

# COMBAT TAI CHI & THE PARADOX OF DEFENCE



Article, Photos & Design by Morgan Buchanan.

In 1599 Western fencing master George Silver wrote a manual of fighting principles known as the Paradoxes of Defence. While discussing the manual with modern Tai Chi master Sifu Eric Fitzgerald he drew interesting parallels between his combat Tai Chi methods and the ancient fighting methods of Silver's paradoxes. I was able to learn about the common links between Western and Eastern fighting arts and gain some new insights into the practical use of the art of Tai Chi Chuan.

*Continues next page*

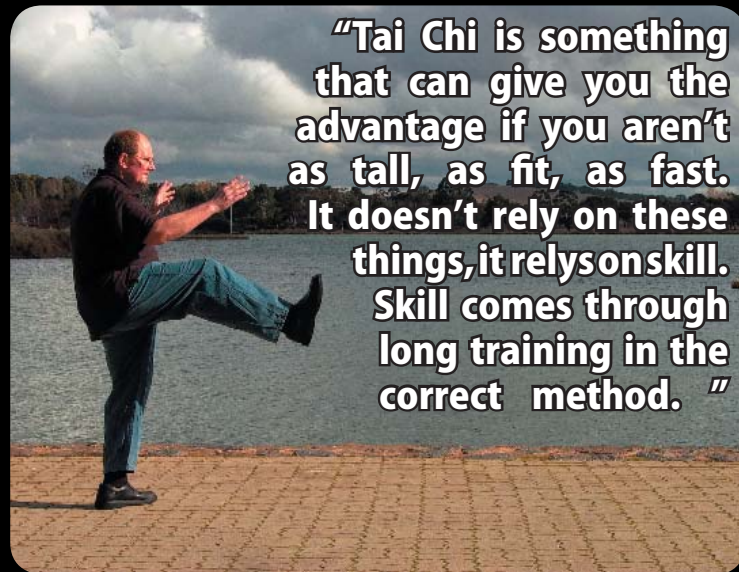
# COMBAT TAI CHI & THE PARADOX OF DEFENCE

"A swordsman should be not so interested in the destruction of his opponent that he disregards his own defence. A Master of defence is he who can take to the field and know that (unless God is against him) he shall not come to any harm." - George Silver

When we discussed Silver's Paradoxes, Sifu Fitzgerald began by discussing the history of the text :

"Silver wrote the Paradoxes of Defence because in his day and age the rapier, and with it a style of European fencing had come into fashion in England and was replacing the old short sword as a popular weapon of self protection. The new style concentrated on quick thrusts to defeat the opponent and was concentrated on aggression, a first in best dressed approach to fighting. The method did not utilise any defensive tactics, sometimes both fighters would run onto each others blades, and up close with swords crossed they would have no option but to resort to their daggers, using similar non-defensive stabbing attacks."

What made Silver different was his commitment to what Fitzgerald refers to as sensible fighting. "It's not sensible to rush at someone to attack, totally committed with or without a weapon. Silver states that even a child can learn to parry an aggressive thrust, and once the thrust is turned to the side, the attacker is very vulnerable. He's talking about sensible defence, using correct distances, correct usage of force."



**"Tai Chi is something that can give you the advantage if you aren't as tall, as fit, as fast. It doesn't rely on these things, it relies on skill. Skill comes through long training in the correct method."**

stout man. "He's talking about reach, about having a longer reach, the same thing applies in the boxing ring, a fighter with an extra six inches of reach, has a big advantage. Tai Chi, its principles of attack arising out of defence, is something that can give you the advantage if you aren't as tall, as fit, as fast. It doesn't rely on these things, it relies on skill. Skill comes through long training in the correct method."

Fitzgerald believes that Silver's manual is about becoming a thinking fighter, about using the intellect to overcome obstacles and that this same concept is found at the heart of Tai Chi.

"Like Silver's Paradoxes, Tai Chi relies upon the idea of defence leading to victory. The Paradox comes in the sense that in concentrating on deflecting the incoming force of the opponent, you are now in a superior position to counter attack. If you have a situation of both parties meeting force with force, simultaneously attacking, this can easily lead to both parties getting injured. In sensible, intelligent fighting you want to get hurt as little as possible while setting yourself up to end the fight quickly."

Sifu Fitzgerald insists that Tai Chi's method of successfully turning defence into attack comes about from not using more than four ounces of strength. "The four ounces is Tai Chi's primary defensive method, when an incoming force is met you must give yourself up,



# High Impact PRODUCTIONS



**VIDEO 1  
EXAMPLE OF WORK**



**VIDEO 2  
EXAMPLE OF WORK**



**VIDEO 3  
EXAMPLE OF WORK**

## SPARTAN



High Impact Productions are working in association with Deeper Insight Productions and the International Martial Art Alliance.

High Impact Productions have a very diverse resume of projects there have worked on including music videos, documentaries, corporate videos, network productions and covering live sporting events (including Spartan). What ever your project let High Impact Productions assist you in creating a master piece at a budget you can afford.

School Owners thinking about developing a training or promotional video/dvd? Give H.I.P. a call.

**HIGH IMPACT PRODUCTIONS**  
ACN 102 758 449

**JACKSON RAINE**  
Creative Director (Victorian Office)

**03 8802 1106**  
**0407 583 368**

# COMBAT TAI CHI & THE PARADOX OF DEFENCE

**"Tai Chi's defensive method welcomes the attacker into your space, welcomes them in as a guest, because they are bringing something to the party - their own energy. You don't view it as aggressive energy, it's neither good nor bad - it's just energy. "**



allow yourself to move in the direction of the force in order to neutralise its threat and at the same time you must not break contact with the opponent."

Fitzgerald equates Tai Chi's four ounce skill to George Silver's governing principles of not being too close and not being too far. In being too close you crowd your own range of motion, in being too far you lose control of the opponent and the ability to counter.

"The methods of deflect and return, correct distancing, using a small force to deflect a large one have been there in other martial arts systems for a long time, both Eastern and Western, for those that wanted to see it. Tai Chi however is totally dedicated to it, Tai Chi doesn't work without the theory of the four ounces."

Sifu Fitzgerald believes that Tai Chi's skills must be learnt in a series of progressions. His curriculum begins with form training to teach the student to move correctly and to properly generate the different forces or energies of Tai Chi.

"Using the four ounces means not using strength, you can't say "I'll use strength on this technique and four ounces on the next one."

You don't have time to think in a fight, you just have to use the four ounces and rely on the training. Using the four ounces, not using strength is more effective, more efficient."

"This is what George Silver's on about, its dangerous to attack. By attacking someone you are already throwing yourself off your own centre, and Tai Chi and Silver's method, take advantage of this by not being there, giving the attacker a place to fall into emptiness, except for four ounces which you use to tell you what direction the force is heading in."

Fitzgerald's Tai Chi system uses Tai Chi's four ounces of contact like an insect's antenna, relaying just enough information to tell him how to lead the attacker off their centre and into a vulnerable, off balance position.

"We train listening energy in two person practice. There are drills and to make them work you put



your hand out and use no more than four ounces of energy to connect to your partner. This is difficult when you first start training. After a long period of training, gaining feedback, you can interpret which direction their energy is going. If they use force and you defend with the four ounces you bring Newton's third law into action - equal and opposite reaction."

To illustrate Sifu Fitzgerald gives the example of going to pick up a suitcase that you think is going

# COMBAT TAI CHI & THE PARADOX OF DEFENCE

"This is the same in fighting, when someone uses strength in fighting, and you're not there to meet their force, they have to pull up their own momentum. Whereas when you're not using strength, you'll just naturally flow to the next place in attacking or defending, there isn't anything to pull up."

"If the attacker is an untrained man, with awkward strength, then you'll get a strong effect with using the four ounces, you'll get the suitcase effect."

"Tai Chi's defensive method welcomes the attacker into your space, welcomes them in as a guest, because they are bringing something to the party - their energy, you don't view it as aggressive energy, its neither good nor bad - it's just energy."

"When the energy comes in, you attach to it, develop listening skill so that you can tell where its going, then you can stick to the opponent and follow when you want to return the energy back to them."

In Fitzgerald's training process the next stage is



borrowing energy from the opponent. He teaches students to attack with the same internal feeling as someone throwing a ball, letting the opponent activate the Tai Chi man's movement, his defensive system, with the force of the initial attack.

The four ounces then allows them to borrow the incoming force, lead it down into the ground through their legs and then back up through the body and into the opponent.

**"Silver is very pragmatic, very practical and I try to keep my Tai Chi the same way."**



"All of the power is released from the body at the point of impact, just like when you throw a ball, except in this case we are throwing the energy into the opponent's body."

"Silver talks about using openings like this. When you've turned the attacking force aside correctly the opponent is in a "ready to be beaten position" as old Tai Chi master Tung Tsai Liang used to say."

"You then have the opportunity to attack, to return to the opponent.

There is a moment when they have exerted their force, landed on emptiness and are trying to pull themselves back up to regain their centre. This is a moment of inertia, a moment of dead time which is the best for attack."

"Silver talks about a leisurely response, where there seems to be so much time after the initial attack is turned aside.

The opponent seems like they are standing still."

"Silver is very pragmatic, very practical and I try to keep my Tai Chi the same way."

Sifu Fitzgerald emphasises Silver's principles in his own classes, often discussing the similarities between the two old Western and Eastern fighting methods.

# COMBAT TAI CHI & THE PARADOX OF DEFENCE

What are the common principles that bind the two ? :

"It's about using the mind, the intelligence, so that strength and aggression isn't a factor in fighting. If you can turn the opponents attack, then the paradoxical situation, taking a defensive position in the face of aggression, suddenly turns to your advantage and the opponent is now in a very vulnerable, very exposed position."

In the case of the Paradox of Defence and Tai Chi, Sifu Fitzgerald can effectively demonstrate why a strong offence is not always the best defence.

For more details contact A.C.T. Fundamental Tai Chi Chuan via email at [bbullpitt@aol.com](mailto:bbullpitt@aol.com) or phone

**(02) 62783787**



**Video Demonstration  
of sensitivity training  
in push hands.**



L to R- David Reid Sensei, Shane Findlay, Craig Findlay, Anthony Kavanagh Sensei,  
Front row, Stuart Power, Nathan Baker

The crew line up after there recent Black Belt Grading. Tired but not broken!!!