

E: “There’s a bunch of things I’m thinking about, so I’m just trying to think of which, where to go with them. One thing I was thinking about is, we’re talking about tactile response as being quicker than visual. There’s a way in which...and then at the end, you were saying you almost get to...the person sort of introduces themselves through that instant tactile touch—somebody you’ve never met before, but because you’ve done *chi sau* so many times with so many different body types, personalities, you get to know that person as soon as you touch hands with them, and then you know how to respond. There’s something that almost seems like that’s not even, it’s not something you’re thinking about clearly, in the way that we usually think about thought, you’re not thinking ‘I’m going to do this, and then that.’ There’s no time for that.”

S: “Yeah, you’re not thinking, absolutely, and that’s what I mean by left-brain, right-brain, right? So, but you are absolutely experiencing the felt-sense sensation. Like you and I were talking about David Abram’s books a little while ago about, he’s all about that: having deep sensate experiences of things versus in my mind thinking about them, and actually relating with them directly. And that’s what you’re doing in *chi sau*, is you are relating directly with the other person. And what that means is, I want you to notice the pressure; I want you to notice the speed; I want you to notice the temperature of that person’s body; I want you to notice the tension, or the relaxation. All of those things are right-brained experiences, and that’s all you have to do. Now you can take it to another level and say ‘oh, I’m noticing my muscles are over-tense right now; oh, I notice that sensation because I can recognize this is too much, and now I can attune—that’s where these micro-attunements come in—oh, I can now relax my shoulder a little bit while I continue to play this game of *chi sau*.’ And that’s how I re-pattern or re-focus my skill-level. You know, is noticing: do these sensations correspond to a felt-sense? Yes. And that ‘yes’ I talked about, I think, in my opening comments on the last newsletter about: all Wing Chun is finding the ‘yes’ in your body. Which is basically: am I on centerline, and am I safe? That feels like a ‘yes,’ because you’ve trained it so many times and you’ve had people run some *poon sau* energy, hand-checking energy, into your structure so you can verify with physical contact on your arms that actually this isn’t going to hit me. But I can hit anytime I want. So again that mindful sensate repetition with a whole variety of positions and partners and drills and dynamism—all of that creates something much bigger than anything you’ve trained directly when you have to actually use it in a fight. All of that stuff integrates.”

E: “It’s interesting too because it’s not that sort of overt thinking but it’s also, it doesn’t seem to quite be habit either, because it’s something that’s much more dynamic, much more responsive and mindful at the same time, so it’s not purely an unconscious habit: I do this, I do this.”

S: “No, and that’s what the mind...so the mindfulness is what can create the new habit or shape previous unconscious habits. So again if you look in the evolution of the human nervous system, the reptile mind is mostly 99% instinct and reaction; they’ll have some input through their senses, and then that’ll hit some pre-determined behaviours of like I’m going to eat, kill, or sleep, or go get warm. That’s pretty much it. They’re not weighing the pros and cons, so to speak, it’s...so we have those parts of us. The autonomic part of our nervous system which controls breathing, and heart-rate, and cellular function, and all kind of things that I’m not consciously aware of. But those things are also linked to my ability to do something today like fighting or self-defense. So if I’m too hyper-vigilant, or too tense, or too whatever, well I can actually moderate that through this mindful training. I can change the tone of my muscle in an exercise by learning to relax, or learning to do things differently, and it is that mindful

repetition that again creates those habits that we're looking for, because what I want, when someone is aggressing against me, is I want really good habits to come out reflexively. Because I don't have the time to think about it. And this is what I love about Wing Chun; you say, 'well, oh my god, someone can attack you in a thousand different ways,' and it's like, yeah but there's only one centerline and that's the only thing I need to remember. [30:00] Go to centerline. And then once the contact that pushes all the software buttons in my nervous system of what my body's going to do, but I need the contact for that to happen."

E: "And that touches a lot on *yi*, intent, that your intent isn't to worry about where the attack, the arms are coming from, but just: do you have centerline, do you have sort of that small hole?"

S: "And go to centerline. I mean, well this might be another conversation, but the more, I don't want to say "advanced" but I'll use it because I can't think of a better word, but the advanced training that links with *chi sau* and then is separate from is the *my san jong* training drills. And those are basically one or two step enter and attacking drills where a person is attacking and defending. And what that does is it...so *chi sau*, I'll just go back to *chi sau*, so *chi sau* helps you when you have contact. As soon as you have contact, you've done *chi sau*, your hands will do something. But how do you get contact without getting knocked out first? That's where the *my san jong* training is, is that you train repetitively, repetitively, repetitively, on the count of three or whenever you're ready, go to the centerline without any hesitation. You might shave or change the line a little bit on your way in, but you're basically stepping in, with good Wing Chun horse stance, smart with your weight on the back, front foot toes in...all those things we know that will minimize our getting hurt, stepping into a confrontation. And with the *jong sau*—and the *jong sau* is the bread-and-butter technique for engagement."

E: "I was thinking that when we were talking about the pillars, the *jong sau's* not there, but you don't do *jong* when you've already got contact."

S: "That's right. The *jong sau* is the safe technique for when you're engaging towards the centerline. Its nature is very good at, number one, creating a protective wedge when you have your *jong sau* technique forward and then your guard hand, you have a nice protective wedge around your body. And but also when you're bringing that energy forward and releasing energy in your *jong sau*, it's very difficult to stop your *jong sau* from penetrating someone else's arms if they have anything on centerline. It really is like a hot knife cutting through butter: it's really hard to stop a good *jong sau* coming forward, boom, with the structure of the body behind it.

"And so once you have the contact with the *jong sau*, again assuming someone else has two hands on the sweet spot on centerline, then, if your *jong saus* don't just cut through that, and then you hit, as if they weren't there—and your *jong sau* will just make a fist at the last millisecond and knock that person out—but if you feel 'oh, they've got good structure, they have some resistance here,' then you're able to change, and that's where your *chi sau* comes in: what happens when someone moves me off centerline, 'oh, the other hand comes...oh my god,' and then all these techniques start to flow naturally.

"So the *my san jong* drills train any fear, frozenness, hesitation out of you when someone's aggressing towards you; you've just done it so many times, someone moves towards you, you step in. You step in.

You step in. And you can override any sort of freeze response your nervous system may have when it gets triggered into extreme stress.

“You’ve basically transformed a big part of your undercurrent being. And I can talk about this on a very, very personal level. One of the reasons I trained martial arts was I came from a physically abusive background. So there’s a lot of fear around being harmed and aggressed against and trauma, and my number one go-to, in terms of stress response, wasn’t flight or fight, it was freeze. That was the only thing that was available to me. That has lots of consequences in life, physical, emotional, psychological, so being able to repattern that in a safe, supportive environment with your kung fu brothers and sisters, I mean there’s a lot of trauma-healing and confidence, as well as the skill that came from that, because I repatterned my body, which repatterns my emotions, which repatterns my thinking patterns, by learning to cross that threshold of someone moves towards me, I don’t get frozen, I move towards it. I engage with it. There’s a great life teaching there, as well as really great fight strategy, because Wing Chun’s benefits are I want to get contact. I exhale when I get contact, I inhale when I go into it, when I don’t know, when there isn’t anything to feel; it’s like I don’t know this person yet—I can see them, but I don’t really know them, but you can’t lie on the felt sense. You can’t fake that. I know who you are.

“My Sifu...my Sigung, Sunny Tang, he would tell stories about his Sifu Moy Yat, and Ip Man, and [35:00] those guys, if they wanted to find out about how good someone’s kung fu was, he’d say they wouldn’t even have to touch hands with them. Just the way they would walk in the room, they would know. But earlier on, when they weren’t as good, they’d say ‘I could do one or two rolls with somebody in *chi sau* and then I knew. They didn’t have to do anything. I could just feel where the holes are, where their aggression was, where their’...so, on contact.”

E: “We’ve talked about, in class before, how touching hands and doing rolls, sometimes you sort of telegraph or it’s this huge sign, especially at the beginner’s, so the red sash when they’re first learning have no...when you’re just learning the first basics, how to roll, you’re not aware of the big holes you’re leaving or advertising...”

S: “No, you’re just learning some basic skills to play the game. You’re not even playing the game yet.”

E: “But later on, later on, you’re able to read those signs and they’re very large signals being sent.”

S: “Yeah, and then you’re learning to minimize those signals because your partner is taking advantage of them, so you get better. And then they have to get better to read even smaller signals. So this is where sensitivity is such a key part of the Wing Chun system: if you really train and hone that ability, then you can notice really subtle movements or changes of balance or direction, even maybe before the other person is aware they’re doing it, and you can take quick advantage of that and finish the fight, I mean that’s an amazing sort of thing. And it can be something really small. Because those are the places that we can actually train to have advantages for. Again, just referencing the whole Wing Chun system, it’s we’re not using size, brute strength, force, or endurance. What if you don’t have those? And you still have to defend yourself. Well, ok, what do I have left? And then you know we talk about our theories, principles, and attributes, and we train those—we can develop those skillsets, and the *chi sau* piece is really what allows you to, again, even when things are dynamic, with the *toi ma*, pushing and pulling of

the horse stance, that I can still feel changes, I can still reorient, I can still keep a clean technique backwards and forwards, I can still stay on centerline, I can still have my intent going forward, I can still keep my horse—my *yi chi kim yeung ma*—and not let that break. And I can do it all at the same timing as the other person is moving and just a little bit faster. Because I don't want to communicate ahead of time what I'm up to, but I certainly don't want to be late—those aren't great situations. I want to...I want the other person to feel me as if I'm not doing anything, even though they can feel some movements, but they don't feel aggression, and they don't...and then bang. That's sort of the nature of the Wing Chun fight, it's not like chopping your way through brush to get to some end point to hit somebody; it's just feeling little pieces, moving and changing when you have to, and finding your way in to the vulnerable place in their body, and then hitting."

E: "And when you encounter resistance or blockage, or an intent to, say, in *chi sau*, to go down or something, energy's pushing down a bit, it seems like what we try to do in Wing Chun is let that happen. So if they're pushing down, you go around."

S: "Yeah, or I want to redirect it to a place where I would have advantages. Or I'll run hands, I'll change hands, so hand-replacement. It's like if I'm in a *bong sau* position and you try and push my *bong sau* out of the way but my other hand is free, I'll just stick with you with my *bong sau* as it goes down, and then I'll hit you. And then after I hit you guess what's going to happen to my *bong sau*, well it's going to be free. So that's where we have double-hand techniques and single-hand techniques. Well, ok, I'll just stick with you, but my hand's going to replace, or run, or change, or hit, or... So there's a brilliance around how you can train your hands to work coordinated together or to work individually. Based on the information that you get from the other person.

"So even though in the *chi sau* curriculum, you will practice sequences of all the different techniques—how to initiate them, if I do, say for example, a *tan dah*, what would be a next logical position or technique that would flow from a *tan dah*, that follows the principles, rules, and theories, like save time, same movement, save energy—so I'll practice sequences of maybe three or four techniques in a row, and I'll add in different footwork, either a *chuen ma* shift, or a little duck walk step, or a full step in, so I'll integrate those things, just so the nervous system has an experience of what feels good, what feels logical, precise. So that when I need something from *chi sau*, when it becomes more freestyle, and a hole emerges, then I'm not going to think 'oh, I should do a *tan dah* right now, this would be a really...', no no no no no no no: when I feel the hole, the sensitivity triggers the neuropathways [40:00] for all those techniques that I did, like a filing cabinet, and pulls out the one that makes sense for the space that's opening. The technique just comes.