

## The Mind/Body Gestalt

BY 'MIND/BODY GESTALT' we mean the idea that mind and body considered *together* form a whole that is different from either mind *or* body considered as *separate entities*. By way of setting the scene for this article, we shall mention two related distinctions that have implications for the martial artist. The first is a commonplace of martial arts writing; the second exercises a pervasive influence on the ways in which we perceive ourselves and the nature of our actions.

1. The distinction between "hard" or "external" and "soft" or "internal" martial arts. This distinction (by no means uncontroversial even among those who accept it) makes its appearance in Chinese sources in the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> It is most usually associated with the Chinese scholar and martial artist Sun Lutang (1860–1933), founder of the eclectic Sun method of taijiquan.<sup>2</sup> The internal arts, called *neijia* in Chinese, are said to rely centrally on the mind to co-ordinate the body, and to make use of *chi/ki* as distinct from physical or "external" strength. These arts include taijiquan, xingyiquan and baguazhang and, among the Japanese arts, aikido. The external arts (*waijia* in Chinese) such as Shaolin quan are held to be such that mind and internal energy are secondary to physical or external force. According to this classification, karate is an external art.

2. The distinction between mind and body. "Mind/body dualism" – the idea that mind and body are ontologically separate entities – has been a talking-point of western philosophy since the seventeenth century,<sup>3</sup> but the philosophical doctrine only expresses a characteristic that all human beings seem to have: the tendency to think of themselves as (in Gilbert Ryle's phrase) "ghosts in the machine"<sup>4</sup> – as minds that live inside bodies and, so to speak, operate the mechanism. Perhaps this is a tendency associated with the quasi-religious idea of a "soul." My self has two components, body and soul, and my body is not the "real" me. The mind/body distinction is associated also with the persistent idea that mental activity is somehow superior to physical. Sometimes, indeed, we think of mind and body as being *opposed* to one another: of mind as something that has to overcome bodily impulses, or that can be overcome by them.

We shall not dwell on the philosophical niceties of mind/body dualism, nor shall we discuss the contentious idea of *chi/ki*. We shall suggest only that the distinctions between internal and external arts and between mind and body are of doubtful validity. It is much better not to think in terms of "hard" and "soft" martial arts with methodologies fundamentally different from one another. It is better also not to conceive of mind as occupying a sort of compartment of its own, or of the mental and physical "realms" as being different modes of experience.

Something of what we mean by all this is conveyed in the familiar diagram called *taijitu*:

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<sup>1</sup> M. Shahar, "Ming-Period Evidence of Shaolin Martial Practice," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (Harvard-Yenching Institute) 61 (2) December 2001: pp. 359–413.

<sup>2</sup> See *Classical Taijiquan* (ed. and trans. Joseph Crandall) vol. 1: *Taijiquan Xue (A Study of Taiji Boxing)* by Sun Lutang (Smiling Tiger Martial Arts, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Largely thanks to the work of the French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes (1596–1650).

<sup>4</sup> See Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (1949; new edn, University of Chicago Press, 2002).



This diagram is also known as the yin/yang symbol. Putting it at its simplest, the taijitu expresses the proposition that reality consists not of categorially distinct opposites, but of the interdependence of opposites. You cannot have dark without light, high without low, male without female, front without back, soft without hard – and so on and so forth. Opposites – black and white, “yin” and “yang” – have an inseparable relation to each other, and each contains some part of the other. This concept has a number of recondite meanings in Daoist cosmology and metaphysics, but these are matters into which we need not digress. We shall use the idea of the inseparability of opposites only to illustrate two points that are central to our discussion.

1. It is a fallacy to suppose that mind and body are distinct and that the mind drives or controls the body as if the body were a horse and the mind a rider. Because the body is not an automaton, its operation depends upon the direction of mind; because mind has no material form, it depends upon a properly functioning body to act in the world according to its purposes. But this is a relationship of *interdependence*. The workings of mind are not distinct from the actions of body; mind and body are the completion of each other. This is true in general, and it is true of karate specifically. Effective karate requires that the mind/body nexus be completely integrated and seamless. Mind and body must flow into one another in an uninterrupted swirl, like cream and coffee in the same cup. If even a second's hesitation or reflection is necessary as a preliminary to action then what you have is fatal hesitation. No martial art is simply a matter of mind or body: all arts require the dynamic interplay of each with the other.

2. Prescinding entirely from the question of chi/ki, there is no such thing as a martial art that is hard but not soft, internal but not external. In functional terms, and regardless of appearances, all arts are *both*. Receiving and deflecting and evading an attack requires suppleness or softness – yin or ju (柔). Striking and kicking requires hardness and “external” force: yang or go (剛). The vital thing is to know how and when to call upon each and how to use each. Hard and soft must flow into each another like the black and white of the taijitu. This truism is reflected in the name coined by Miyagi Chojun Osensei: Goju Ryu – “Hard/Soft School.”<sup>5</sup>

We shall try in this article to bring out some of the practical implications of these preliminaries.

## Fear and Relaxation

Animals, including human animals, exhibit one of three reactions when threatened or alarmed: flight, fight or freeze. It is with the last of these that we are concerned.

The tendency to freeze or tense when frightened is the “rabbit in the headlights” phenomenon. On the basis of common human experience we speak of someone being

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<sup>5</sup> Miyagi Osensei derived this name from a passage in the ancient martial arts text called *Bubishi*; see Patrick McCarthy (ed. and trans.), *Bubishi: The Classic Manual of Combat* (Charles E. Tuttle, 2008).

“paralysed with fear” or “frozen with terror.” But you cannot defend yourself if you are frozen with terror; you cannot deflect, absorb or evade an attack if you cannot move. You cannot even run away. Nor is it enough to be able to *overcome* an initial “freeze” response and move from it into a condition of softness or relaxation – because moving from a state of tension to a state of relaxation takes time, and time is something that you cannot afford to waste. The martial artist must learn to exist in a state of relaxation that is constant or normal: not a state in which the “freeze” reaction can be quickly overcome, but one in which it does not occur at all. He must develop relaxation as a permanent condition of existence that does not desert him at moments of stress. This is very difficult to do, because it requires us to override something that seems instinctive. Why an instinct that has such negative survival value should have persisted is something of a mystery.

But consider the “freeze” reaction in terms of the kind of symbolism provided by the taijitu. Is the paralysis of fear a mental phenomenon or a physical one? Does the body freeze because the mind is in a state of panic, or is the mind in a state of panic because the body is frozen? Anyone who thinks about it will, we suggest, soon realise that these are the wrong questions to be asking. The “freeze” reaction cannot be analysed in terms of a mind/body dichotomy, because mind and body do not operate separately in the ways that such a dichotomy presupposes.

It is important not to be misled by some of the connotations of the word “relaxation”: connotations of inattention, inertia, sleepiness, sluggishness. What we mean by it is a state of confident poise or alertness such that one can react instantly to any situation without “freezing,” letting softness and hardness – “ju” and “go,” defence and attack – flow into one another without thought or pause. A familiar illustration of this interplay of soft and hard is the pine tree in the wind. The pine tree is strong, but it is also supple. When the wind blows it accommodates itself to the force of the wind instantaneously, without thought or deliberation. It is precisely through doing this that it becomes strong – able to receive the wind without damage to itself.

Clearly, however, developing this condition of relaxed versatility is not a matter of training the mind; nor is it a matter of training the body; nor is it even a matter of training both – because, strictly speaking, there is no “both”: there is no duality. It is a matter of training what we can call the mind/body gestalt. To do this effectively is to achieve what is usually called mushin (無心): a state of being such that the mind/body gestalt reacts without so much as a second’s hesitation to whatever situation confronts it – hard or soft, attacking or yielding, resisting or giving way, as the flow of circumstance requires.

In the following pages we shall recommend some exercises and methods that have been found valuable in cultivating the kind of mind/body integration that we have described.

## ***Meditation***

There are two main school or sects of Zen meditation in Japan: Soto (曹洞) and Rinzai (臨濟). The differences between them are mostly methodological, but this is not something that we need spend time on. What the two schools have in common is the practice of meditation as a way of developing awareness of the true nature of the self: of the mind/body gestalt and its place in the world. In meditation, body and mind are no longer separate: they come together as one reality.

In Japan, seated meditation or zazen (座禪) is usually practised in the posture called seiza (正座). This involves sitting on the floor in the way illustrated below, with the back straight but not tense and the shoulders relaxed. You can sit on your heels, or you may find it more comfortable to sit on a small plump cushion of the kind called zafu (坐蒲) in

Japanese. The hands are folded in the lap, usually with the fingers of the left hand resting on those of the right<sup>6</sup> and the tips of the thumbs touching. The eyes are kept open (otherwise you may fall asleep!) and should look at the ground about two or three feet in front of you. Breathe slowly and deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth.



*Zazen*

Because Japanese people sit in seiza from an early age, they do not find it uncomfortable, but westerners – especially older people – may find it hard to get used to. Remember that meditation is not supposed to be an ordeal or a pain-resisting exercise. If you cannot get used to seiza – if your legs always go numb or your knees hurt – you can sit on the floor or a cushion in a simple legs-crossed position, or you can meditate sitting on a chair (not too comfortable a chair, though, because, again, you may find yourself falling asleep). Another common posture for seated meditation is the lotus seat, as illustrated below; but if



*The lotus seat*

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<sup>6</sup> Left-handed people find it more natural to rest the fingers of the right hand on those of the left. It really does not matter.

you find seiza too hard on the knees you will probably find the lotus seat impossible. If you can sit comfortably in seiza or the lotus seat, well and good, but there is no need to fret about it. It is not a good idea to sit in any fixed position for very long periods even if you experience no great discomfort. Prolonged immobility combined with dehydration can have serious consequences, such as deep-vein thromboses. Sensible meditation does not put the normally healthy person at serious risk of such things, but it is as well to mention them. The method of walking meditation called *kinhin* (経行) is also valuable. It involves nothing more complicated than walking around the dojo (or wherever you happen to be meditating), taking each step slowly and deliberately while maintaining the same state of tranquillity and detachment as you have in seated meditation. The Chinese *zhan zhuang* exercise is the simplest alternative of all. Just stand in *heiko dachi* (平行立) with your hands hanging loosely by your sides and breathe deeply, feeling your body relaxing and sinking with each out-breath.

The purpose of meditation is to withdraw the self from engagement with distracting things and to integrate body and mind into a calm and relaxed unity. (Consciously and deliberately relaxing your shoulders will almost certainly show you that you are more tense than you thought you were.)<sup>7</sup> However exotic and unfamiliar it may seem at first, meditation is a completely straightforward practice. Contrary to what is sometimes thought, it is not necessary to meditate “on” anything. Advice often given to the beginner is that you should not think about anything; but this, of course, is hopeless: you will immediately start thinking about not thinking about anything. More helpful advice is: let thoughts arise and pass away naturally, like bubbles rising up through lemonade. Do not worry about the fact that they are arising or try to suppress them. Be aware of them, but take no interest in them: do not attach yourself to them. If at first you find it difficult not to be distracted by passing thoughts, focus your attention on something specific but neutral: the sensation of breath passing in through your nostrils and out through your mouth, or the rising and falling of your chest as you breathe.

Meditation is not something that comes easily to people accustomed to living in a busy world; some people even feel guilty or self-indulgent about taking time to do it. Nor, as with so many things, is it possible to give hard and fast directions, because within certain parameters everyone will develop his or her own way of meditating. Just as there is no need to look for hidden difficulties, so too there is no need to look for rules and regulations. The outcome is the important thing, not the process. The more you do it, the easier you will find it to enter a meditative state, and the more completely will the calm mind/body condition that you discover enter into all aspects of your life. Try to set aside fifteen minutes each day for meditation. Separate yourself from all extraneous concerns, and enjoy the stillness of being alone with yourself.

## *Trust Exercises*

Because tension is so frequent a concomitant of stress, exercises that enable you to stay relaxed in a stressful situation are especially beneficial. The various “pushing hands” exercises common in Chinese and Japanese martial arts are a good examples of this,

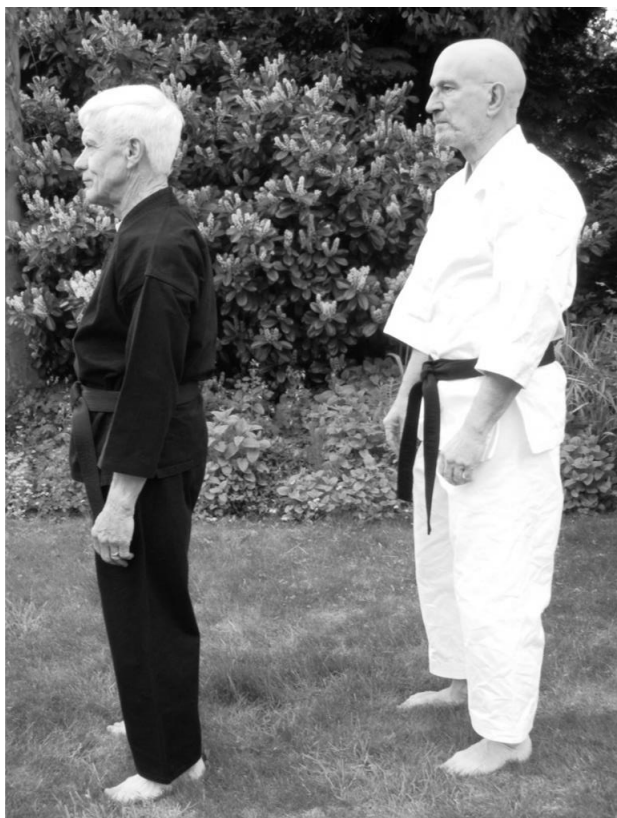
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<sup>7</sup> Unconsciously tensing the neck and shoulders is one of the most typical signs of stress, and a primary cause of tension headaches. You can easily test this for yourself. Pause at some point during the day and see if your shoulders are “up.” If they are, relax them as completely as you can and take a few calming breaths. Then try the same thing again in an hour. In all probability your shoulders will have come “up” again without your realising it. This seems to be especially true of people who work at desks.

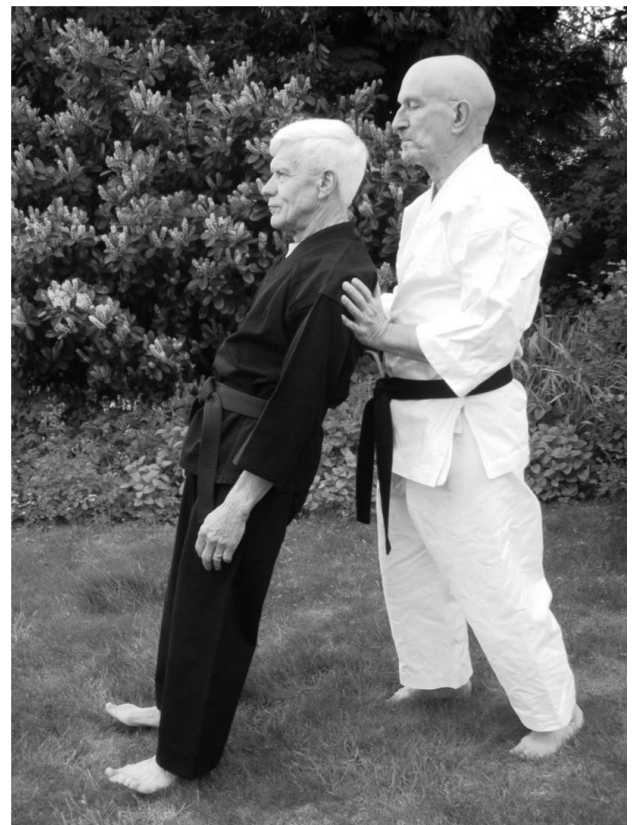
especially when practised with speed and vigour. If you do not remain relaxed, you simply cannot do the exercise; but, at the same time, you know that you are pushing hands with someone who is trying to unbalance you or to take some other kind of tactical advantage. Also, you can add degrees of stress by means other than increasing speed and vigour. Try staring into one another's eyes as you push hands: excessive eye contact is disturbing at the best of times; or try pushing hands blindfolded or with your eyes closed.

Here are three simple "trust" exercises that will enable you to explore for yourself the relation between stress, tension and relaxation. The idea in each case is not primarily that you should trust your partner but that you should learn to trust yourself to "let go": to override fear under conditions of stress.

1. Partner A stands in front of Partner B and topples rigidly over backwards like a tree, making no effort to save himself – and implicitly trusting Partner B not to let him fall.
2. Partner A lies on his back, with Partner B kneeling behind him and holding his head in his cupped hands. For Partner A, the object of the exercise is to relax his whole body, including his neck, making no muscular effort to support his head. He knows that if Partner B lets go of his head it will bang on the ground – but he must still remain perfectly relaxed, trusting Partner B not to let this happen. (We have, incidentally, seen people fall asleep during this exercise. If you can do that, you have certainly mastered the art of relaxation.)



*Partner A stands in front of Partner B ...*



*... and topples over backwards, trusting  
Partner B to catch him*



*2. Partner A lies on his back, with Partner B kneeling behind him and holding his head in his hands. Partner A must relax completely, trusting Partner B not to let his head bang on the ground*

3. Partner B leads Partner A around the dojo while Partner A keeps his eyes closed or – better still – wears a thick blindfold. Partner A's task is to remain completely relaxed, entirely trusting Partner B not to let him bump into anything.

The advantage of these exercises is that they create perceptible levels of stress with no possibility of real catastrophe. You will probably find the self-relinquishment that they require difficult at first, especially if you practise them with someone whom you do not know well; but overcoming the difficulty is the whole point. Trust exercises will make you acquainted with your worst enemy. No doubt the reader will be able to devise other ways of creating stress and learning to cope with it. Kata practice blindfolded or in the dark is an example of something that can be done along the same lines.

## **Relaxation and the Control of Space**

Everyone is familiar with the idea of personal space; everyone has his own private bubble: the area around him, defined by an invisible boundary, within which he feels safe and comfortable. The boundary is not a rigid one. Different people have different conceptions about how far their personal space extends, and these conceptions naturally vary according to (for example) whether they are with friends or strangers. There are also cultural differences that can lead to awkwardness: people from some cultures seem to need a smaller or larger private bubble than others do. But a bubble of some kind seems to be a universal psychological need. No one likes to have his or her personal space entered by a stranger or against his will. Even in circumstances that are not particularly threatening it feels uncomfortable – anyone who has ever stood in a crowded lift or on a packed underground train will know this. In less benign circumstances – confronted by an aggressive or angry or violent individual – it is a good deal more than uncomfortable, and a typical feature of



aggressive behaviour is that an aggressor will try to intimidate you by invading your personal space. Considered under this aspect, an assault is nothing more than a violent entry into your private bubble; self-defence is the gesture that you make to reclaim it.

Clearly, the management of personal space is integral to both psychological wellbeing and personal safety. Equally clearly, maintaining or reclaiming it as an aspect of self-defence requires that we be able to control distances by moving with decision, speed and fluency under conditions that are urgent and frightening. But, as we have seen, one of the characteristic untrained reactions to fear is to freeze. It is essential, therefore, to learn not only how to relax under stress, but also how to relax and move under stress.

Once again, pushing hands exercises in their more advanced and dynamic aspects are a good way of training the mind/body gestalt to react to stress or threat with fluid and no-minded movement. The following suggestions will also be found useful. As in the previous section, this is not a complete list; you should feel free to devise methods of your own.

1. This exercise (and variants of it) was developed by Harada Mitsusuke Sensei of Karate-do Shotokai and regarded by him as having great value as a method of teaching effective distance control. In its simplest form, two people stand facing each other with their arms outstretched in front of them, just touching one another's fingertips. This is an absolutely safe personal space (though larger than most people require) because, at this distance, neither partner can reach the other, even with a kick.



*This is an absolutely safe personal space because, at this distance, neither partner can reach the other, even with a kick*

The object of the exercise is for each partner to defend his personal space against the other's increasingly resolute attempts to enter it. The partners move across the floor, one walking backwards and the other forwards. When they reach the wall, they change direction and come back the other way, maintaining contact with their fingertips at all times. For each partner, the objective is (a) to get close enough to the other to touch his body and (b) to prevent the other from doing the same thing to him. Each partner must try to keep the other at a distance neither greater nor smaller than the length of their outstretched arms.



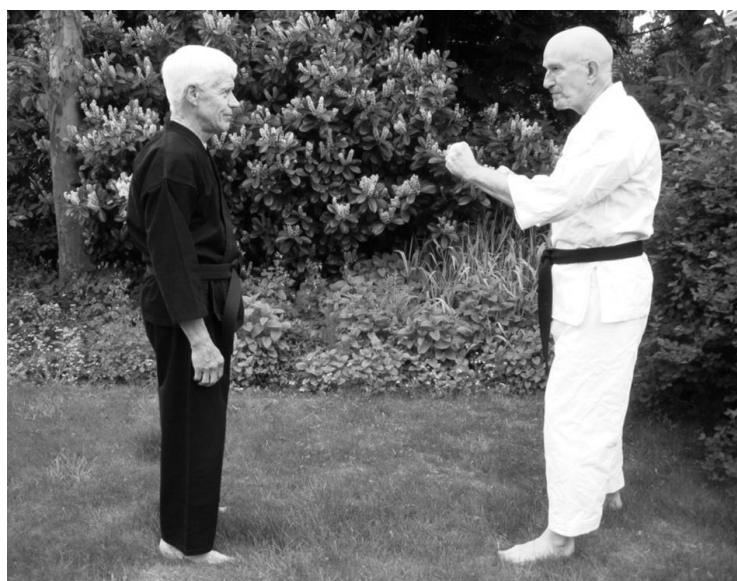


*Moving backwards and forwards, each partner must try to keep the other at a distance neither greater nor smaller than the length of their outstretched arms*

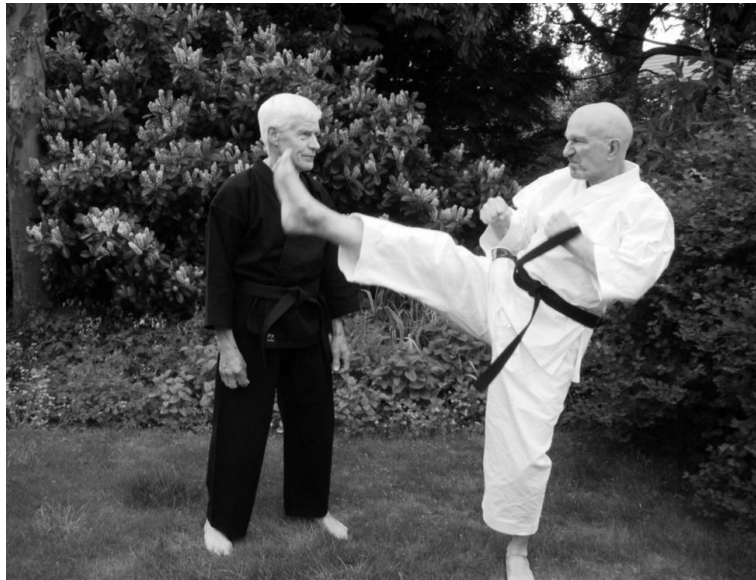
This exercise should be done slowly and uncompetitively at first, but with increasing speed and determination and with sudden and unexpected changes of direction as the participants try to take one another by surprise. At its most advanced it is done at a brisk run. As with pushing hands, you cannot do this exercise unless you are relaxed and can move readily, but speed and the determination of your partner to enter your bubble will put you under a degree of stress that you will have to overcome. As with the “trust” exercises, there is stress, but no harm will be done if it goes wrong.

This exercise can, of course, be done out of doors if your dojo is not big enough. You should be careful about practising it at speed in bare feet on a wooden floor. The sudden and rapid changes of direction that it requires will generate a lot of friction, and you will develop painful blisters if you are not careful.

2. This exercise can be regarded as a preliminary to the practice of tai sabaki (体捌き) or ‘body-shifting.’ One partner attacks the other; the other’s role is to evade the attack simply by stepping away from it or around it.



*White Gi is about to attack Black Gi; Black Gi’s role ...*



*... is to evade the attack simply by stepping away from it or around it*

The point here is to train not self-defence as such, but calm and relaxed immediacy of movement under stress. The partner receiving the attack makes no block or counter-attack. His only objective is to *move out of danger*. The above illustrations show the exercise at beginner's level. The amount of stress, and hence the degree of calmness and relaxation required, can be heightened by reducing the distance and increasing the speed, power and unpredictability of the attacks. Eventually the exercise can become a kind of fast and furious chasing game. An important part of it is to make the evasive movements as small as possible: to let every miss be a narrow one. As we have said before, evasion is not flight, but tactical retreat, and it is vital to develop the confidence to work at close ranges.

The exercises so far described are meant to develop the mind/ body gestalt in relation to what one might call the "ju" side of Goju, or the black or "yin" aspect of the taijitu: softness, fluency of movement and evasion. It is time now to look at the "go" or "yang" side.

## **Disinhibition and Reaction**

There is an enormous difference between striking and kicking in the dojo and striking and kicking in earnest. The latter is far harder to do than many sincere and dedicated karateka realise; certainly it is harder to do than "sport" karateka realise. We have said something about the disabling effect of fear. We come now to something that, for many people, is much more pervasive and harder to deal with – partly because the problem that it presents is one of which they are often unaware.

All ordinary adults – that is, sane people who are not violent criminals – have passed more or less successfully through complex processes of upbringing and socialisation. We have been taught to conform, at any rate for most of the time, to the norms that others around us acknowledge. We have been taught to suppress, if not always to rise above, our worst selves. On the whole, we behave according to the values of our culture not only because we fear the consequences of not doing so, but because we have had instilled in us a sense of right and wrong. Most people carry around with them a well developed set of inhibitions or taboos. In the civilised world it is wrong to hurt people, wrong to grab for oneself, wrong to be brutally selfish, right to consider others and defer to them – and so forth. Perhaps these principles are sometimes more honoured in the breach than in the observance, but in the main they are principles to which ordinary people in ordinary circumstances subscribe.

But consider the implications of this in extreme or extraordinary circumstances: in the event of a violent attack on your person or on a loved one. Over and above the freeze reaction that we have considered, another obstacle now presents itself: the learnt behaviour of the socialised human being. It is against all your training to let yourself go: to explode into violence, to fight, to hurt or injure someone – to revert to the behaviour of the savage. Indeed, do we not normally have a clear mental picture of the sort of person that the karateka should be – gentle, controlled, forbearing, peaceable? Here, then, the mind/body gestalt is presented with a dilemma – and another possibility of fatal indecision. If you sit at home and consider the abstract possibility of an attack, or if you rehearse violent scenarios in the dojo, you may think that you do not suffer from such inhibitions. Possibly you are right. But experience suggests that most people are a good deal more inhibited than they think they are. We have often seen students who, asked to give a “kiai” yell – to scream with all their heart and all their might – find themselves unable to do it. They are unable to do it because they can’t “let themselves go” – which is only another way of saying that they can’t override the training in self-restraint that the ordinary civilised human being has undergone. Also, the sort of play-fighting that one sees in the dojo does nothing to dispel the inhibitions that we are talking about. You know that no one is going to hurt you, and that you are not going to hurt anyone. It isn’t real.

Choosing not to defend yourself, on the Socratic principle that it is better to suffer evil than do it, is a moral choice that it is open to anyone to make: provided that it *is* a choice rather than a case of pusillanimous dithering. By all means turn the other cheek if that is what seems right to you. But if you *do* choose to defend yourself:

1. You must act instantaneously. The smallest hesitation, whether it arises from fear or scruples or a combination of both, will almost certainly mean your downfall.
2. You must act with total commitment. Half-hearted self-defence is no defence at all. It is, indeed, worse than no defence at all, because responses that lack conviction will only increase the attacker’s level of arousal and make the situation worse.

What it boils down to, in the context of this section, is this: that you must find ways not only of overcoming the “freeze” reaction to fear, but also of temporarily switching off the inhibitions that are characteristic of decent human beings. Notice the word “temporarily.” No one is suggesting that you should revert to savagery. Self-defence can and should be seen as a regrettable necessity in an extreme and abnormal predicament. Whatever is necessary to secure your safety can and should be done without anger or hatred. Nonetheless, if you are going to do it at all, the mind/body gestalt must be able to react instantly and reflexively to whatever situation has arisen. You may find this a good deal harder to do than you think you will. Here are some suggestions.

1. Quite apart from its unnerving effect on an attacker, few things are as disinhibiting as a totally committed and unselfconscious “kiai” (気合). There is no point in emitting the kind of half-hearted and reticent yelp that one so often hears at “prescribed” points in a kata. It is vital to overcome the quasi-instinct to hold back. When you strike the makiwara or the bag, forget yourself – let yourself go. Scream with all the spirit and conviction that you have; yell as if you were trying to burst the dojo walls. Sasaki Sensei of Hida-shiki Kyouken-jutsu is said to be able to make temple bells ring with the force of his kiai. Imagine yourself doing that. Of course you will feel uncomfortable at first. Overcoming the “wrong” feeling that accompanies letting yourself go – switching off the inhibition – is precisely the point.

2. In the same way, when you train on the makiwara or bag, train as if everything you love depended on it. Routine or merely dutiful training – training as a wearisome chore – is useless. Train as if each blow and each kick were the last act of your life. Every time you hit the makiwara or the bag, do so with the intention of breaking it or splitting it. The whole mind/body gestalt must be single-pointedly committed to the strike at the instant you make it. Each one should be a tremendous instant of explosive self-forgetfulness, like a sneeze or an orgasm. Let every strike be made with your whole being, with no part of you standing apart as a spectator. Strike without thought or emotion, with nothing attached to your strike – no past, no future, no result, no fear of failure: just the eternal moment.

In this connection note that it is important to avoid rhythm in your makiwara training. A session of thump-thump-thump, with the blows coming like the ticking of a clock, will detract from the force and intentionality of each strike. Let each be new, unique and self-contained, not just one of a series.

3. When using the makiwara, have someone give you a random and unpredictable signal to strike (“now!” or a click of the fingers or something of the kind). When you strike, aim to reduce the time between the sound of the signal and the sound of the strike to its smallest possible minimum. The two sounds can never be completely simultaneous, but try to get as close to simultaneity as is humanly possible. Apart from anything else, this exercise will train you in the art of delivering short-range “untelegraphed” strikes, because the further a strike has to travel between inception and destination the greater the time-lag between the two sounds will be. Make sure, however, that reducing the distance does not reduce the power of your strikes. Cultivate what Chinese artists call “fajin”: a sudden explosion of completely uninhibited force.



Neither karate nor any other art is purely external, nor should the body be thought of as a mechanism that the mind leads or drives. *Mind and body must be merged into one indivisible and spontaneous whole.* There must be no space between thought and act: no mind – mushin. To the extent that mind and body are not integrated, there will be deliberation, hesitation, tension, indecision, and these things will hold you back and drain the effectiveness away from your karate. This unselfconscious and utter concentration of the self on the immediate present is hard to describe and even harder to achieve; this is why Zen teachers so often speak of a moment of satori (悟り) – realisation: a flash of sudden awareness that is non-verbal, inexpressible and intuitive. Train until you find it.