

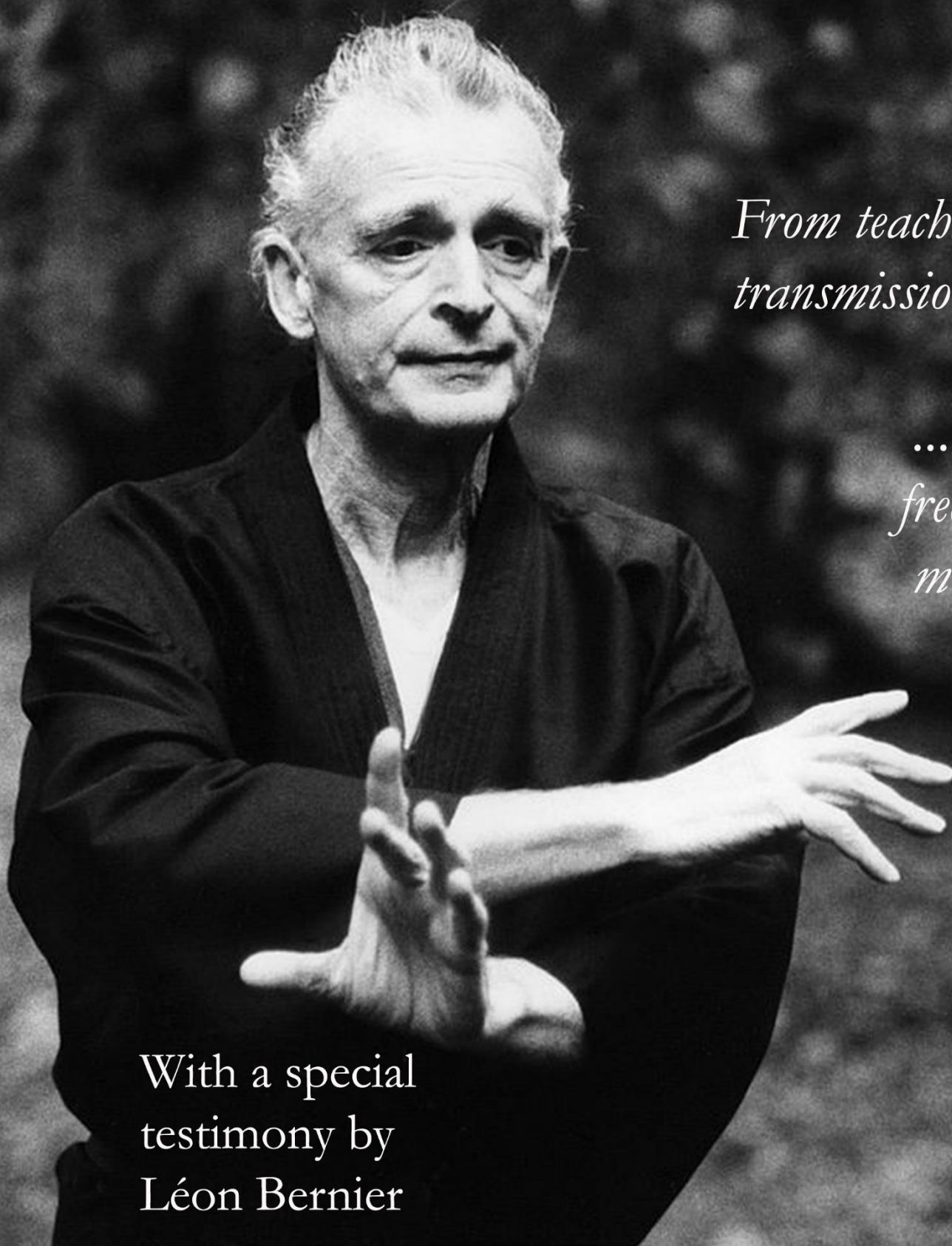
Special issue



L'ART DU CHI
Méthode Stévanovitch

Tantien MAG

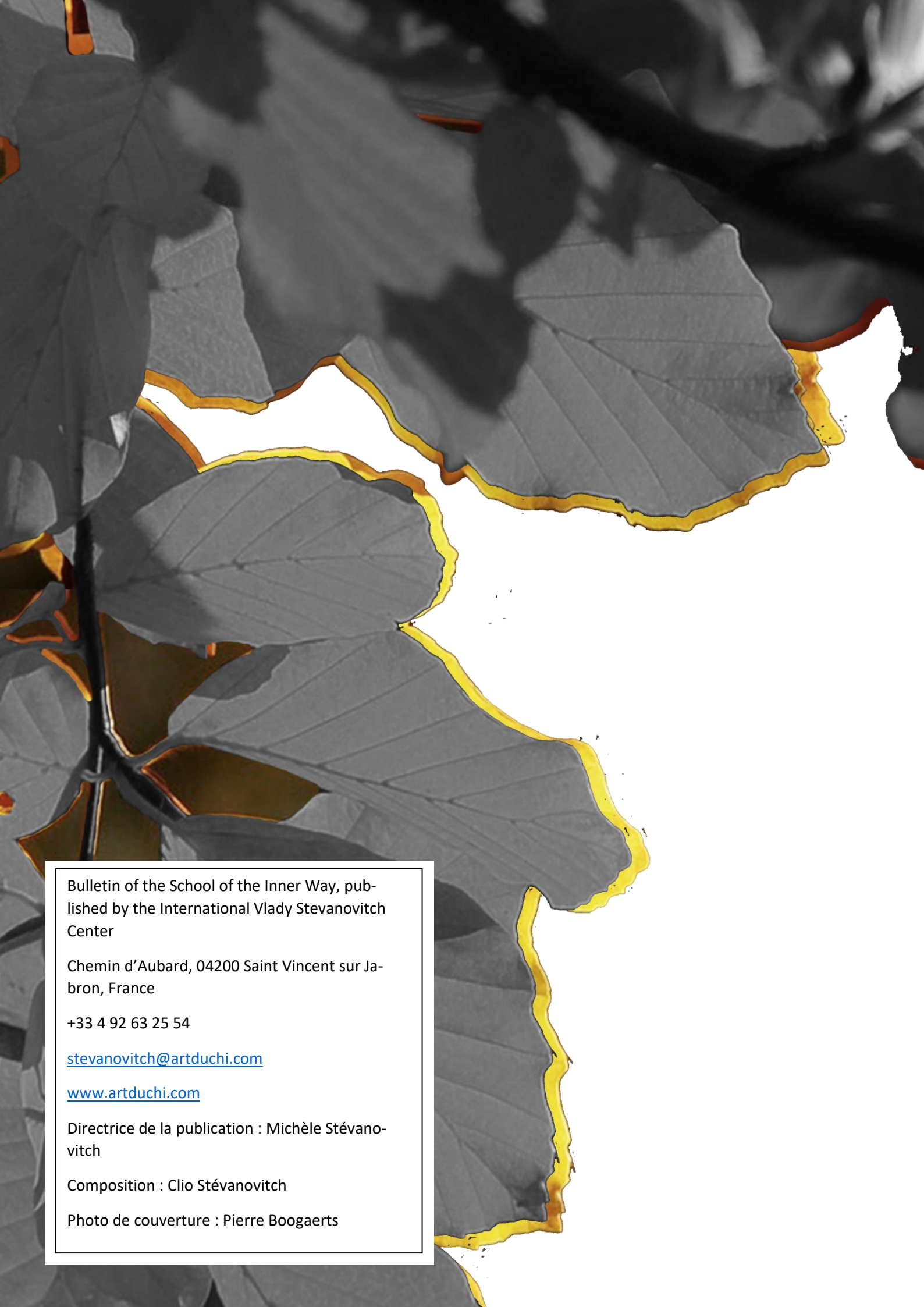
December 2022



*From teaching to
transmission...*

*...to reach
freedom of
movement*

With a special
testimony by
Léon Bernier



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Edito

A word from Michèle

This special issue was inspired by Léon (Professor delegate in Quebec), who, after 30 years of practice, wishes to take stock and provoke exchanges with "the elders". Exchanges in order to perhaps give some leads to the researchers of our school.

Great initiative welcomed by Pierre and I with enthusiasm.

Therefore the starting point is Leon's article.

A few Promoncas from Quebec, chosen by Pierre, and a few from Europe, chosen by Michèle, will try to put us on the right track by making a sort of inventory. Where they are today, as simply, as sincerely as possible.

Thank you to them for indulging in this issue.

Our school is full of elder, let's listen to them.



To Linda

To reach freedom of movement

There is something paradoxical in the approach we pursue in the Art du Chi. At the moment when, after having worked for a long time, everything is put in place to let the movements of Tai Ji Quan be carried out freely, without any effort and without any intention, where there remains only a body animated from the inside by a whole of Chi micro-events, this body no longer responds.

By Léon Bernier

I do not claim to have toured the garden in which Vlady kindly invited us to enter. I am perfectly aware of having cultivated only a tiny plot. Michèle often uses the toolbox metaphor to refer to Vlady's legacy. It's all there, she says, nothing to add, nothing to subtract. I take the liberty of specifying that it would take more than one lifetime to make adequate use of all the tools that Vlady has placed in his box. Some techniques clearly go beyond what the practice of Tai Ji Quan requires. For example everything concerning the work of Chi-carrying sounds, the complexity of which requires such an investment that it would be necessary, to do it justice, to devote oneself entirely to it.



I confess to having personally focused on the Chi techniques most immediately related to the practice of Tai Ji Quan. I would even go so far as to say that, during all these years, I have worked on Chi techniques only according to Tai Ji Quan and that it is through Tai Ji Quan that I have been able to come to really realizing how much these Chi techniques had transformed me physically and mentally. I can also say that over the years, my personal practice took over from the teaching, or rather my teaching became more and more marked by the physical sensations of Chi which manifested themselves in my practice. I came to realize

that at a certain stage in the practice of Tai Ji Quan, one had to forget the techniques. Or more precisely, take advantage of the fact that the repetition of the same exercises and movements during all these years opened up on the possibility of letting the Chi act freely. We can say we then reach the “doing nothing” stage, or more precisely the one of observing what several years of assiduous practice have breathed into the body.

The term breathe here seems to me particularly apt to describe the physical result of long years of working with the same techniques and postures. In the end, →

everything is a con-fusion of the breathing supported by the Tiantien and the circulation of Chi, in and out of the body. This breathing-Chi alliance results in the circulation of Chi in the diagonals, the small circulation and all that is grafted to it. But even more generally, in a whole series of bodily micro-events which accompany and possibly produce the movements of tai. ji quan.

Obviously, for a movement of Tai Ji Quan to be carried out freely by letting the Chi act, this movement must not present any physical difficulty. As far as I am concerned, I admit that several movements, especially in the 127 postures, still cause me trouble.

There are some that, when I was younger, I did easily, but which, with age and bodily stiffness, have become difficult for me.

The approach that I pursue now being to observe how the Chi acts freely, I chose to exclude from my practice all the postures

which cause me a problem of execution. I only kept the first section of the 127, the first section of the 108 and the 24 postures. That is more than enough and, above all, necessary to allow me to continue my observations on how Chi works on us when we choose to let it be.

All this, of course implies a certain renunciation. Not only to a whole part of the Tai Ji Quan movements that we took so long to work on, but also to the complex

Chi techniques that the body has not really assimilated and that it is needless, with the time we have left, to persist in wanting to add to the already plenty baggage that we have become accustomed to accumulating.

You will doubtless say to me: "but Vlady's legacy?"



Linda, Pierre et Léon, Août 2022

My answer is that the best evidence of Vlady's contribution comes through the body, through the demonstration of a Tai Ji Quan movement really carried by the Chi. It is by showing the result we can best make students and future students understand the importance of the long road they are about to travel.

As soon as we realize that the result is there, at least for some of the movements, isn't it our duty to take the plunge and free our practice from all the preparatory baggage accumulated to get there? Where are we? Yes, Vlady has passed on age-old techniques to us, with a pedagogy of his own allowing us Westerners to access them. But it was not to imprison us there.

An advanced teacher should not just teach techniques and break down moves. He should give a central place to the careful observation of his students, each of them. And at the same time, ensure that they develop their capacity for observation and attention, in such a way that they come to recognize and, possibly feel for themselves, when a movement is carried by the Chi.

I personally had the good fortune to work for many years with Linda. It quickly became a reflex for us to observe each other. Over the past few years, our observations have become extremely precise and are about what I call micro-events of Chi which take place in the body and reveal to perception as many micro-movements which subtly punctuate the execution of a posture of Tai Ji Quan, and this, without any intervention of the will, by making the mind an extremely vigilant organ of physical perception of the Chi.

Such an approach is, of course, suitable for the most advanced practitioners. It is useless to skip steps before having worked enough on the techniques yourself so that they become one with you. On the other hand, there is no point in remaining glued to the techniques, when the body asks nothing better than to free itself from it. It is quite normal and essential that more beginner teachers emphasize technique and devote a lot of time to preparing their lessons. Not only do they have to make the techniques work, but they have to internalize them.

The more we progress in teaching Tai Ji Quan, the more our own practice should color our teaching. However, the pitfall which threatens to pursue the long-time teacher is what I call the teacher's mad monkey, which takes the form of an insidious mental discourse parasitizing the practice of directives concerning, for example, the diagonals, the breathing times associated with the small circulation, etc. It was while discussing this phenomenon one day with Alain, who is one of the School's elders, that I took the full measure of this unfortunate defect, from which I was far from being free at that time... To Alain's remark, which was something like this "I am incapable of doing my personal practice without being in the process of teaching myself" I remember spontaneously answering him "give more importance both in practice and in teaching". I addressed this advice to myself just as much as I did to Alain.

Circumstances, in particular the pandemic, meant that I no longer taught groups of →

beginners and now addressed very small groups of two or three students at a time. For me, this teaching context has become ideal. It allows communication by the look, by mutual observation, which comes to take precedence over the use of words, therefore over recourse to the mind. To be more precise, my interventions are essentially centered on the physical perception of Chi, bringing students to focus their attention on what is happening in their body during the execution of a movement, emphasizing what I perceive at such a precise moment of the posture.

Where this leads is, like everything we do, hard to put into words. Let's say that is a Tai Ji Quan which remains structured but without the memory of the techniques worked to forge this structure in the body. One could also imagine a camera of such precision that it would allow seeing the performance of a Tai Ji Quan movement as the succession of an infinity of specific events without the fluidity being affected at any time. From the whole.

But back to words to sum up all of the above. The approach, therefore, consists in letting the movement unfold at the

spontaneous rhythm of the breathing circulation of Chi, which rhythm tends to become slower and slower, to allow both the realization and the observation of all that intervenes in the body at each micro-phase of the movement.

That is when one comes to touch life without this being just a word. Feeling even a micro-movement of life in oneself puts us in communication with all that vibrates around us at once. Isn't that what we all strive for, practitioners of the Art du Chi?

The path ends here for me. But Linda is ready to continue where we both left off. Now it's up to her to take her place, wherever that takes her.

Thank you, Vlady, thank you all.

Léon Bernier

Octobre 2022

Delegate professor in Quebec

December 2022



Beware of words

“Follow me”, Vlady often said. This apparently simple directive took me years to really grasp its meaning and importance.

Having worked on other body techniques before meeting Vlady and the Art du Chi, I had already developed a certain ease in learning movements by reproducing by mimicry what the teacher was doing.

While having the intuition that the movements of Tai Ji Quan went far beyond what I perceived visually, it is very gradually, and by investing myself more thoroughly in training, that the "follow me" of Vlady gradually revealed itself in all its inner dimension. A new way of observing, and trying to perform the movements myself, as I perceived them in Vlady, and in the elders of his students, who became our teachers, developed in parallel with the progression in the learning of more and more complex Chi techniques, and the repetition, alone or in a group, of Tai Ji Quan movements.

The pairing of what Vlady called “postural rigor” and the presence of Chi as a component of the movement did not come at once and was done first, and for several years, without my knowledge. →

By Linda Bohamed

December 2022



Subsequently, all this became more conscious and gave rise to a very voluntary phase consisting of what was called in the courses *putting Chi into the form*. It is only recently and thanks to a very personalized work to which Léon explicitly refers in his text that I was able to go beyond this *voluntary phase*, to *arrive at a more spontaneous stage, consisting in letting the Chi carry out the movement*.

Contrary to what we are used to reading in books of wisdom, such a process does not go through self-effacement but, on the contrary, through an acute awareness of what is happening in one's own body. In fact, what we manage to free ourselves from is not self-awareness, but words that act as obstacles to a real self-awareness, essentially bodily.



Léon's contribution to the evolution of my practice of Tai Ji Quan lies precisely there. How many times, especially in recent years, has he not said during the many exchanges that he and I had on what I believed was progress in the perception of Chi: *these are still only words*.

This distrust of words is not new in the teaching that takes place in the School. Already, it was omnipresent in Vlady although he had said and written a lot. *Tai Ji Quan*, he constantly repeated, *cannot be learned from books. It is learned in and through practice*.

Without always being well understood, Pierre seeks on his part to make beginner students, but also less beginners, aware that there is a phase of our work where we tend to delude ourselves about what it truly means *to feel the Chi*. This consists in taking the words for the thing, and in the long run becoming an obstacle rather than an advantage.

It is really in this direction that Leon's teaching was ultimately situated. Go beyond words to try to feel what is happening, down to the last detail, in the execution of the movements.

With Léon I learned to return to the starting point, to return to the simple movement, to stop looking. Everything is there, inscribed in the body... provided that we have worked a lot.

As I write this text, Léon is losing more and more of his muscular strength. On the other hand, I can see what drives him: this Chi that he has developed for more than thirty-five years is palpable.

I stop here because if I continue Léon will say "These are only words".

I still want to tell you that the doctors and all the medical personnel with whom Léon has been in contact over the past few years, all without exception, do not understand where he manages to draw his energy given his very low rate of hemoglobin...

They are forced to admit that there is something that escapes them.

Thank you, Léon,

Linda Bohamed,

November 2022

Professor

Purify

It's hard to put internal work experience into words. The purpose of verbalization is to make the event intelligible for the other, which is a necessity in a school. But for the personal experience it is always a risk of impoverishment. Because, inevitably, we bring in the need for meaning. There is a risk of memorizing the explanation to the detriment of a renewed experience. Suddenly, the experiment lost all its force. That being said, to express ourselves and teach, we make do with words inevitably. We get closer or less to what is perceived, but these are never just words. There is the interpretation of the one who chooses them and the one who receives them.

In order to engage in a true endless exploration, we must infinitely renew our listening to the felt and disregard the mind. The words are only a track. You have to work with the body, with the perceptions.

By Michèle Stévanovitch

Do not interpret so that the experience continues and evolves indefinitely over the years and practices.

But are perceptions really changing? Some, yes, I feel them becoming more powerful, spontaneous, richer. Others are there from the beginning, like an acknowledgment of the state of inner listening.

There is yet another form of evolution of perceptions. For example, it's from a concrete perception of the tactile kind, that one feels a pressure of Chi. But we also, and just as concretely, feel the Chi outside the body...

So what's going on? What is a perception?

Another subject of contradiction is the search to improve and recover the logic of the body, because this logic, which is a requirement for entering the work of Chi, will one day be outdated and perhaps even become useless.

All body movement, is always driven by Chi. We experience this during floor sessions with imaginary movements. Thanks to the tireless repetitions of our live movements, to the corrections and to the different reading proposals (action, breathing, diagonals, rhythms etc.), the body understands the intention of action better and better, and is able to "simplify" the gestures. So they are more effective. The body then executes a form that is pure and cleansed of all detours and all artifice.

When I work on the logic of the body, I inevitably fluidify my body, mind, and Chi. The efficiency of the gesture is a determining element in the correct circulation of Chi. The Chi circulates well in a released body, a body that has found its true nature, a body encompassing all that we are.

A conscious body.

I believe this is precisely what is happening. Our practice makes us aware of our →

body, our blockages, our resistances (mental and physical). We are constantly refining our gestures and deeply penetrating our being. We become body again... We navigate, and we can choose to be a precise point, or to invade the whole body, to feel our unique presence in the Center or in the whole of our body.

Consciousness manifests itself in matter. We are incarnate, our earthly work is done in this body. We seek the harmony of all the elements that compose us.

By working the body, I melt the obstacles, and the intent becomes physical. The body becomes fluid, the pressure perception of Chi continues beyond the limits. Chi flows freely. A movement becomes an internal pressure that can overflow the body. I manipulate pressures, fluids, without any resistance. At this moment, I discover that I let myself be guided by something, deposited in me, which harmonizes with what surrounds me. That something will always be right because it does not come from my mind.

However, we all have physical limits, different from one person to another, according to training, accidents, age etc.

Curiously, it is to achieve this freedom (inside-outside) that you have to learn to work without exceeding your physical limits, not even reaching them. (Be careful, I am talking about practice, that does not mean that you should never make any effort...) We will always have limits and if the intent is to overcome them, the continuation of the work will not be

possible . It will not be possible to really confuse and work in a fusional way the matter, the Chi and the intent. The intent with which we work is so important. The body is our raw material, we must work in collaboration with respect and listening. Only then, when actual fluidity has is reached, bodily limits no longer matter.

Could Chi be a form of intent ? Could the body be a form of intent ?

In the same way inside and outside of the body are in extension, my intent, extends into a larger intent, and the global Intent, extends into my intent.

The intention of the whole manifests itself in me.

Life.

Michele Stevanovitch

November 2022





*I would like to be a master of not thinking
and teaching silence.*

Vlady Stevanovitch

It all comes down to that, and yet endlessly
increasing questions come back, the trap of
the mad monkey...

Can we codify the uncodifiable and put
words where they no longer have any use?

A few "elders" among us have followed the
teaching of a master.

Everything in the transmission has gone
through the respect of traditions.

By Karine Taymans

10,000 hours and then it all begins, without question and with complete confidence.

Tirelessly practice leads us towards simplicity, counting, never perfection.

Life with a capital V is at the center of this research.

We are creators of calm and silence.

When I complete the form, all is accomplished.

There is nothing more to say.

The Art du Chi is a universe that cannot be appropriated.

Nothing is ever acquired, despite our experience.

Every day, we create a space where plenitude gives way to what can still be accomplished.

A blank page that emerges, a landscape of snow in which the body evolves, merges, dilutes without leaving any trace.

Let's not forget, we are the explorers of the inner world, never imitated, always in permanent creation.

Even the obstacles encountered will allow us to discover new paths that are still totally unexplored.

I wish you "good road to all"

Karine Taymans

November 2022

Extract from a re- cording of 1996

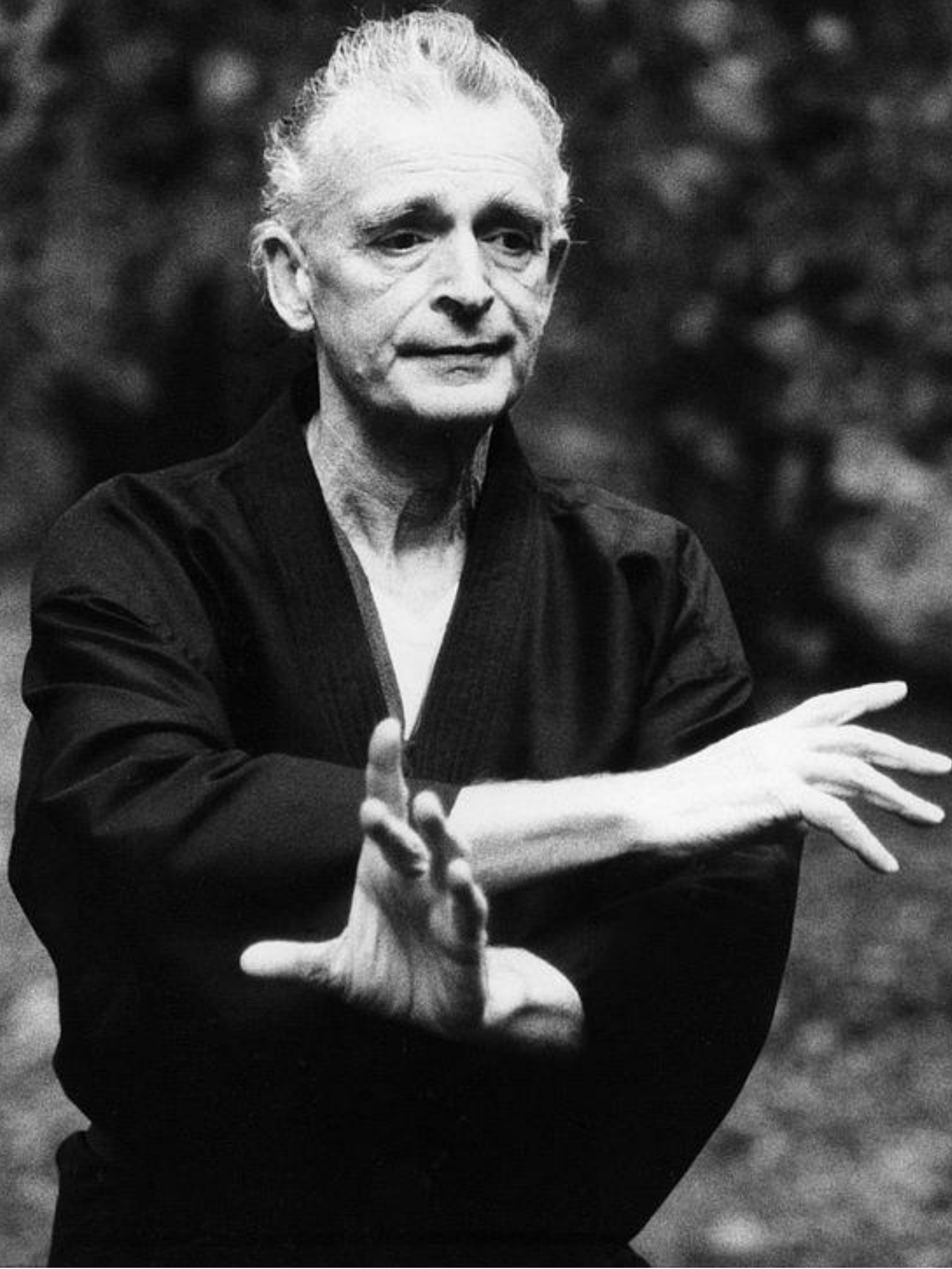
"I can give you hope, even certainty. It's that if you keep going, if you work long enough, you'll get there for sure; it just takes time for that. By working, of course, you reach a certain level, but it takes time.

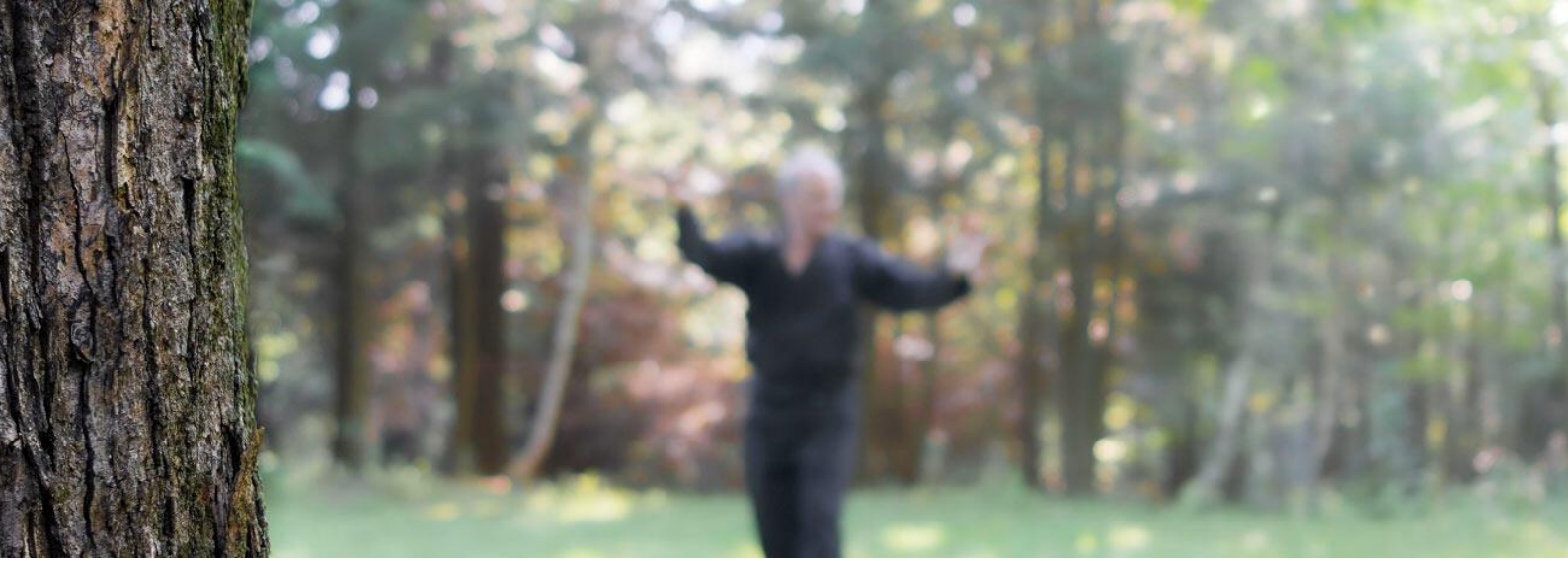
It is like a child who does gymnastics, he will not be an adult faster than the others, he will only be a well-trained and healthy adult. But he won't be an adult sooner.

It's the same thing, to reach adulthood in this work, it takes years and years of work. And when you have worked a lot, when the years have passed, when a sufficient number of years have passed, you arrive at a level which then provides joys, satisfactions, which nothing else can provide.

And that I have enough hindsight to be able to affirm it. »

By Vlady Stévanovitch





One feels very small in front of a friend's farewell.

"Death, our only enemy" (Vlady Stévanovitch)

But why, God damn it, don't we feel so small in the face of life? We have received it, and not only do we find it normal that we are entitled to it (the right of the consumer, is not it), but we quickly move on to something else! And when we are interested in it, instead of enjoying it, we play with it as if it were a toy or we take it apart hoping to rebuild it, only better. And to invoke the law, science, beliefs, conventions and other convictions. Poor us.

Daring to respect life is what the Art du Chi offers us. That is what Léon has been showing us for a long time.

By Pierre Boogaerts

Progressing in L'Art du Chi

*"It is then that one comes to touch life,
without it being just a word. »*

(Léon Bernier)

To learn :

To approach the Art du Chi for me is to draw near a huge mountain. The closer I get to it, the smaller I become.

To advance :

The path to the mountain of life is that of life. Its dimensions are its own. I am only going a little way there.

There is the path of life and that of society. They are intertwined, but confusing them would be a mistake. It is obvious that that of society makes me advance on that of life, while the reverse is not. And so, social conditions – real or imagined – can make me walk or dawdle, run or crash on the path of life.

But no matter the conditions, after more than forty years of practice, I know from experience that the Art du Chi can be a real life accelerator.

Time :

In the autumn of my life, certainties tend to fade, the path becomes more flexible, wider, easier. As a teacher, I know that I must be wary of my fluency since it is not yet that of my students, even if they sometimes think the opposite.

What is "being advanced"?

I would say that it is not only a question of technique, flexibility, seriousness, practice, time, even if these are essential components. "10,000 hours", said Vlady, and to add that it is from there that it really begins!

Then what is it, to be advanced? Of course, I have some benchmarks, but first of all I have a certitude, that of being still a long way off. Like on the way to the mountain, the more I advance, the more I feel like I am becoming tiny and a beginner. But this time, it is as if I became so - finally - really.

Marks :

I find them in my practice and in that of others. Because for me, teaching and practice are both the united heart of training in the Art du Chi.

To evaluate a student, I will never ask him to do the Chi Belt, the Sphere or the Hoops. I will ask him to show me his Tai Ji Quan. It is what will tell me precisely the depth of his integration into the Art du Chi. →



In his movements, I will see, for example, the degree of effacement of his muscular efforts. Because it is the Chi and not the muscular effort which must support it, it is the force of life which must carry its body in motion. And that is the cleansing of the body, the anchoring and the depth of the Tantien that allow it. Only then can I call his practice fair and truly harmonious.

Because you can achieve a beautiful execution, and even think you are carried by the Chi... without really being so. Not being anchored in the Tantien, ease and lightness are nothing more than slenderness and softness or naive casualness.

Nor does experience and sensing the Chi guarantee advancement. As our sensitivity is imprinted with a mental charge of

culture, beliefs, hopes, deviances, it can easily delude us and confuse us in the dreams of the "crazy monkey". It is so easy to produce our perceptions, it is part of our everyday life, our system of perception and also... our training in the Art du Chi.

In my practice:

I hope you will forgive me for speaking in the first person. It is true that deep down, I always do it, but so discreetly that most of the time no one notices. That happens during my classes, guiding and correcting others. To revise someone, I do something other than refer to techniques and postures. I feel in my body what is happening in that of the student. I can only feel it if I peel back the layers of clothing that society has dressed me in and that I have agreed to wear. Teaching, to me is a real exposure, a total lack of modesty.

It is true that with practice, the Art du Chi has also become a comfortable garment, that has accompanied me for a long time, and continues to adapt to the evolution of my body, heart, and consciousness. It was the passion of my youth, and today accompanies the conditions of my old age. Even more and more often, this garment becomes skin. A skin that sticks to the soul. It's crazy how these two can help each other.

When the Chi carries me, I no longer do the postures. It is he who moves and leads me. I am then entirely sensitive, attentive, as if on the lookout, and he makes me do "my" Tai Ji Quan. But only if I am present, careful to put my arms, legs, head and trunk, my whole body in this volume-clothing which moves all the time. At the slightest inattention, he leaves me and moves without me. I then find myself, for a few moves, lost like a clumsy beginner trying to catch up with a master, someone who has been there for a long time, long before me, maybe even forever. Whereas, I have just arrived. Then again, we meet, and I am. I am and do not precede it. It is a matter of respect. And that's when I am.

Exactly the same thing happens when I teach Chi techniques to advanced students.

Abandonment:

To be carried by the Chi, I abandon everything (which a long practice of deep

relaxation and mental emptiness can make possible). Well... almost everything, but certainly: the clothes of mastery, of knowledge, of strength, of power, of domination... all those things that mark most innocuous everyday gestures and of which no one seems aware as they are so common in our society. I give up to confide in, open up, trust. I drain myself of this learned "me" to receive what fills me. I lose myself in order to access... myself?... I don't know... (to the "All", but I dare not write it, it would be to claim to know the unknown). So there remains the immensity of the mystery and something that strangely resembles love.

So, for me, that is the form, a Chi technique. That's why I try to follow, and not invent random movement or flourish. These interpretations are only possible if I persist in identifying with the social self. It would be equivalent to cutting the link that connects me to Vlady and his masters. That would cut me of my true self, the one that is connected to the whole and not to a person.

The complexity of simplicity:

This is how I seem to be able to penetrate at times, and only a little, just a little, into the complexity of the techniques (Chi and Tai Ji Quan). The techniques hide the real stakes of their practice well under an apparent simplicity. The very one that allowed me to approach them and learn how to handle them. →

When I'm in "rider's pose," both feet are firmly in contact with the ground. If I think of the 14,000 nerves in my 2 feet, which also include 52 bones, 40 muscles, 32 joints and 214 ligaments (I quote doctor J-P Willem), my feet are no longer in contact with the ground.

Freedom :

Following is my true freedom. It is the one that life deposits (imposes) in my body. And these are certainly not the beliefs that society, religions, politicians and other guides value (impose on me).

Vlady has said it enough: "I didn't invent anything...". Evolution in the Art du Chi has nothing to do with progress as we understand it today, that is, as science, technology and the market design it. Moreover, science does not stop discovering what life has invented for so long and what it continues to "imagine" now, every moment. It's an eternity, it's the way of life, not that of the human.

It is obvious to me that my freedom is in the flow of life, this mystery that I barely touch on in my practice of the Art du Chi. Sometimes I feel like it comes to me, this flow. So, it is the immensity of the mountain that penetrates me and expands me. I stop being tiny "in front" and become big "inside" of it. To be free, to make the right movement, it is enough for me to be in agreement (in agreement) with life. Everything else is laughably small.

The future :

Regardless of where and how we see the world, regardless of our opinions, we are all marked by the evolution of society that has spread throughout the planet. I know that I must be wary of the pessimism that invades me when I observe the path that society imposes on us more and more brutally. My responsibilities in the School, and my work as a trainer, puts me in front of students and promoncas, increasingly marked by the evolution of this society. This evolution which is diametrically opposed to the Art du Chi...

"Keep going" as Vlady said, as if we still believed in it, even if we are short of time, despite all the signs of the end of life. "Continue" to the end that we will never reach, because it is much further than beyond.

Thank you, Léon, for what you show us, thank you for this friendship that has been engraved in us.

Pierre, December 6, 2022

December 2022





Personal practice – teaching practice

I have admiration for steady practitioners, outside teaching, of which Léon is a part.

I remember, about thirty years ago, when Léon, and Luce, his companion at the time, had welcomed me, took me in, should I say, finding myself homeless in winter in

By Christian Michel

Quebec after a failed attempt at life in Gaspésie!

They took me in and I lived with them for a good 2 months. It was a rich period.

I have a special affection for you Léon and I have not forgotten.

I have already witness this good habit of practicing the 127 in the parks!

For my part, given my family situations, the time available, the circumstances, the solution was to teach a lot to be sure to practice! Besides, of course, the need to try to “earn my living”, like everyone else.

The more than 10 weekly classes I gave, plus the internships, made teaching the personal practice, the main means of exploring and deepening the Art du Chi.

My rhythm is different now, and I feel the need, the desire and the joy of moving towards more personal practice.

The Art du Chi adapts

Léon testifies to having limited his practice to a few forms. He had the wisdom and the audacity to adapt his way of doing things to get to the point, according to his state of being, body, consciousness, health, mind...

The few forms retained are more than enough to best express his understanding, and to influence his students towards this essential.

I think his testimony should help us not to fix ourselves, rigidify us in a way of doing things.

The legacy

I confess with Léon, the legacy bequeathed is too vast for a lifetime!

Moreover, it seems the more we advance, the less we know !

So much the better perhaps, the less we know, the more the vanity of doing and knowing appears to us,

The less we know, the less we do, and the better it happens on its own.

Because we practiced and rehearsed a lot beforehand!

There is of course, the profession, the experience, the personal skills to be transmitted, the tips that we all find to help the student. A kind of personal know-how, of which one must moreover be aware that it is only ours, and evolving.

There is the "see-feel" in front of the student. Léon talks about it, which can guide us in our help and corrections.

There is that one favors this or that aspect of the Art du Chi.

For me, for example, it is the practice of vocal techniques that will have been the most powerful in bringing me closer to the quality of the state that I am trying to express below.

→

We don't all insist on the same aspects, and that's good.

Elders, professors, delegate professors, trainers in particular, should ideally keep the widest possible range of teaching and practice... They are supposed to represent the Art du Chi. But is it possible?

The lighthouse through the mist

What is possible in any case is to stay the course.

If time is short, if it is necessary to go straight to the point, I choose the presence at the Center, and the "Nothing".

In the practice of Tai Ji Quan.

I'm talking here about pure practice in silence, not "exercise" practices where we promote awareness of one aspect or another, where we repeat, to firmly root this aspect... To by the way forget about it in pure practice.

Still and always, simplify, be careful of what we do too much.

Do not impose yourself in space, be with, let yourself be welcomed by this space.

Free yourself from the worry of getting there, of guiding well, of teaching all kinds of things well...

I don't especially want the Chi to flow here or there, or not flow there. I want to go before, upstream, to the source.

Go to "Nothing".

Do nothing.

The teacher is no longer a teacher, what is personal to him has disappeared. He disappeared.

There remains only what exceeds it itself... And the words here no longer succeed, so I stop.

It is an ideal, a course towards which to strive... Without worrying about getting there or not.

As I approach it, I know that I am taking the students with me, that it vibrates in this direction.

I think that's how, for me anyway, and for the moment, that I convey best, part of Vlady's message.

Think Tantien, be Tantien

Presence at the Center.

Slipping from Tantien thought, from mental observation of the Tantien phenomenon to Tantien being.

"I feel it, it already changes my inner landscape, it already makes me feel good and opens me up to something else" but I continue to observe it from a mental energy.

To become Tantien, you need more, you have to stop thinking, trust and dive.

Like the Samurai, like the lover... Like the Samurai in love?

Every moment is a chance to practice. Tai Ji Quan or not Tai Ji Quan.

Daily, technical, family lives... It should be noted that these lives take up a lot of space, and also become an excellent field of practice.

The drop and the ocean

Finally, I remember this passage from an interview with Vlady, in Quebec by the way, in 1991.

He talks about a drop of water that doesn't matter as a single drop of water. It is a drop, it exists because there is the ocean.

This drop extracts itself a little to live its life, then returns to the ocean, to the Great All.

I kiss you Leon!

Christian Michel

December 2022



When Body and Chi harmonize

I started my practice of martial arts at the age of 20 by learning karate which I practiced for 10 years. I had the chance to take training with Japanese masters who came to teach us combat techniques and katas. It was during a lecture given by a master, who was talking about Tai Chi, that it really piqued my curiosity.

A few years later, while walking in Montreal, I came across a flyer inviting us to a conference-demonstration on Tai Ji Quan given by a master from Europe. Arrived on site, there was Vlady, Michèle, Pierre and Nicole, who were demonstrating the form of the 108 postures and an audio recording was broadcast at the same time. I didn't understand what was happening while watching the demonstration, but Vlady's words touched me and the following weekend I took part in a two-day workshop. It was a revelation and I only participated in one karate class after this workshop and I have dedicated myself to learning the Art du Chi ever since.

I have been learning and practicing Tai Ji Quan for 37 years this year. I started teaching in 1989 and it was by teaching that I was able to deepen this art. I remember, during the first weekend, I told Vlady that I would like to teach one day and he answered me smiling, if you want to learn Tai Ji Quan, you should practice for 10000 hours. I never counted the hours, but I believe I passed 10,000 hours a long time ago.

By Yvan Désautels



Today, after all these years of practice, I can say that it was worth investing a lifetime in research. It allows me to stay calm and healthy. At the beginning, we learn the postures and the sequences afterwards. Later, we learn to feel the Chi and to make it circulate in the body by performing these postures and sequences. Then we start teaching. What a challenge it is at the beginning. How to transmit this teaching to beginners? Reiterate techniques thousands of times, with new students each year. Very few of them take the path, but by teaching, we progress and reach a mastery of Chi

techniques that we manage to make even beginners feel.

There, we begin to enter The Art du Chi. When you manage to feel all the techniques learned at the same time. Feel the Tantien, the hands, the Chi Belt, the sphere, the Lu point, the inner mast, the small circuit and the large circuit. It is as if the physical body and the energy body harmonize to team up and perform the postures of Tai Ji Quan with great precision. The slightest unnecessary effort changes →

the movement. For the Chi to circulate in the body, one needs to use some muscles, of great flexibility, landmarks which become anchor points and which allow the Chi to pass, to circulate. It is inside and outside the body at the same time. Become more present to yourself and those around you.

To be attentive, concentrate, listen to the Chi and to realize how it puts itself at our service. It does its job when we let it, when we let go of our old habits and our fears. Cleanse the mind of its beliefs. Chi is part of my body, and lets me know when something is wrong. When I have physical ailments, I tune into the pain, and with the Chi, send an intention to heal myself, to do me good, and the pain gradually decreases and disappears. I had surgeries at the dentist twice, and he prescribed me painkillers. I didn't need it. As soon as the operation is over, the Chi gets to work, and the pain becomes tolerable. The body and the Chi have their own intelligence, and it is bigger than me. It's beyond my human intelligence.

At 67, I am blessed to have good health, to be able to teach and to continue to grow with my students. When they arrive tense, stressed and leave with a smile after class, it's a real treat.

Vlady gave us such a rich teaching with great generosity. Today, I recognize all the depth of these techniques, and I would like him to still be alive to exchange with him.

A big thank you to Leon who has been a model of perseverance for all of us during all these years and who stimulated me to write this article. Despite the illness, he continued his research on the Art du Chi and was able to bounce back several times.

Yvan Desautels

December 2022

Delegate professor in Quebec

December 2022





By Fabien Bastin

I thank Leon for his testimony on his Chi Art journey. It has inspired me to write as well, a task I don't like very much.

Although everyone's path is different, human beings are similar enough that one's path can help others. That's why I write too.

Of course, it would take a book to go into all the details of this path. But even some of them could help other explorers.

4 major events mark my journey in the art of chi:

1986: I read Biosophy and it was a revelation. The world is the image of the cognitive and perception system that encloses us. Freedom is found by breaking down this barrier. So, it was not Tai Chi or Chi techniques that drew me to Vlady, even though they immediately appealed to me.

Summer 1997: At the Italy course, 2 important statements by Vlady:

- 1) **no more** applying the small circulation in tai chi (at least in the forced way we did).
- 2) **no one** does the snake on the floor anymore except Madeleine (he noticed that we didn't know how to use the body correctly).

Summer 2000: Vlady invites me to his laboratory and says: "**At school, people don't have the tantien!** I hope to help them with sounds".

June 2005: The last meeting with Vlady during which I tell the singular experience that Jeanne Houde lived: one day, she tells me that all the chi techniques transmitted by Vlady plus not taught ones manifest themselves in her, at the same time without trying to do them. When Vlady learns about her experience during the Nem-Bou-Tsu technique, despite his very debilitated state, Vlady has a renewed energy and tells me "This is a high-level experience; I want to see her". Unfortunately, due to his illness, their meeting was not possible.

In addition to these major one-off events, there were all the workshops with Vlady where he guided us for years to integrate the techniques and made, not without humour, countless remarks, and corrections in the movements. I also had the chance to follow him in his practices, often revealing and questioning.

This set of events has guided me and oriented my work over the years:

1. My early days were characterised by learning Chi techniques and Tai Chi. This was a new practice and there were subjects that I actually had no idea about, except for those concerning Biosophie. This was a big advantage over those who had already seen videos or practices or read about it because they came with preconceptions, good or bad.

So, in the Tai Chi classes, I tried to be present and feel what was going on. And I

partially captured what was behind the movements or what was in the movements. This is important because it is during the first contact that we form the basis for learning.

As far as the Chi techniques are concerned, I quickly felt surprising, unusual effects.

But there is a but. Everything I could pick up, memorised, was influenced, deformed unconsciously by my knowledge, by my habit of wanting to understand in order to memorise, by my enthusiasm of wanting to do well and quickly, my ambitions,.... Then, by wanting to repeat the techniques or the movements, I tainted them with other aspects, like forgetting

details of certain movements or basic techniques, forcing, letting go by becoming soft, moving parts of the body and not others. The movements were disconnected.

In fact, at the beginning, in order to remember movements, we pay attention mainly to some details of the external form. The body itself, we move it by the knowledge of the body resulting from our physical education (the way of moving and behaving of the people we were in contact with as children, then the gymnastics, sports, dance classes, etc.). Not to mention all the emotional and mental reflexes we have built-in. Our habitual conscious will to move our bodies is based on this knowledge. The movements, even if well coordinated, are internally disconnected. In the beginning, tai chi is an expression of

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all our received learning and our shortcomings.

2. Then, after practising for a while, I noticed little things, such as contractions in the body, in the breath, in the head that I started to release. Also, there were moments when the movement was flowing better. The movements, well known, were more coordinated, the little circuit worked better in the movements. I could "stay in the chi", and float.

It's good, and it's enjoyable, but it was always executed and controlled by the usual mind-body system. Any practice of movements at a given moment becomes easy. You feel less and less effort, it becomes automatic, like a reflex. It is supposedly integrated. In fact, the body has managed without necessarily freeing itself from tension and effort. For example, what remained evident was the mental tension that accompanied the movements to integrate the small circulation and to do the movement well according to external criteria. This tension manifested itself especially in the forced use of the breath; for example, pushing on the exhalation or contracting the throat for better control. At the same time, pains appeared, in the knees in particular, but not only. I told myself, as I had been told or as we tell ourselves when we don't want to or can't see reality, that it would pass, that it was only an adjustment towards the right movement. This can be the case, but it rarely is. In fact, the body is misused and has struggled to get around the obstacles

In the meantime, in 1994, I had a serious accident which left me with a disabled shoulder, for which nothing can be done.

The way I practised chi techniques (including sounds) and tai chi did not help and even accentuated the pain and the difficulty to move. This accident was decisive in my approach to all of Vlady's work and motivated me to explore in more detail the harmonious relationship between the body, the Chi and the mind.

3. The beginning of the liberation.

From a practice and bodywork point of view, doing nothing, not interfering, is not using the nervous and muscular system as usual. Moving through the nervous and muscular system is the way we were taught to move the body and the way we unconsciously copied adults as children. It always goes through the brain, through reasoning, through the known, even if unconsciously and automatically.

So, to move, one can only move by contracting and releasing parts of the body.

I noticed how the application of chi techniques was accompanied by tensions and led to blockages and difficulties.

So, can we conclude that the techniques are not good? That chi is not magic? That tai chi is not corrective? No. Because it is the modality of application that matters. My consciousness was blinded by my knowledge, my fears, my desires, my hopes, my disappointments, ... From these "ghosts" I had to recognise the impacts on the physical functioning of the body and integrate the form and the techniques in a different way. The consequences of the accidents highlighted all these difficulties even more.

Here are some tips I have found to free myself from certain obstacles:

a) Identification of hidden tensions, such as:

- inert and/or forgotten areas of the body that are no longer accessible to our consciousness; some are generalized, such as the shoulder blades, others are personal, such as areas that have been injured
- the areas that are constantly tense, but which do not hurt, and therefore are interpreted as relaxed but are not
- breathing, which I call the ultimate trap, where we replace the tensions we eliminate from the body with tensions in the way we breathe to carry out external or internal movements (Chi technique).

b) Consistently apply a few simple basic principles, which are all too often missing, even in advanced people. I will mention four of them:

- Equivalence of movements: if one hand goes down, the other goes up. This principle is general and also applies to different parts of the body, from left to right, front to back.
- Empty one leg before turning. If applied correctly, this promotes diagonals
- Keeping "eggs" under the armpits
- weight shifting from one leg to the other

c) Gradually, no longer using the muscles, but rather using the whole body, chi and



intention. This even in Kiriki. Effortlessly seek the inner alignments (*) and relaxation that will allow the body, chi and will to trace their paths. Inner micro-movements are part of this. This approach does not mean falling asleep, hypnotising oneself, freezing in a silly bliss, letting oneself flow in any way where form and techniques are neglected. It must respect the techniques and the form, even if in a different way than expected at the beginning. Form and technique are the safeguards against slipping.

Here is an example of a different approach: lying on the floor, lift the head. This is very hard, sometimes painful and, if we have problems in this area, it can be dangerous. To lift the head, we must contract the neck muscles strongly. Then, by helping →

ourselves with a solid support on the tantien, this will reinforce the muscular work, but the sensation of effort remains, and the neck muscles remain contracted as long as the intention of raising the head is in the neck. On the other hand, if we remain relaxed and, from the tantien, make a clear intention to raise the head without the help of the muscles, Chi will be triggered from the tantien. We will gently let the chi rise towards the neck. It will swell and lengthen the tissues of the back and the muscles of the neck which will magically lift the head with a sensation of minimal effort. There is no longer any intention to lift the head in the neck muscles.

This example shows that doing nothing is powerful. It also shows that the Chi must bite the body, must penetrate it and activate it concretely, gently. Without this intense and subtle work in the body, it risks to remain a mainly mental work. Any mental image causes brain work and sensation, but it should not be confused with real body work. Pornography is an obvious example. There are brain reactions, but it is not an act of love, and it is far from it.

Do not force to perform a technique; the small circulation for example. Because to pay a controlling attention will be a source of tensions of all kinds. Do not try to perform the postures at all costs, especially the most difficult ones, so as not to injure yourself physically and not to block the flow of chi. The "comfort first" rule also applies to the movements. "Comfort first" does not mean collapsing.

If we do not apply the techniques too rigidly, they no longer conflict. They help each other, merge and reinforce each other. E.g. Chi Belt or Cerceau movements can spontaneously trigger the movement of chi from the shoulder blade to the hand in the cross circulation.

Well-made conscious movements naturally trigger chi movements, and these, in turn, trigger physical movements.

(*) External versus internal alignments.

Let's take an example: the rider's posture

External alignments: bend the knees, spread them and grip the ground with the toes; this gives a feeling of holding the legs but mainly by the muscular strength of the thighs, toes and outer sides of the legs resisting (straining) the push of the body weight.

Inner alignments: the legs adjust internally to fit the shape of the horse; the arc, formed by the thighs (inner side) and the perineum, rounds, swells and spreads through the knees to the feet and toes. There is no resistance or force, but 2 continuous, curved, solid and soft lines that give us the sensation of stapling ourselves into the ground, in relaxation; the legs are full of chi that circulates naturally.

4. Along the way, the very limited and fragmented everyday consciousness gradually gives way to an expanded consciousness. The impression is that the movements are more and more on their own and that another intelligence acts for

us on the physical and it is not an automatism resulting from a learning process. In the end, there is no physical or mental effort required during the Chi techniques, Tai Chi, Kiriki or the sounds. In fact, the intention that controls the bodily tools (brain, nerves, muscles...) becomes itself the tool and acts directly, without an intermediary.

Gradually everything comes together and works at the same time, in agreement, but in a natural way.

Examples:

- In the beginning, the body moves the chi, then the chi moves the body, and finally everything comes together
- In the beginning, the breath guides the chi, then the chi guides the breath, and finally everything is united
- At the beginning, we direct our work toward the Tiantien, then the Tiantien guides our work, and finally everything comes together →



- In the beginning, the body and the will operate to execute the small circulation, then the small circulation triggers the movements of the body, and finally everything comes together.
- In the beginning, well-done Tai Chi movements increase the circulation of chi, then the circulation of chi triggers the physical movements, and finally everything comes together.

As the parts unite (physical, energetic and mental), there is a sense that we are uniting with the surrounding space. We take it with us or it takes us with it.

Sometimes in Tai Chi we don't know where we are, which posture we have finished, or the next one. At an advanced stage, this may be right because the state of union has manifested itself.

- "I eat an apple", "I have beautiful hair". Who is "I"? What is "I"? Is it my brain, my body or what? Where is it?

Let's analyse a little.

"I am eating an apple". How do I know that I am eating an apple? I know because I see an object that I recognise as an apple, and I bring it (the recognised act of my arm) to my mouth (knowledge). I bite it (I recognise that my mouth(knowledge) is working (internal sensation)) and swallow it (I recognise that my throat(knowledge) is swallowing (internal sensation)). These internal sensations are also knowledge. Our intellect coordinates external and internal

knowledge to conclude "I am eating an apple".

According to our intellect, the apple is obviously external, even though this apple belongs to me because it was picked from my apple tree.

Let's take "I have beautiful hair". How do I validate this statement? I have a mirror, I see my hair on my head, I find it beautiful, and I conclude "I have beautiful hair".

However, is the hair external or internal to me? It belongs to me, like apples, but it is also physically attached to my body, so I conclude that my hair is also me. Me is everything that is physically attached to my body. This is a definition of me, seen from the outside.

Now let's go inside. What is I or me? When I say my hand, I feel it, so it is me. If a friend pinches my buttocks, parts of the body that I usually don't pay attention to, I jump up and say, "You're hurting me. So, what I feel in the body is part of me. My Tiantien too. I feel it inside the body so it is part of me.

So I could say that everything I feel inside, through my usual system of perception, is part of me.

But where is the observer who experiences these inner sensations? When we say "my hand", I name it as an abstraction, without feeling it, or by feeling it too? But let's try to feel where the one who says "my hand" is in relation to the hand he feels. The hand

I feel is distant, the Tantiem is distant. The hand is mine, but I am not the hand.

If I move my hand or my tantien, I observe it moving, but "I" is distant, separate from my hand and my tantien as are the hair or the apple. So, the inside is as separate from Me as the outside is from the usual functioning of our consciousness.

There is a fracture between Me and the rest. Me is not engaged, Me is enthroned, still separate from what it observes.

In point 4), we talked about the union of parts and techniques in practice. Perhaps this progression will lead us to unite, to merge with Me.

As Vlady said: "The Master becomes the posture, he is the posture".

Fabien Bastin,

Décember 2022

Trainer, head of CVSP in Portugal

What re- mains of the prac- tice

I have been practicing for over twenty years now. But what really crystallized in me, and is it even possible to know it? The mind tells me things, my experiences too. But I feel that these are not real answers. I recently read a book that really impressed me. It was the story of a prisoner. He had been deprived of all that was possible to take from a man, and of his dignity first. He suffered violence, hunger, cold... What was left to him then? The book was a lived experience and its authenticity resonated with my auntie in a way I will never forget. The richness of the essentials of life, reduced to a minimum.

I obviously never experienced what this man went through. But I got sick. At my level, I went through difficult times. I tried to live them by practicing, as consciously as possible. And I must say that the translation of the word *Tai Ji Quan* by supreme combat, with bare hands, took on its full meaning. Especially with my bare hands because I felt really alone, without help or treatment, covid long being a still unknown disease. And I also had a sense of personalization of covid, constantly adapting and changing to my body, living in me. The symptoms are very different depending on the people, and for me, they have evolved over these three years.

By Jean Bru



Our practice forges us a *Tantien*, a way of listening to *Chi* and its quality. It also develops the ease of the body, the opening of the breath. Covid meticulously took all of this away from me. *Tantien* first and *Chi*, its quality but not always its quantity. I sometimes had a lot of it. It got into my head with little ways to circulate it, except to get it out through the points of the head. Without *Tantien*, it took a long time, sometimes hours. Of a terrible *Chi*.

At first, I couldn't practice anymore, apart from the breathing exercises I was trying to adapt to my changed body. Then little by little, I was able to resume. Resuming the 108 postures was a great victory. I once again could do something every day. I also started practicing a lot. I had to adapt

constantly, listen to myself. And then crack ! I fell into the trap! A trap much stronger than my practice...

When I practice, I seek direction and listening. They are two very different things for me. I decide the direction while the listening is more in a passivity, a receiving. With the covid, I listened, the positive things as well as the negative things. My idea was to be as aware as possible. But for the body, negative things shouldn't have been listened to, because it absorbs them in the same way. The message was wrong. It took a long time for me to understand that it was necessary to filter. And only be in one direction. It was around this time that

Michèle suggested that I always practice with well-being. Well...

Vlady left us some very precious little sentences. And the first is Comfort First. Comfort, not reality! Comfort is an intention that we place. There is another not bad one, Chi is not an easy task. It's nice, it feels like a detective novel. Here again, Vlady slips us a hell of a message. Like a puzzle. We have to pay attention to beliefs, interpretations, rules... Yes, we all know that, until the day we realize how wrong we were! The murderer was smarter, again! Another not bad "Stop the blah blah". It is also for interpretations, but here I would like to develop a little.

In practice, there is doubt. We don't really know what drives us to do this, if it's worth it, if we're going in the right direction, if we follow the right teaching, etc... Personally, doubt has never left me, and I know that I will always have it. But as my years go by, the questions are no longer the same. Doubt has become more refined, more precise, and I obviously use it to know where I am, to know myself. But when you get sick, you inevitably wonder why. Why am I sick, why am I still alive ? And then everything goes, was my practice correct ? Did I understand it? Everything I thought was resolved, well, isn't really resolved after all... When all this Chi was coming into my head and, I was wondering what I had done wrong? Maybe if I hadn't practice l'Art du Chi, at least I wouldn't be feeling this horrible stuff? I don't have an answer, I don't know how I would have experienced this without my practice. I will never know.

It's all bullshit, and it's best to let it go. And sit down: front, back, Tiantien mark... The beauty, the goal of the practice, is to practice. Merely.

The Art du Chi is not a protection, a screen that keeps us away from disease, encounters that do not suit us, errors... The list is long and corresponds to our shortcomings, desires, fears. The practice is not what we want it to be. The practice is way beyond that. Let's not reduce it. If I can decide the direction, over the years, I realize that I can neither control it nor change what it is. Moving forward, the precision shows me that there is only one possibility of movement for a moment. And that it depends on the movement before and decides on the one after. We just have to follow this rail and let ourselves get carried away by these sequences. The mind can no longer decide anything, and results this great freedom.

But if the talk makes me go around in circles, the practice gives me some answers. My Tiantien is here today. Not always like before, but it is there. With something else. A quality that I had to find, out of necessity. A more obvious, more beautiful presence. A little only, but without doubts. A something that means that when I read a book about a Moroccan prisoner, my Tiantien reacts, with an obviousness, a quality, a depth that I did not know three years ago. It's very much alive in me. Another short phrase from Vlady comes to mind: Life, my children, life!

Jean Bru, Decembre 2022

Professor

December 2022



Liberate thought to liberate move- ment

Thank you Leon for your testimony. It is touching, rich in food for thought and it invites openness and sharing. It is to this invitation that I respond today.

It all started during a practice in front of magnificent mountains. An unexpected moment of silence, there was NOTHING, no expectation, no judgement...only the pleasure of seeing, of feeling, of being carried by this magnificent form that is Tai Chi.

This moment is engraved in the memory of my body, a moment of grace that still carries me today and guides me in all my research. Leon, you talk about freedom of movement, without thought, without intention. I'm in awe, not there yet, but I'm on the road!

You repeated to me in different ways: "Free yourself! The techniques are important, they are essential, but you have practiced them so much, they have shaped you, let them live. And indeed, in my practice, something was missing. Yes, the chi movement was becoming more obvious, but I felt like it was staying in. How many times have I said: I feel like a prisoner in my body.

By Carole Cajolet



Michèle uses the expression "the body as a flexible envelope" however, it is an expression that she uses with very beginners and it is now that this expression makes sense to me. As if my internal movement came up against a physical limit. Both a movement and a resistance. First I had to relax this limit, then open, allow myself to feel my body in a space larger than its physical limits.

I sought. To feel inside, the spaces grew larger, the movements of chi became more and more simple, spontaneous. Feeling outside was more difficult, by putting my attention on it I was able to feel the space around me, but there was always this border between inside and outside. A border that limited me. It is said of the Art of Chi

that it is an approach that goes through the body. Pass, but to go where?

There is inside, outside, there is neither inside nor outside. Ohhhh... so many words, but also so many perceptions to explore, discover, erase!

Return to base, repeat. Staying as close as possible to the technique, to the forms of Tai Chi as they have been handed down to us for generations, that's what we say in the school and I agree, that's our wealth.

How pleasant and comfortable it was for me to endlessly perfect these techniques and postures! But there was always something missing. I had to take another step: let this dialogue take hold →

between the will and the spontaneous response of the body. Welcome, wait, let bloom, trust. These spontaneously triggered movements are always an amazing experience.

As a teacher, what do I have to offer?

Not long ago, I was teaching one of the first Tai Chi postures to beginners. After working on the basics (ball, rotation, etc.) I simply give the instructions, forget what I taught you and follow me. To my great astonishment, a global movement has taken place. It was wonderful. What happened ? Several answers are possible, one among others: they have stopped thinking, of wanting to do well, to simply slip into my movement.

I encounter a similar challenge in my personal practice, this alternation between doing and letting things happen. There are delicious, joy-filled moments... moments of presence where I can just watch my Tai Chi moves being made. But it's so fragile! A thought, a will, an in-tention and presto, control returns.

Freeing thought to free movement?

I received, I received a lot, and I give. I am grateful for what I have received, and I give with all my heart, I love my students. What can I offer them more than the rigor of my teaching and the passion that inhabits me?

Thank you again Léon for having aroused this reflection which pushes me to go further. I admire you, I admire this constancy that you

Have had to search all these years and finally touch this freedom of movement. You are a model for me.

With all my love

Carole

December 2022

Delegate Professor of Quebec



From teaching to transmis- sion, achieving freedom of movement.

By Jean-Marie Savard

Reading Leon's letter to Linda, a Zen Koan came to mind: "When the flowers fade, where does its fragrance go?" »

Where I come from,

These few lines around the theme of this issue of Tantien mag give me the opportunity to share my experience as a teacher resulting from the practice of Aïkido from 1983 to 2011, then the Art of Chi since 2003. aware that he undoubtedly had less experience with the formal practice of Chi and Tai Chi than most of the school elders.

My practice of Aikido has allowed me to experience Ki in action, notably by serving as Aïte to Master Tamura, being sucked up and thrown following an attack without any feeling of constraint or violence. This is what led me to contact the school, to study Chi techniques. In practicing these two Arts I had found the perfect balance for some time. Suffering from a severe herniated disc, which had to be operated on, due to a motor deficit, I stopped Aikido in 2011 to continue only Tai Chi. Then 2 years after



the intervention, there was a recurrence of sciatica in a context of professional work overload, and overload of Tai Chi lessons (3 x 2 consecutive lessons during the week). These painful experiences led me little by little to take care of myself a little better and to integrate notions such as impermanence, patience, letting go, and adaptation.

This sharing is a reading of a process still in progress concerning me, and has no claim to freeze anything. It is simply an opportunity for me to investigate my modest

practice in the light of teachers who devote their lives to it. I am also aware that all my years of teaching Aikido permeate my teaching of Tai Chi.

Teaching,

I became an Aikido teacher following the departure of the club teacher, 4th DAN in charge of national education and student of TAMURA Shihan. I was 2nd DAN and went from assistant student status to →

teacher status. I did not plan for this so early and didn't really feel ready, but the lessons had to be animated.

At the beginning I reproduced the structure of the courses that I had been able to memorize with the technical level and understanding that I had at the time. Over the years, gaining in confidence and maturity in practice, I became able to make mine the animation of the courses. I had noticed that when I planned the techniques to study, I changed it most of the time, during the class, because I had to adapt to the conditions of the students, and their progress, class after class. This first experience allowed me to quickly take my bearings in teaching of Tai Chi and Chi.

If I can use a mechanistic metaphor, as a teacher, I see myself as a transmission belt of what I have received, assimilated and what the student can receive. So there is a unique relationship between the teacher and the student that evolves year after year.

Teaching requires a strong commitment by giving body and soul to the group that trusts me. This commitment to the students is associated with the desire to continue my research on the path, move towards more technical finesse, more fluidity, more depth, and to question the meaning of this practice. For me, there is a deep feeling that the practice of Tai Chi goes far beyond movement, and that the different meditative practices lead to a profound change of being.

But of course it is also possible to practice as a hobby, an anti-stress method, to have social relations and to enhance your daily life. There is no judgment of these motivations. Everyone will find what they are looking for.

When the teacher is able to live the present moment fully by being completely present, he gives a living, embodied teaching and the student directly perceives and receives something that he may not be able to put into words, but which makes him want to continue with this teacher.

The research teacher will evolve towards more and more finesse that goes beyond the fluidity and biomechanics of movement. There is obviously a need to refine the technique, to develop correct movements resulting from a good understanding of their martial origin, but also to develop an awareness of bodily feelings both in sitting and in movement in order to feel the movements of the inside, to eat them.

This awareness of the body is explored in Chi practices, which are a practice of mindfulness implemented from the beginning in Chi classes (mindfulness of the body, subtle bodily feelings, the perception of Chi in the hands, then in small and large traffic) and as well as in moving practices. This immersion in the field nsoriel is a training of attention and concentration that requires regular practice in order to open and refine the very subtle energetic bodily feelings leading to body-mind unity.



Over the years in contact with the Master and the students, the human qualities also develop, such as patience, trust, respect, curiosity (beginner's spirit), perseverance, letting go, acceptance and humility. Humility allowing the teacher not to take a posture of knowledge, but to be always in search.

Under these conditions at a more advanced stage, after having integrated, incorporated, become one with the practices of sitting and moving, he will be able to enter the path of counting. Thanks to the relaxation of the body, thanks to its capacity to be present, from moment to moment, to the feelings of the body in movement carried by the Chi, it will be able to experience, more and more often, movements which are done all alone. The foot lifting as if on a cushion of air. The perception of micro sensations, that runs through the body from the tips of the fingers to the tips of the toes. He will be able to experience a more harmonious state of being, silence of the mind,

freedom of movement not constrained by bodily tensions and connection to the surrounding space.

Sometimes I live this experience of unity, of openness, of connection, of lightness where I have the impression that the movement is done freely, as carried. But as soon as thoughts arise, I am no longer in my body, and sometimes a hesitation arises regarding the movement that will follow. It happens in a fraction of a second. It also happened to me to change the sequence of movements before finding in consciousness the standard choreography. In this case, if I am deeply rooted in my practice, the group carried by my presence follows perfectly. The way is still long....

The transmission,

It seems to me that a necessary condition for transmission is a real presence to →

oneself and a deep attention to bodily feelings. Distraction and dispersion of attention make transmission unlikely. It is thanks to this state of being of the teacher, combined with the receptivity of the student, in the ability to perceive directly in his body, beyond the words, that transmission is possible. This will be done by infusion over time in contact with the Master or the teacher. It is a long and global process of technical evolution and of consciousness which does not always have the same temporality.

Traditionally this transmission was done in daily contact with the Master for many years. The contact with the Master was made at the Dojo during daily intensive practices, but also during daily activities. The student disciples were therefore, in contact with the Master of the art, but also in contact with the man in his daily life and could realize that the presence of the Master was identical in the dojo and in everyday life. The transmission was thus done directly from body to body, from heart to heart, from spirit to spirit.

Vlady said: "My Masters did not just teach me techniques. They helped me understand what lies beyond techniques and art: Life. They showed me a Way: that of communication with all the living, that of conscious integration in this immense outpouring of joy that is the Way of Life..."

Tamura Sensei said: "Aikido is a budo whose objective is the training of human beings manifesting a balance between

body and mind not for the fight against the other but in the service of an ideal of union with the 'other in practice'

To finish

"When the flowers wither, where does its fragrance go? »

During the practices of Chi, ground movements, meditations and Tai Chi, we can experience constant changes in the conditions of the body and the mind. Sometimes the body is supple and relaxed, sometimes there are stiffness or tension, and the mind can be calm or restless.

Over the years our body ages, loses physical capacity, joints wear out, diseases appear, and we know that one day we will leave our body.

These two arts that have participated in my evolution are a Way, a Do, a lifelong journey leading after a long maturation to the freedom not only of movement in the practice of tai Chi, but also to the freedom of being. Free from attachments, ego conditioning source of dissatisfaction and suffering. In order to experience an open, curious and non-judgmental awareness of the manifestations of life in oneself and around oneself as they are.

Jean-Marie SAVARD

December 2022

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Happiness is the normal state of all living beings.

Vlady Stevanovitch

This is the sentence that Vlady wrote to me in the dedication of his book.

If there is a search that joins us all, it is that of happiness. But a normal state, how do you get there??

Go straight to the heart

Around the age of 10, I had an experience of consciousness that was extraordinary for me. We were on a family vacation and, with a group of cousins, our parents took us, for an hour, to rent a cuistax (small pedal go-karts, at the North Sea). It was the amazing day we were all waiting for! But arrived at the merchant, small problem: we were too many, and it lacked a cuistax so that we could all participate. So, I don't know why I finally agreed to leave my place.

By Inès Périlleux



A small childish disappointment experienced as a great void!

So here I am with the adults, walking together on the dike by the sea. And that's when it happened. An infinite Happiness, the feeling of Everything: the feeling of the immensity of the sea, the touch of the warm hands that held mine, the presence of passers-by, the sea breeze on my skin, my ample breathing to which I do not have never paid attention before, the joy of my cousins... I became aware of it, and it plunged me into such Happiness! Life!

When I met Vlady, it was a real magnet effect. He had everything: in perfect physical shape, he radiated health, beauty, happiness, and love. He had THE key. To no longer dissociate himself from this Happiness, he knew its source within him, and he took care of it. And he offered the method to get there. With the help of Michèle, he served it to us on a silver platter with infinite generosity and kindness. I had my life to build, it was the Grail within my reach.

Do your exercises, learn your techniques, and practice your moves.

We are many years later. My quest, my research, I have a lot of difficulty talking about it, because I am not a real "researcher"... I am a profiteer! And I take advantage, day after day, of the Method offered by Vlady to multiply the moments of Happiness. As for "working", I admit to being rather lazy, which certainly harmed the development of my ability to play my instrument to the best of my ability as well as my ability to teach it. Only the years that follow one another do me a favor!

Over time of practice and teaching, my confidence and fascination with the effectiveness of the Method have only grown. When you think about it, there are still a few disciplines that, even though they have been practiced and taught for many years, continue to have such a power of attraction. This is perhaps what we can call the taste for research: it is the result of the deep conviction that from the beginning, →

we were on the right path and above all, that there is still a lot to go.

I was fascinated as a child to hear my music teacher pick up my instrument and play the score that I had been working on and painfully trying to render. It was my instrument, but I had never heard it make that sound, and it was the same score for beginners, but the music was of a beauty that I had not even noticed! I never had the discipline and perseverance to practice my musical instrument to get there. And I would never have evolved in the Art of Chi either if I had not been able to teach it, for my greatest happiness.

And teach!

My life, like everyone else, is not a long calm river. Ups and downs, difficult choices, responsibilities that seem insurmountable, doubts and bereavements, and then great joys, deep happiness, serene and unshakable certainties. Through it all, it was the teaching that always calmed the “crazy monkey” for me, and allowed me to stay on course.

I can't separate practice and teaching. For me, teaching is a part of practice, so powerful in its effects.

First of all, because nothing is taught without doing it. I remember at the beginning of class when I had to stay on the lookout at the window to open the door for a late-comer. The participants were lying down and I was trying to describe to them what they had to do (the clock exercise probably). I couldn't, even the words no longer existed.

How often do participants, who have been following my courses for a long time, tell me that “this is the first time we have done this with you”. I almost always tell them that it is a technique that we have already practiced often together. But in the end, they are not really wrong. Even I feel it; the feeling of never having “felt like that”. It is my experience of this technique that has evolved, and it has been reflected in my way of teaching it. The evolution is made, almost without my knowledge. What luck!

When we teach, we are obliged to be true, since our language is that of the body. I think back to a passage from the novel *Les enfants de la terre* which explained that with spoken language lies came, but that the expression of the body does not lie, neither to others nor to oneself. We obviously have to relearn how to listen to it, rediscover its language, its instinct, its will; learn to express the beautiful, the simple, and the living. This is what the Art of Chi re-educates us to. The movements of Tai Ji Quan as much as the techniques of Chi and Sounds are for me the most beautiful expressions of the body. From the first day, the pleasure is there. And with the truth of the body comes purity, spontaneity, and joy. I become again this child at the edge of the sea!

And then there is the exchange, the others. Whether in a small or large group, teaching is above all practicing together, and being together. The Chi placed in communication becomes Love. Isn't that what Life gives us best?



The road is long, long live the road.

I still have so much progress to make. Nice! In my personal practice, perfecting, perfecting, and perfecting again. Let the movement happen, listen to the silence, and become the child again. And in my teaching practice, develop the feelings of the other to be able to guide him adequately in the truth of his body and help him too, to become the child again.

It is inevitable, by dint of practice, and especially in joy, the Chi shapes us. I think it is me who learns to use it, but it is him who

heals me, structures me, frees me, and puts me back in my natural state.

Thank you Leon for your invitation and your example; you are a guide and cement between us all.

Ines Perileux

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Delegate Professor

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