



Let's not forget: many times the someone in this example has no idea there is actually an issue in how they are moving. Why? Because they are caught up in the choreography and not the reasons underlying why the hands are where they are and why the feet are where they are. There is no art.

I have no argument with the idea that the art is learned through the playing. I actually firmly believe that such is the truth, as I have experienced it in my own journey. That journey began in the room with Mesmer Sifu at Black Dragon School where our time in the studio was not just moving, moving, moving. That was for practice outside the studio. We drilled into movements, moments, principles, etc. Such requires not only floor exercises and form play, but discussions of the theories and reasons for why things are the way they are. Without them, your T'ai Chi Ch'uan is shallow, artless.

Look at it this way: we are painters. T'ai Chi Ch'uan is the paint. Our bodies are the canvas. When we focus on putting things in the right place at the right time, we are only painting by numbers. When we drill into the details to truly understand how and why this foot is connected to that hand and this part of the body is turning this way while that part of the body is twisting that way, etc., we are beginning to blend the lines between the various numbered splotches of paint – and our painting is becoming something more than the result of a kit we bought at Michael's into something that is worthy of a gallery opening.

Yes, sometimes solo play is enough. Sometimes a demonstration, or group play can be a rich learning experience. But, we communicate through words – like the ones that you are reading right now. It takes words to get beyond the surface that is the movement. It takes words to understand what the movement hasn't revealed to us. It takes spoken words to make clear the words we have read elsewhere.

So, I don't talk to hear my own voice. I don't talk to fill time. I talk to help. I talk to clarify. I talk to point you in the direction of the next, difficult step on your journey.

I can only hope that you listen.

