

4th International Push Hands Meeting Hannover, Germany

Having taught here forward to my 3rd visit able to exchange in an I had arranged some Friday – Sunday in Hannover from offered three different 3 hours a day, for 3 was due to work on but alas, due to Grandi, of Italy I had organiser, Lam King of a nearby coffee house short interview with After a pleasant lunch, shou sessions that hours each afternoon. of pushing with a range of skills and an opportunity to engage with new faces.



obvious to me was the inner stillness of the serious practitioners and the busy-ness of the lesser experienced. The funny thing is people who know listen and people who don't, don't. This was particularly evident when I had a very interesting and rewarding exchange with Henk from Holland who is a well-known regular at Recontres Jasnieres known for his wonderful musical skills as much as his tui shou ability.

On my second day of teaching I had only two students; a man from Aachen with a few months experience and a woman from Hamburg whom I had worked with on the previous Friday, in Hamburg and for a short period last autumn when I was invited to teach at Daniel Grolle-Moscovici's regular class. My topic was focus and intent and fortunately these two students were particularly receptive to the work. We spend the early part of the session working on a stepping routine which involved focussing forward through the hands whilst pushing towards a point in the distance. Forward and back we worked for some time establishing the goals of direction and intent. From there we worked on looking at strengthening the internal structure, maintaining a clear connection with the ground. The three hours passed surprisingly quickly and we all seemed to gain some benefit from the session.

The informal exchanges continued each afternoon with training room getting busier as the week went on. Events such as these really do a lot to increase the skill level of practitioners, allowing them to work with a variety of partners, a variety of approaches, and a variety of skill levels. However, it is worth noting that (as the programme suggested) it is a good idea to clearly establish the rules of engagement in each bout you encounter. The validity of this advice was particularly well illustrated when a young female student of mine, who felt troubled by what she had considered excessive force, when her male partner persisted in gripping her wrists despite being asked not to. On seeing her upset appearance at the side of the training room, I enquired as to why she felt this way. On hearing her story I felt it necessary to clarify the situation for all concerned. I asked the gentleman in question to explain his intent and he indicated that he wasn't aware that he was causing a problem. When I told him that the student had three times requested that he desist from these actions, and that he should be aware of the feelings of others, he agreed and apologised.

Often situations can escalate when one party imagines one things and another has trained with another approach or line of action. If each partner takes time beforehand, to establish the rules of engagement, then potentially unpleasant situations can often be avoided.

On the second evening of my visit, a few of us adjourned to Nil's apartment to discuss the finer points of the art over a few beverages. Over some nice music and conversation, we grew a little closer together and the evening progressed to viewing of Nil's new video of the William CC Chen, Cheng Man-Ching form that he had made. The video was beautifully filmed, excellently presented and will serve as a very prized addition to the collection of practitioners of this style. This didn't, however prevent some of us from adding our own ad-libbed commentary when Nil's left the sound down for the benefit of we non-German speakers. Despite the increased hilarity and pissing-taking Nils took everything in the good spirit in which it was delivered. The evening provided a wonderfully relaxed (if not excessively so for some of us) opportunity to forge links across the European continent once more.

twice before I was looking with the knowledge of being open, friendly environment. teaching in Hamburg from and would be working Tuesday – Thursday. I had approaches to Tui Shou, days. On the first day, I Sensitivity and Awareness the popularity of Tiziano no takers. Nils Klug, the Malaysia and I adjourned to to allow me to conduct a Nils for future publication. we joined the open tui were running for three Aside from the pleasure practitioners who possessed approaches, it also provided meet some old friends and What became increasingly

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For my final workshop was entitled, "Tui Development." My really looking deeply influenced by our how each of these modified by paying going on with our

A group of 8 – 10 them to sit down in I had previously to ask them if they the workshop was. A through meditation be exploring the as a a tool to inner gave them the felt they weren't woman left.



workshop the theme Shou as a Tool for Inner intention was to work on at how our push hands was own behavioural habits and aspects could be changed or close attention to what was emotions etc.

people arrived and I invited the circle of chairs which arranged. I felt it necessary knew what the theme for few didn't so I explained that a 'listening' work we would possibility of using tui shou development. I then quietly opportunity of leaving if they interested in the work. One

We started by closing our eyes and tuning into our breath; where the breath was felt most in the body, the depth, the pace, trying to get a real deep sense of how we used our breath. I then asked them to try to keep returning to their breath and the sense of letting it settle in the lower abdomen. Then I asked them to get a sense of the quietness, the silence, the stillness and how it felt to be in this way. From time to time I let questions enter. I invited them to consider what initially attracted them to tai chi, what they felt about push hands. Try to get a sense of standing opposite someone you've never met before, about to engage in tui shou..... how do you feel? How do you make contact.....? Where is your breath.....? Etc. etc. By giving these enquiring questions, I tried to instil a deeper sense of what they went through every time they pushed hands. After some time we slowly opened our eyes and I asked them to try to remain with the stillness, quietly find a partner, and begin pushing.

When pushing I asked them to try to keep the talking to an absolute minimum to allow them the opportunity to increase their 'listening' ability beyond the auditory sense. For the next forty minutes or so each person had the opportunity to work with the other until they had all experienced pushing with everyone in the room, including me. I then invited them to sit down once more, and discuss how each of them felt about their experiences of working with the other players. Some of them looked like they were in agreement with the reported feedback while others were a little surprised. I kept my comments to the end, as I didn't want to influence any of the participants in what they said.

One woman, whom I worked with, seemed to use her arms to keep me away from her. What I mean is that I was consciously aware of her tendency to protect herself from intrusion by strengthening her resistance through her arms to keep me at bay. I brought this gently to her attention while encouraging her to relax her arms and move from the waist, tuning into my movements at the same time. We then worked on exercises to give a sense of structure to her body, to her arms and a real connection to herself, to the ground and to her opponent. By creating and firmly establishing, a real sense of these things made her stronger and more able to deal with potential problems.

During the discussion session we talked about each person's experience of the other and allowed him or her to consider whether he or she really knew how others experienced working with them. For some this new approach increased their personal insight and allowed them to develop further in another way. As everyone was open to dialogue it allowed us to perceive what we were doing, or what we thought we were doing, from someone else's perspective. This brought some interesting observations to the foreground:

When a woman indicated that she felt a man to be tense or hard he explained that what he was actually doing was some 'grounding' work which involved taking her connection to the ground, so what she was actually experiencing was his connection to the ground, and not tension or resistance. I understood what they were both referring to and indicated that this was an example of misunderstanding which could create unpleasant exchanges if not dealt with. In this open free exchange, we had all agreed to look closer at what others experienced, in working with us, and found the information useful. Whilst acknowledging each person's point of view I also indicated that it could be particularly pleasant if he were able to 'ground' her push while she felt absolutely nothing!