this kind of understanding gets us little if it's not followed by the presence and practice of what is grasped. After all is said and done and all the books on the subject have been read, don't we still find ourselves at the effect of fear, jealousy, desire, romantic love, hatred, pettiness, need, embarrassment and excitement, to name a few?



Obviously, more is called for than merely a lecture class or a seminar or a good book; we want to approach mind from an experiential familiarity. In the Principles Course we confront the body through the making real of new concepts of body and energy, and through what is called radical experimentation. Notions such as grounding, the sphere of awareness, and use of intrinsic strength are "tried on" and made real by the student, or they could not be understood no matter how flowery the explanation.

How much more confrontive then, is the challenge of that by which every other thing in our world is defined and given meaning and value? In the Mind Course, we endeavor to look honestly at "that which cannot be seen" to listen for what is not spoken and to participate fully in what does not appear at first to have value for us.

So of course, Mind Course students are those who will take responsibility for the course themselves; they are the ones who can honestly face their present condition and recognize the cost in freedom that the denial of this condition demands. I encourage you to see that "thinking" about mind falls short, the way you "feel" about mind doesn't matter, and there is nothing you can "do" about mind because it is already something being done! A disciplined and purposeful endeavor to match the purposeful habit of mind can be found in the Mind Course. The skillful and powerful function found in

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

Peter Ralston is intently and fully given to a committed group of people of which you are fully capable of becoming a part. This ten month adventure will begin October 1st. Sign up now and find yourself in the "driver's seat of your life."

Jef Edwards
May, 1986

41. The Challenge of Being: The Cheng Hsin Principles of an Effortlessly Effective Body-Being Course

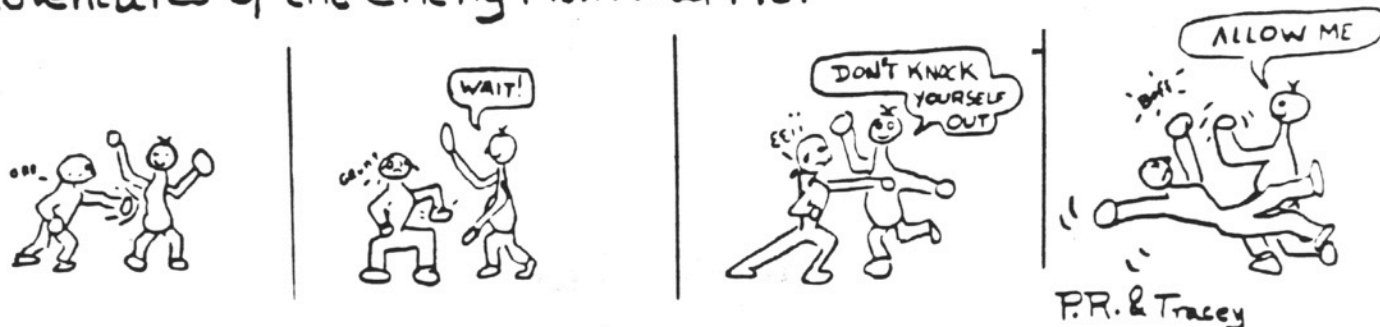
The challenge of being seems a never-ending one for us humans. The challenge of being good, being cared for, being satisfied, as well as being talented, being rich and being skilled in our undertakings are considerations which have driven us in life for as long as we can remember. Yet how often do we actually feel we are in control of what we are being at any given moment?

So how does being come about for us? Many students at this school (myself included)

often hold "being" to be some esoteric head trip or fantasize some magical state which would carry them away from the difficulties of reality. This never seems to do much for us though. It appears that when we are being, we are being right here, not in some fantasy land. Day in and day out, when we are being tired, bored, energized, happy, disappointed, scared or hungry, what we are being is what is real for us. So it looks like any approach to being will have to begin with what is showing up for us right now.

Herein lies the power of the Principles Course; this course actually demands that we have a different way of being show up for us right now. Putting attention on what we're really up to is a powerful exercise in itself; trying on the principles of Cheng Hsin can actually change your life. The principles are anything but arbitrary. Relaxing, being whole and total, centering, grounding and calming the mind are principles which are, quite literally, the base from which we operate. Whatever names we give them, the power of all that we do reflects the presence or absence of these principles in our lives. No kidding.

Adventures of the Cheng Hsin Warrior



Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

Lasting four months, the Principles Course handles all the mechanics of body movement and teaches all you need to know about energy. It is experiential, not a lecture course, so there is plenty of hands on (or body on) experience with the Cheng Hsin principles. It does not deal with any specific set of movements, so anyone may take the course.

Every student is capable of experiencing the simple presence of any principle as well as all the profound realizations of true workability which seem to be implied "down the road." Getting down the road, however, demands that we get on the road and do some traveling. Ability in being relaxed, for example, comes from training relaxation, not from knowing that relaxing is a "good" thing to do. Any principles course graduate knows that when they actually come from an experience of the principles, what they are doing works better.

Unfortunately, it is our tendency, having gotten some good results from following the principles, to lock into some process that we associate with the result, and then make it into a technique or style. Training the technique or style is not the same as training a principle.

When an athlete or a business person or an artist develops skill in their techniques and have the knowledge required to be proficient in their profession, we say they are good at the work they do, maybe even very good. Then there are the greats, the major leaguers.

The skills and techniques they train are usually the same if not identical to those practiced by others in their field, and the body of knowledge they work from is most likely the same one that everyone else does. Yet, these persons seem to be in an entirely different class; the base from which they are operating is a different one. I'm suggesting that the state of being from which they pursue their arts is more conscious and full of workable principles, and I'll bet those workable principles are relaxing, being whole and total, grounding, centering and calming the mind.

The demand of the Principles Course is one that is felt with an immediacy that we call real. At the same time, we are asked to give or bring something new to the way we are being now; also real. This simple demand is the challenge of being.

Jef Edwards
May 1986

42. No Matter What

About four years ago, when I first began my study of Cheng Hsin, I did something incredibly powerful and of lasting value for me: I made a commitment. It was a simple statement of intention made at a time when I could clearly see the scope and depth of the Cheng Hsin teachings. I committed to myself that "I would do this no matter what."

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

Long before I understood the power of commitment and the nature of having context, I arrived at an intention to delve deeply and uncompromisingly into the full scope of Cheng Hsin. I had come to notice a trait or habitual nature in myself - I never stayed with anything when it got tough, uncomfortable, or demanded true change in me. I wasn't truly accomplishing any growth, expansion or understanding of myself, of an art or any endeavor requiring substantial investment of time and energy. I was just going along in my life, picking up superficial understandings of this and that, measuring my growth by the extent of interesting topics I could think about. I even gained exceptional facility in discussing matters related to "consciousness," "metaphysics," "mysticism" and "psychology." What I absorbed through reading, thinking, and some academic training came out as my knowledge of the world. I was not particularly happy and satisfied nor was I unhappy and dissatisfied. I was simply being mediocre.

It was in the first few months of learning T'ai Chi that I found that I in fact lived with a deep and encompassing question. A sense of inquiry that never reached full expression yet existed as the basis and motivation for my many endeavors of academic pursuit. I wanted to know what life is, what I am and what is all of this. For the first time I found at Cheng Hsin others who were asking these kinds of questions, and powerfully so. It felt

so good, nurturing and satisfying to be among others who wanted to truly investigate these areas, and as well, to really get their hands dirty with the stuff instead of just talking about it. Simple things like relaxing, being in your body and being whole, total and complete were immensely satisfying. These communications were coming from an experience of what's really true and real in life. I was learning what I'd always wanted to learn: what's really going on.

It was around this time that I made my commitment. I participated in one of the most impactful experiences of my life in the taking of a four day Empowerment Intensive Workshop. For perhaps the first time ever I felt truly in relationship with others, actually participating in life as it actually is, and not as I imagine it to be. I fully realized that I had become involved with a profound opportunity. I had found a real study of life but my habit to back off could prevent me from learning. I recognized this was a study worthy of all of me. I suspected times would come when I'd scream and holler. I would decide to "take a break for just a little while." I would be afraid, discouraged or be off to another interest not quite as intense and demanding. I recognized that the nature of the study would require me to directly confront everything true of me, others and living. So I made a commitment that could handle all the stuff I historically would come up with. I created a context that would

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

always be greater than all urges, reasons and decisions to stop. My commitment was: "I will do this no matter what," which leads to only one conclusion where the commitment ceases to exist. That is, simply and powerfully reaching completion. Anything less than a genuine sense of completion with my study would be held as stuff of "no matter what."

Over the past few years I have met with all sorts of circumstances and perceived conditions in which I felt I was trying to do something impossible, times of confusion, fear and uncertainty. At times such as these I wanted to stop. I lost interest. I was too tired to practice. I could see no reason for my involvement in the study. All I had was my commitment. And each time I remained true to my commitment, a most wonderful occurrence came about. I broke through something and reached a more powerful and genuine understanding of Cheng Hsin. I could then see that all the stuff of "no matter what" related to growing pains, and if I had stopped, I would have never expanded beyond that stuff. It would have always been an area of which I chose to remain ignorant. I would have been overpowered by the influence of a "no matter what" and incomplete with the greatest involvement of my life.

I appreciate the power of the moment of clarity I had four years ago. It allowed me to make a commitment that serves as an instrument for cutting through all the stuff

that leaves me powerless, aimless and stuck in limitation. It has empowered me to approach the possibility of true change, growth and authentic understanding.

James Kapp
September 1985

43. The Cheng Hsin Apprenticeship Program

The Cheng Hsin Apprenticeship program is unique, powerful and demanding. The program empowers understandings that are real, transforming and inaccessible by any other means. A graduate of the complete program is fully capable of creating a Cheng Hsin school that offers a full range of workshops, studies in internal martial art, Cheng Hsin courses and even an Apprentice Instructor Program. The graduate could demonstrate the highest degree of skill and ability in internal martial art, would be a facilitator of Cheng Hsin Empowerment workshops, and realize (directly experience) Cheng Hsin.

Becoming an apprentice to the Cheng Hsin Teaching is a commitment to have a real and complete transformation occur. It is the most effective way to learn all that is available at the Cheng Hsin school. It is an acknowledgment for both yourself and the school, of an intention and a willingness to personally have true growth, ability and understanding show up.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

The total program spans a period of nine and one-half years. There are five distinct levels of achievement. Each level is a whole and complete pursuit. Graduation from a level signifies that true and genuine growth has been attained in the areas emphasized in that phase. A level is identified in terms of length of time, areas of accomplishment, and an overall context of power and learning.

Each level requires an increase in commitment and intention for a true mastery of Cheng Hsin. There is no obligation for an apprentice to continue to the next level of apprenticeship after a level graduation. There is, however, an explicit requirement that each level entered must be powerfully completed and graduation attained. The program is created as a source of support and encouragement. Cheng Hsin Trainers participate in each level to facilitate the apprentice in attaining mastery at that level.

The purpose of the Cheng Hsin Apprenticeship program is to work directly and honestly with the experience of Being. It is personal, intimate and an uncompromising confrontation with the

truth as it is revealed in our living. Sometimes it requires courage, demands expansion beyond personal limits and uncovers the most hidden aspects of ourselves. As such, it is effective, profoundly moving and touches the very core of our being. The study of Cheng Hsin, the nature of Being, and an authentic integrity in being, becomes real, accessible and lived.



Level III Apprentice Instructors

This is the only course of study that I know of, which in truth actualizes the pursuits of the "renaissance" man or woman, by powerfully supporting the growth of the "whole being." The depth and scope of this school takes the student to a completion which does not stop with an expertise in

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

philosophy, superb athletic ability or sensitivity and creativity in the arts. These skills will develop only as far as the capacity the individual has already established permits. By addressing the whole being, the apprentice program demands that the individual create a context that allows them to enter into areas and skills of being that have always been inaccessible to them. In this way the capacities that they do have are freed to go far beyond previous limits.

Seeing the truth is not easy, especially if we have not taken the steps necessary to free ourselves of the assumption that our survival is aided by lying to ourselves. The Level I Apprentice Program begins with the development of an expanded sense of freedom and capacity. This requires an understanding of the power of intention, completion, clarity and responsible communication. From this, personal power is developed. Working directly with the way we live, perceive ourselves and relate to the conditions common to daily life, the Level I apprentice develops the ability to have what is said be what is so. This simple training of telling the truth allows a refreshing sense of responsibility for oneself to show up. The truth of "you" is what the apprentice program is about.

In Level I it is realized that one is more than what one thinks or feels; there is an experience of the whole being. In order for learning to take place on all levels, the teaching must be received as more than a

thought or a feeling; it must be encountered by the whole being. This is the doorway to Level II. It is here that the apprentice recognizes the truth of the Level I program as something which <<is>>, rather than something that was only taught. Through their own presence, their listening ability is cultivated and new levels of reaching into the world around them, their own experience, and the teaching of Cheng Hsin, become available. Through this newly empowered ability, they are able and encouraged to create their own course of study. Attainment of Degree II is required at this level.

Learning the skills and attaining the understandings necessary to facilitate others in a powerful and transformative way begins at Level III. One is asked to go beyond oneself and actively pursue depths of ontological study that demand transformation and therefore commitment. A great deal of personal and private attention from Peter Ralston brings forward real and clear movement in the apprentice. As the levels continue, the requirements and confrontation, as well as the value and depth, increase. The time commitment for Level III is 18 months and the skill commitment is Degree IV; for Level IV it is 2 years and Degree VI; and Level V is the commitment to go all the way and is four and a half years with attainment of Degree VII.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

What is guaranteed to and demanded from the apprentice is the attainment of a genius of being. The most esoteric and the most obvious are studied and mastered. Ability in facilitating workshops, courses, other apprentices, and teaching students is achieved. Mastery of the psycho-physical and meta-physical levels of human existence is undertaken. The very Source of Reality is experienced. The scope of the Apprentice program is the best that Cheng Hsin has to offer. As a matter of fact, it is primarily why Cheng Hsin exists. For this reason it is not exclusive. It is possible for every student of Cheng Hsin to apply to be an apprentice. It is the REAL study.

James Kapp and Jef Edwards
September 1985

44. Going For the Extra Stuff

The activities of Cheng Hsin could be seen as either just real weird, or coming from some purpose. I wonder if it has ever happened that someone walking by the school has done a double take upon realizing that the staff is actually sitting in a circle staring at a piece of chalk.

There is a lot going on at the school. Some of it is easy to make sense of and some of the other stuff may appear to be "way out there." It seems to require some experience to recognize how all of the stuff of Cheng Hsin fits together. My experience shows not only

that the classes, courses and workshops are connected, but that they feed one another and work together to get across the whole of the communication of Cheng Hsin.

This was difficult for me to see in the beginning of my studies. I figured I was at the school to learn T'ai Chi and all this other stuff was extra and not what I was here for. This notion I applied especially to the aspect that is called "empowerment work." I could see some value in the Principles and Function Courses, but the Mind Course and "Enlightenment" type workshops seemed to be more for the people who like to share their feelings in a group, something like an encounter group.

Peter talked to me about attending an Empowerment Intensive, and I did. I came away with a different sense of what he was available to teach. I could intuit that the power and ability I experienced in Peter was somehow related to this kind of work. It was all new to me and sort of scary to dive into something I knew nothing about, but I went for it anyway. At that time I could not imagine anything more unrelated to my interest in T'ai Chi than an empowerment intensive, but I also heard in Peter's invitation an opportunity to join him in having more of what was being offered at the school. I felt I was taking a significant step towards actually learning the T'ai Chi Ch'uan he was capable of teaching me.

While in the intensive I was brought face to face with "me." I felt openings, resistance,

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

and unreasonable joy. All sorts of stuff showed up and I found great value in just getting to open up and see what was there for me, as me and my way of living. It wasn't anything like an encounter group or a place to just tell everyone off, or be emotional. Rather it was a place to just tell the Truth of how it is and move into the substance of me. The intensive ended and I didn't feel what I thought would be more powerful and capable. Rather I felt true to my experience. I was left with a raw honesty that felt vulnerable, blasted apart from my armor of protection and exposed. I wasn't the powerful being I would have imagined myself to be, but I sure felt honest to the being that I actually was. And this was the me that resumed a study of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

I didn't practice a lick of the set during the period of the intensive but when I returned to my study I was capable of doing a level of T'ai Chi that was very different than the T'ai Chi I did before. Something was coming through my practice of the art that was not there before, and it had nothing to do with training in the form of the art. Although I felt more vulnerable and at risk when doing

Outreaching Hands (T'ui Shou) I also found in this, actually being with a partner. I felt more whole, in my body, and with what was going on, with me and in this relationship. This was not just psychological. I actually "felt" more. For the first time I recognized T'ai Chi Ch'uan as an art that demanded openness to be in relationship to another. That the skills and abilities I wanted were closely related to my capability to experience myself as being and to be in communication with another who was also being.

All of this brought me to a radical shift in what I was up to in my study. I had an experience of what the "extra stuff" was really about and I could see it was not extra at all. The scope of the Cheng Hsin teachings actually included all of what is offered at the school. I started to learn the T'ai Chi Ch'uan that Peter is teaching, not the art I thought it was. So when I exercise my ability to be in a communication, or courageously look into my fear, or contemplate the question "Who am I?" there is the sense of saying, "So, this is T'ai Chi."

James Kapp
May 1986



Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

45. Freedom In Not-Knowing

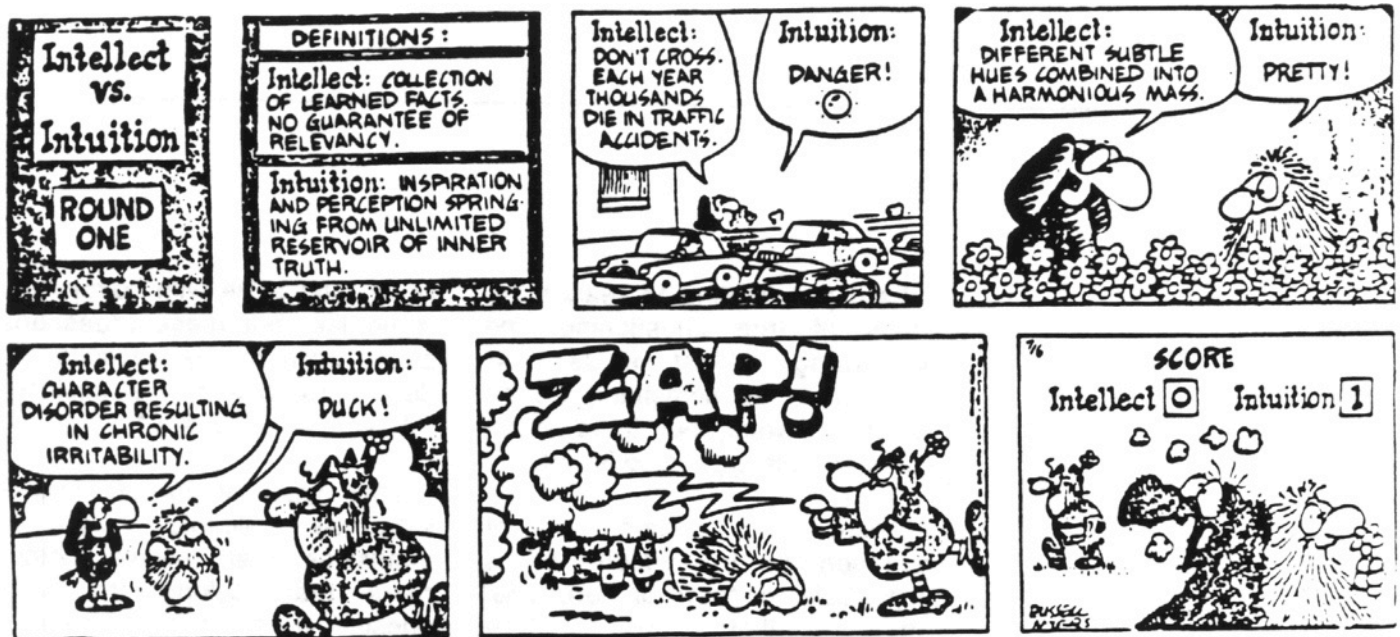
As a result of work I've been doing lately in the Mind Course and Apprentice Program, I have been discovering some very powerful things about Being and not-knowing. To not know or be in the state of not-knowing, I must first be with what I habitually ignore and look beyond what I think is true. What is fundamentally true is that I don't know beans. I don't know what I am, or what you are, what my body, feeling or anything is! When I relax into this, what is simply true is that beyond any doubt or thought, I don't know anything.

Immersed in this, a sense of true knowing arises. It seems to come from being with what is true, beyond my hopes, beliefs, or personal considerations. My sense of knowing and not-knowing dissolve, somehow, into one, and both appear to be

true at the same time, in paradox. I am not expecting anything or thinking of the past. What's there is simply what's before me, and the freedom of being in the presence of what's true.

I can see my thoughts and feelings, what I normally live in, my "knowledge," all applied, all generated like thick smoke to cover this base of not-knowing. My smokescreen is almost perfect, only a sense of basic incapability and uneasiness seeps through, and then, only when I don't ignore it.

When I truly recognize that I don't know, I find freedom from my hopes, thoughts, and knowledge of the world, not because they cease to exist but because I know them for what they are.



Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

This state is fundamentally different than the way I live, day to day. I suspect this is basic to everyone's existence and is accessible as an experience. I wonder, experiencing this, what else is possible.

Karl Zeise
September 1985

46. Why Isn't Anyone Listening To Me?

It's kind of like finding yourself in the river - you resent and resist that it be necessary to struggle to the surface.

"Why must I have to be courageous, contemplate, live in an inquiry and openness, a movement that is against the grain of what simply befalls me and arises from me just in being the way I am? I AM - why can't I just BE? Why doesn't everything work out and be "right" just because I am? Doesn't the Universe know that I have come? Doesn't the world appreciate me and that "I am being!?" Don't others recognize that I am all that is meaningful and necessary and significant and magnificent? Doesn't the Universe care?"

Of course you're still in the river. The choice is yours.

Peter Ralston
February, 1985

47. Huan Sheng Corner

Peter has given me permission to talk to you about what the Senior Apprentice Instructors are up to in our secret or esoteric studies with Peter.

We want to share with you some of the phenomenal experiences that come about as a result of this work. One of the things we do with Peter is what he calls Huan Sheng.

Huan Sheng is the esoteric or highest level of fighting skill in Cheng Hsin. In Huan Sheng we study things that I never knew existed about reality. We are required to move into experiences of Being so deeply that the mind is utterly blown! I am now beginning to appreciate all that Peter has done and demanded from us up to this point. I can see that without that preparation and confrontation I would not have the faintest chance of being able to truly hear or come close to grasping what we are doing in Huan Sheng.

I also want to tell you that the real power lies in exactly what he is telling you, if you could only hear what he is really saying. I didn't really know this or appreciate its profundity until my mind was opened in his teaching us Huan Sheng. So much I could have known or seen if I had only studied with more genuine openness and commitment.

I (we) intend to write more to you in further issues of I.D. about our personal experiences of the magnificence of Huan Sheng and the power of Internal Training! It is

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

unbelievable, folks! This is only an introduction.

An Apprentice Instructor
December 1983

48. The Joy of Being

The joy of Being
is equaled only
by the immensity of the pain.
When we shrink from the pain
we only suffer.
When we breath it
deeply and beyond, embracing it
powerfully,
we are instantly greater
than the pain;
which is as great as life.
This is the domain of freedom
and joy.
Although in the end
there is no reason,
we have lots of reasons for the pain.
There is no reason
for the joy.

Peter Ralston

49. The Gentle Rain

There are moments of dramatic realization in Cheng Hsin. Something becomes clear for the first time, a new and totally different realm of awareness is suddenly apparent. The impact is so great and consuming that a complete transformation appears to take place. It is like being swept up by an ocean wave. The realness of it, the exquisite integrity of this way to experience being comes in overwhelming proportion.

And there are the times when this is not. The teaching is appreciated more as the sprinkle of a spring rain. Soft, subtle, refreshing perhaps, yet far from the crashing power of the surf. I have come to know and respect the value of these times of gentle rain. The day by day, month by month practice of all that I know. Although generally unglamorous, my daily practice is where the principles become substantial in my experience. It is continuous movement towards having the Cheng Hsin teaching as my true way of being.



Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

Never have I found my practice to be anything less than profound. Nor do I ever consider a single set of T'ai Chi to be in the realm of the mundane; and still there is a subtle nature to the transformation process that's taking place. Each day I spend time alone to simply work with my understanding. I experiment, find out and feel. I do T'ai Chi sets coming from all that I know. All the while I watch and correct, look into things, honestly see what I'm doing, noticing why and what transpires.

Postures that once were nothing more than awkward attempts by a body held in tension, restriction and confused symmetry have become more open, fluid and simply done. What I am able to do now as opposed to six months ago is remarkable. And it is an accomplishment arising out of progressing inch by inch.

Sometimes even less, sometimes more. With greater consistency I'm finding that I can feel another's whole body, that I really am using energy and it's becoming as real and tangible as feeling my arm. I could go on and on with a list of what I've found to be true in Cheng Hsin principles through daily practice. What I am having is the product of consistent practice.

I'm becoming so familiar with various principles that I'm able to go beyond the condition of initial recognition of a principle and move into being with it. I find that I occasionally tip the scale in favor of having Cheng Hsin principles show up as where I'm

coming from. It is at these times that I don't have to "do" anything to be aligned, I just am. I am creating the teaching as the foundation of my existence. My practice is the very soul of my day.

James Kapp
December 1983

50. Private Territory

Suppose Peter Ralston came up to you one day during class and said, "Come up to the school tomorrow afternoon and I'll go over your movements with you. You can do your set for me, and we'll take a look at anything you need work on. Then we'll go over any other problems or questions you have."

How does that sound? Like a really great deal, if it ever happened to you? Well, you can have it happen. All you have to do is reverse the process: just walk over to Peter and say, "I'd like a private lesson."

I finally did this after being here for more than a year, and I only wish I had done it sooner. It sure would have speeded up my training. Previously, I had thought that I should be able to get whatever I needed by going to classes and weekend practice. Whenever I had a problem, I would usually think, "I'm out of shape" or "I should be more centered" or "I should get serious and practice more." I didn't think of Peter as a resource that "I" could use to advance

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

myself. Taking private lessons looked like something that only the hot-shit old-timers did to refine their brilliance. Gradually I noticed that I was making use of everything else possible to help myself. I was repeating the Principles Course, choosing senior students to practice with in class and reading "The Principles of Effortless Power." Taking a "P.L." began to appear not as a wholly different thing to do, but as the next logical step. So, I took the step.

My private lessons have turned out to be as necessary as I thought they would be. Peter has been excellent in working with my stiffness and energy problems in T'ai Chi, T'ui Shou and free-fighting. When we work on centering or weight shifting, he shows me what I'm presently doing with my body and my energy feeling, and always has some movement I can do or an exercise we can do together that results in my having an expanded feeling of being in my body. Then I will go back and do a T'ai Chi sequence or a T'ui Shou technique with him, and it will feel physically more simple, instead of being a complicated struggle. After a P.L., I feel more connected in my body and energized as well as relaxed. I feel at least as relaxed as I felt after those weekly massages I used to pay for, and in a private lesson I learn something.

Working with Peter is also helping me to start opening up to move beyond my personal resistance. In our private lessons he has me confront self-imposed limits and

habitual attitudes, as they appear in my practice of the functional arts. Peter won't let me get away with bad habits, whether it is not completely turning my hips when I punch or not fully outreaching when I do an uproot.

I have experienced hesitation and fear in my T'ui Shou and free-fighting classes. I notice that I want to get better without having to confront my contracted way of being. However, in private lessons I am forced to change; if I do T'ui Shou or boxing in my same old way, I will end up getting thrown around the room, or punched all over. Anyone who has done functional P.L.s can tell you that when Peter Ralston is fully there with you, you better turn off your internal bullshit and be present with him. The situation demands that you start transforming yourself "now," by shifting into being with your partner, not with an emotional projection of what is going on. This "supportive confrontation" (also found in another form in the Apprentice Program) speeds up your growth remarkably, here and in your whole life.

Often it doesn't take many sessions to get what you want. You will be surprised at how fast you will learn, especially if you practice after each lesson. There is a fee schedule posted on the door near the dressing rooms. If money seems to be a problem, please talk with me about how I handled it. Really consider this an opportunity for yourself.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

You can always do without it, but you will do much better with it.

Bob Smith
December 1985

51. T'ai Chi Sword

**The nature of the sword is touched,
followed with an openness that seeks no
answer.**

**Again and again the movements are
practiced,
beyond failure, beyond form,
burning away all but the presence of
Listening.**

Body and sword are one being.

**We move together,
breathe together,
lost within the vehicle of purpose.**

**True relationship.
Center moves with center
in a whispering dance of power and death,
symmetry and life.**

Kate Bishop
February 1985

52. The White Part

Students new to the Cheng Hsin School, or those unclear about what they should be up to while they are here, often need some sense of direction, a study plan and an

indication of how progress is provided to meet this need.

When I first met with Peter for private lessons he asked me what I wanted to learn. I sort of shifted my weight from foot to foot, searched the ceiling for an answer and finally came up with "T'ai Chi." He walked me over to the school's north wall and we looked at the sheet listing the T'ai Chi Ch'uan degree requirements. He told me that the best way to do that was to work on the areas on the sheet. He asked me how far did I want to go. I pointed to the bottom of the list and said "the white part". He took all of me in via a glance, looked back at the list, pointed toward the first line and said, "OK, we'll start here." I was ambitious, Peter realistic.

Peter understood that the only real way for me to reach the "white part" was by working down the list, achieving a degree promotion each step of the way. The degrees are significant indicators of substantial and real accomplishment in understanding and ability. My ambition could be met, but only through a demonstration of mastery in the requirements for each degree. There was not one item on the list misplaced or superfluous to an authentic achievement of mastery.

Our work began that day and days afterward in acquiring something real, authentic and genuinely aligned towards reaching mastery in T'ai Chi Ch'uan. In the weeks, months, and years to follow this most propitious beginning was to unfold into an

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

in-depth investigation of what is really necessary for mastery in T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Yet never did we once depart from adherence to the components of the degree system. The system was the study plan worthy of my ambition to reach the white part.

James Kapp
September 1985

53. Unsought in the Heart

The true measure of a person seems to lie in the standard of their conscious and free emotional relationship with others.

It is not found at all in their beliefs, their opinions or their judgments.

It is not found in their philosophy, their intelligence, their skills or abilities.

It is not found in their type, their make-up, or their particular temperament.

Rather it is in their true intention, their presence with others and their emotional orientation to the truth.

Peter Ralston
from *Reflections of Being*

54. The Insightful Eye Of A Master

Yagyu Tajima-no-kami was a great swordsman and teacher in the art to the Shogun of the time, Tokugawa Iyemitsu. One of the personal guards of the Shogun one day came to Tajima-no-kami wishing to be trained in fencing. The master said, "As I observe, you seem to be a master of fencing yourself; pray tell me to what school you belong, before we enter into the relationship of teacher and pupil."

The guardsman said, "I am ashamed to confess that I have never learned the art."

"Are you going to fool me? I am teacher to the honorable Shogun himself, and I know my judging eye never fails."

"I am sorry to defy your honor, but I really know nothing."

This resolute denial on the part of the visitor made the swordmaster think for a while, and he finally said, "If you say so, it must be so; but still I am sure you are a master of something, though I do not know of what."

"If you insist, I will tell you. There is one thing of which I can say I am a complete master. When I was still a boy, the thought came upon me that as a Samurai I ought in no circumstances to be afraid of death, and I have grappled with the problem of death now for some years, and finally the problem of death ceased to worry me. May this be at what you hint?"

"Exactly!" exclaimed Tajima-no-kami. "That is what I mean. I am glad that I made no mistake in my judgment. For the ultimate secrets of swordmanship also lie in being released from the thought of death. I have trained ever so many hundreds of my pupils along this line, but so far none of them really deserve the final certificate for swordmanship. You need no technical training, you are already a master."

Hagakure
middle of the seventeenth century



simply realize the outstanding value and magnificent opportunity that the words Cheng Hsin represent.

Imagine you are a Tahitian and you've never been off the warm, tropical island that "is" the world to you. Now say I start talking to you about snow. No matter what I say, you will not have an experience of snow - unless you do the improbable by experiencing snow beyond anything I've said to you. So imagine an experience such as that for Cheng Hsin, which is not as easily represented as snow.

So you see, one of the essential components of Cheng Hsin is inquiry. Many of us don't truly know how to powerfully use our facility to inquire, to question. Asking the right question and truly wanting to know requires first an openness and an allowance

55. What Are We Up To?

At Cheng Hsin we have to communicate to you about something that is impossible to symbolize. What I mean by that is we can talk about it, we can communicate how great we think it is, we can represent it, but we cannot actually say or even show what "it" is. I cannot symbolize it for you and have that symbol be "it." So when all is said and done - even before all is said and done - you will have to make a leap. You will have to go beyond anything you've seen or heard and

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

for not knowing, and most of us are too busy trying to know or pretend we know, to actually inquire! To ask the right question is more valuable than receiving a thousand answers. But this has to be done with your being, not just with your mouth or mind.

So let's exercise that ability: I want you to actually question why you came here, and the way I'd like you to do that is by telling yourself whatever comes to mind right off. Whatever is the case for you. Then I'd like you to pause and take another look. Why would you come to something like this?

Beyond that, I want you to ask yourself what you want. Not just here, but what do you want that would motivate you to go out and investigate something? Start inquiring into your motivations and into what you want in relationship to yourself - dig a little deeper into that. What do you want for yourself? Are you willing to get it? Are you committed to openly and honestly asking that question, and then putting in the time and discipline and intelligence to pursue what you need to pursue? To practice and learn and deeply move your own being, so that you actually become what you want to be?

Consider this: Freedom is a cornerstone principle and goal of Cheng Hsin, and perhaps even its purpose for being.

Peter Ralston
February, 1985

56. A Message From The Master

Cheng Hsin represents the possibility of a way of being that is not simply a variation on your present way of being; one that is lived out of a context that doesn't now exist as a reality for you, and would displace the one that has historically been lived out as you. The key here, however, is "represents." Our task is to experience it -- get into or lend ourselves to it -- as the force and consciousness of life.

This may sound impersonal and threatening, even impossible. How could it sound any other way?

Peter Ralston
October, 1981

57. The Art of "Giving Being" to Another

I want to briefly describe something to you that is at the heart of our practice at Cheng Hsin. Few students have grasped it yet, and this essay is too brief to do it justice, but it is to the point. Contemplate it. It is useful to have background on "Giving Being," such as that found in the Empowering Transformation Workshop. In this communication, I'm addressing the possibility of giving being to a particular relationship with another person and to the process that arises in that interaction.

Original Internal Dialogue Anthology

The art of giving being to another exists as a function of relationship, and paradoxically appears as a function of giving or creating. In order to approach the experience of "giving being" to a desired form of relationship with another, we must create this relationship as we would create a principle or state of being. We begin "giving being" by fully experiencing others exactly the way they are, including their context and exactly what they're doing, and only what they're doing, in each moment. From this base of acceptance and surrender we can paradoxically create the relationship to be some way without reason and without process.

However, it is also true that we must want what they want, or "create" what they want. We may create without process, merely as a creative act, but if what we create is going to show up effectively in the relationship, we must never leave or separate from the occurring process. Since we each identify with being an individual, separate and limited, the tendency is for us to attempt to create exclusively. When this occurs we will suddenly separate from true giving being and from the process that "is." What appears to be created by us exclusively will appear as pretense, opinion, hidden belief, or fantasy, and not as "real" or really powerful (effective in what is seen as reality). Give totally to receive totally. Be them. Create them. This is the Art of Cheng Hsin.

In the old T'ai Chi classics it says: "From Wu Chi evolves T'ai Chi which is the mother of Yin and Yang . To state it in Cheng Hsin terms: "Absolute Nothing is the context for Consciousness (Cheng Hsin) which is the Principle within which and from which "being" is created as a function of giving and receiving, self and other."

I see no true evidence, only remnants, that the T'ai Chi founders originally "knew" this, or that T'ai Chi "was" this. I've seen evidence from a very few masters and have heard tell of references to past masters and teachings that indicate the possibility that this experience was, to some degree, there for them. Yet I have no reason to believe that anyone of them truly understood it for what it is. It is possible that they did. For us, the question is irrelevant.

Peter Ralston
May, 1986

