

China Chi and Chicanery

Since Tai Chi Chuan and other Chinese exercises do involve systematic mental programs of mood and mind training, it is only natural that they should produce this relaxation response among practitioners.

It is a widespread belief that one who has trained extensively in Chi gong can produce effects that take place outside the body and often seem to defy the laws of science. Unfortunately for believers, these feats are rarely, if ever, performed under properly controlled conditions. To the best of my knowledge, these effects have not been proved to occur in such a way that they cannot be explained by our current understanding of science. In some cases, for instance, when martial artists break concrete or wood, they may believe that they are using Chi when in fact the feat is quite explainable within physics as we understand it.⁽⁵⁾

Invoking Occam's razor, that the simplest solution consistent with the facts is more likely to be true, We are once again left without evidence of Chi.

Other feats are much more difficult to explain and require the services of a qualified magician to help design control conditions. When such conditions have been provided, the effect of the Chi power again disappears, leaving little or nothing to support the existence of these powers. A 1988 CSICOP delegation to China provided such tests, and without exception remarkable powers failed to manifest themselves (Kurtz et al. 1988). Sociologist Marcello Truzzi (1985) had a similar experience. I viewed a report on a supposed test of Chi gong-inspired psychokinesis in Taiwan, and I was appalled at just how poorly designed the test was. This response was doubly felt since I had just finished reading James Randi's *The Truth About Uri Geller*. The parallels were simply overwhelming.⁽⁶⁾

These powers, as alleged proof of Chi, were shown in the Moyers series in a segment in which Moyers viewed a Chi gong teacher known as Master Shi. In a dramatic episode, Master Shi allegedly demonstrated his control over Chi by such acts as pushing over large numbers of students with one hand, and in turn not allowing himself to be pushed over when a large number of these same students shoved him in unison. In a particularly dramatic incident, one of the students, an American studying in Beijing, attempted to pick up and throw Master Shi, but met with no success.

I have watched this Moyers sequence carefully about a half dozen times to see if there was any evidence of fakery on the part of the students or the teacher. I have noted the following: Different students when pushed by the same wave of Master Shi's hand fall and roll different distances. Similarly, the students have different expressions on their faces. As they are thrown back, some grimace as if the experience was unpleasant, while others laugh and seem to enjoy it. Meanwhile, Eisenberg seems somewhat unimpressed by these performances. The American student then announces that he is going to try to pick up his Chi gong teacher and throw him down on the ground. He explains to Moyers that he really does want to do this, while Master Shi, who presumably speaks no English, looks on with apprehension from the background. The student then slides into throwing position and grasps the teacher's arm. His body trembles with the apparent effort of this attempt at a throw. Meanwhile Eisenberg yells, "Try harder. You look like you're faking." The student's foot begins to flop around like a dying fish, supposedly to show just how much effort he is evincing in this attempt to throw this man to the ground. Ultimately, he gives up and announces that Master Shi is reversing his energy through his use of Chi gong and that it is in fact humanly impossible to pick up and throw his teacher.

I offer the following comments, which should supplement Eisenberg's ("You look like you're faking"). Most Asians, particularly a Chi gong instructor, are quite concerned with face and image. If one is interested in his teacher's saving face, then it is quite important not to bounce him on his head on international television. If you do so, then the teacher might, at the very least, not teach you anymore. Second, I have found myself in many situations where I have been required for one reason or another to lift people up off their feet and into the air (ambulance attendant, hospital orderly, rock-concert security guard, older brother, happy uncle, etc.). Step one in picking up another person is pretty much always to make sure that you have your feet firmly planted on the floor, or else you both might land on your faces as you fall over. It would seem that before we accept this segment of the Moyers program as cause to revamp Newton's laws of motion, we should at the very least conduct a few controlled tests to see if the student just might have been trying to make his instructor look good in front of Bill Moyers. I'll leave to someone else the mechanics and ethics of designing a double-blind test to see if a martial-arts student can throw a non-Chi gong master more easily than a Chi gong master.

Having surveyed the evidence so far, there seems to be little evidence of substance that supports the existence of Chi. Although some, including myself at times, find this quite disappointing, it is really not too surprising when we look at the extent of the claims and the way science works. Science and scientific theories and knowledge don't just happen arbitrarily. They are developed based on careful observation and testing over the course of many years, if not generations. Chi theory states that the function of the human body is based on a system of energy that circulates throughout all other existing systems and integrates with them all. There is no evidence that such a system exists. Similarly, if such a system does exist, but for whatever reason has managed to avoid detection by science, then it would seem logical that there would be large and sweeping gaps in our knowledge of human physiology every time we examined a system that the Chi interacted with. In other words, if Chi controls and influences the behavior of the human body, and we have not detected Chi, then the existence of Chi would be conspicuous by its absence. Personally, I believe that

further study of traditional Chinese medicine should uncover many valuable things, such as some useful herbal treatments. I also believe that modern medicine and healthcare have many problems that should be looked at seriously and possibly fixed. Despite these, it is important to examine any body of knowledge critically before employing it for anything as important as healthcare, and this includes the traditional arts and sciences of other cultures. If one wishes to truly understand something, one must be willing to look beyond the explanation traditionally presented. To be truly open-minded, one must be willing to step beyond the boundaries and limitations that have been inherited. To pursue the truth, you must be willing to consider the teachings that cultures have to offer, but you must also hold those teachings up to careful examination.

Notes Actually

Chi, is believed to flow through everything that exists in varying amounts, not just living matter. The study of how Chi flows through landscaping and living environs and how it can be manipulated to benefit humanity is known as "feng shui," or Chinese geomancy. Feng shui is still taken quite seriously by many people throughout China. Return

This is done normally to test one's ability or to increase one's self-confidence, although there is a great deal of debate within the many-faceted world of martial arts about what pragmatic use such acts actually have. Although some have suggested that martial artists treat wood and other targets to make them more easily breakable, it is important to understand that in some cases they actually treat materials to make them more difficult to break and thus increase the challenge. Having broken many pieces of wood and other material with my body over the years, I will simply say that, although it is sometimes a silly thing to do, it is also a lot of fun. Return

According to the request, before the General Secretary Hu seriously study at the Central Party School provincial or ministerial level education classroom speech, Li Jianguo, secretary of serious study in the province's speech at the Ninth Party Congress and in the city Songyuanfangshuji 11's speech at the party congress, learning LI Secretary in the Xianju party groups and the central theoretical study group monitoring the forum, in his speech, conscientiously study on the State Council on strengthening food and product safety supervision and management of the special provisions. In addition, the City Industry and Commerce Bureau, the scene in Xingtai City

August 2007 had been closed to the normal procedure for investigations on the case, immediately after the county's back on this period of time is usually the case for self-control to standards of self-examination, the meeting of the meeting, the re-made for the re-again, and can be turned up for the workers, the remedy remedy. In particular, some Yingshang must be resolutely corrected, no matter how good place to fight for.

About the Author

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