



The Gift of Paradox

By Amy Tyksinski

I recently attended an enriching Tuesday morning Zoom teacher's practice led by Sandy McAlister. One teacher raised a question about Bird Flaps its Wings. Having moved to a new state, he had noticed differences in how some people were doing the movement compared to the context he had for it.

Whenever movement discernment questions arise, I know that an awareness of paradox is being asked to expand in me. This paradox simultaneously includes yet is not limited to the following (in no particular order):

1. Gratitude to our community. An awareness of how, knowingly or unknowingly, we urge one another on, we ask and share and offer and thus grow.
2. Diversity of experience. Each person's individual expression of Justin's teachings and TCC and how the teachings articulate through each of us.
3. An invitation of Being. Unity in connecting with the essence of TCC and not picking the wings off the butterfly. An openness to "Let T'ai Chi Chih teach me T'ai Chi Chih" **and it does so in myriad ways.**
4. A return to source materials. Moving with Justin. Hearing/reading Justin's actual words which often mystified me many years ago and still do. Noticing with each passing year his words become more alive. Justin chose his words very carefully. I feel they are gifts offered in service to our awakening, filled with vitality.

Most recently (perhaps thanks to COVID), I have been struck by a startling recognition and subsequent dissolution of personal ideas and constructs. Loneliness. Belonging. Love. The TCC principles have been a part of this inner revolution as they, too, broaden to encompass a wider swath of embodiment. Softness? Not what I first thought it was (as applied to TCC *and* to life). Continuity? Completely different than how I experienced it even a year ago.

I don't want to miss the potential in T'ai Chi Chih because I have a concept that doesn't fit Justin's modeling and description of a movement. I delight in delving deeper into the materials he left us, not as an abdication of my own authority or longevity with the practice but because the ultimate relationship with T'ai Chi Chih is reciprocal. Justin left us pointers and content that

will bring T'ai Chi Chih alive in us **for our own empowerment**, and to take us as far as we want to go. It is up to us to find it!

To use the example of Bird Flaps its Wings, from Notes On Movements Just Learned – *TCC Joy Thru Movement Photo Text* Justin says, “We **flip the wrists to the side quickly**, but bring the arms and hands back together slowly. As the hands come together, the polarity of the palms facing each other is important, so do not rush bringing the hands together.” In the Zoom gathering, Linda Braga also recalled that Justin used to say, “Do a little bird, not a big bird!”

Justin emphasized a “break in the wrists” (his phrase) in Light at the Top of the Head/Temple along with Bird Flaps its Wings. The “break” in these movements is critical as it encourages stronger chi flow as the resulting sudden tug in the wrists awakens the meridian channels in the wrists with alacrity. The paradox? One can **flip** out quite quickly, **break** in the wrists, **return** more slowly and still be moving with **softness and continuity on the inside** throughout the whole movement. It takes great awareness and inner release to be able to do all that at the same time. It flies in the face of an external-only demonstration of evenness yet to reinforce Sandy’s point, all is integrated and is it integrated from the inside out. In Bird Flaps Its Wings, we achieve greater inner continuity paradoxically by flipping, breaking, fast, then slow! I am still working on consciously embodying an all-at-once-ness, so when necessary I apply a strategy of slowing down a given movement but include to the best of my understanding the different parts of that movement. In the case of Bird Flaps its Wings, I still go out faster than on the return, and still allow a noted break in the wrists as they flip out as opposed to an even-paced glide or a float, so the power of the movement and “chi” generation can be fully experienced.

The ‘both/and’ paradox found in so much of TCC and its principles seems to take time to develop. Justin never talked about how soft he was on the inside. He embodied it. He moved quickly and effortlessly yet exquisitely could “commune with the chi” through it all. Little by little, and gently so because T'ai Chi Chih is so gentle, we are stretched through paradox to expand and include a new experience of ourselves, our connection to Source and sources, freely sharing with one another and coming to Know Who and What we are.