

Evolution

Nasser Butt ©November 2015

“The active does not depart from the passive and the passive does not depart from the active, for the passive and active exchange roles. Once you have this understanding, you will be identifying energies. Once you are identifying energies, then the more you practice, the more efficient your skill will be, and by absorbing through experience and by constantly contemplating, gradually you will reach the point that you can do whatever you want.

The basic of basics is to forget about your plans and simply respond to the opponent. We often make the mistake of ignoring what is right in front of us in favour of something that has nothing to do with our immediate circumstances. For such situations it is said: “Miss by an inch, lose by a mile.” You must understand all this clearly. ”

Great-Pole Boxing: The Theory
Brennan Translation

Evolution is a ‘slow-cook’ process unfolding, gradually, over long periods of time. This is the way of nature. One cannot skip or miss a step without there being consequences.

I first saw Erle in the flesh in the autumn of 1999, having already begun my training a few years earlier. I remember on the final day of our training session, Erle being asked by the crowd to simply “do” the form as he would and he obliged.

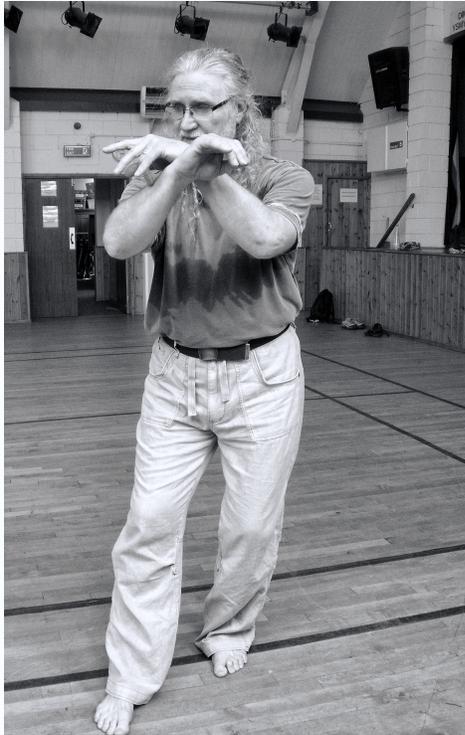
What I witnessed then left me gobsmacked — as we say in England — I had a surge of doubts rush through my head. This was going to be a very difficult journey! I simply remember seeing a man who moved with the grace and efficiency of an animal, and not just any one particular animal but, rather, every animal I can ever have remembered seeing! What was clear, even then, with my limited understanding of the system was the fact that I was witnessing an evolution.

I, like most others, had only seen Erle from his videos and again, like most folk, had begun with MTG2 — Erle’s first production on the Old Yang, way back in the early 80’s — and the man who stood before me now moved nothing like the man on the videos!

Erle didn’t arrive at the MTG2 stage overnight! He had already been training for more than a decade with some of the most illustrious names in the world of the internal arts before he first committed his form to film and continued with the “Taiji To The Max” series. In doing so, he was simply leaving a marker for those who would tread the road later!

By the time I stood watching, mouth agape, in 1999, he had already been training for almost another two decades and the results were there for all to see.

By the end of October 2010, having spent most of the year training with him on the “What Yang Lu-ch’an Knew” series, lights began to go on in my own head leading to questions and answers that would change how I saw and thought about things myself.



Erle demonstrating “Stepping up to Seven Stars” in 2010 during one of our Q&A’s we’d often have on the sidelines. Compare and contrast this with MTG2 or the “To Max” series.

I remember one day doing the form and suddenly hitting a point where I literally felt as if my body was moving of its own accord with an indescribable stillness - I was unable to speak. No sound escaped my throat and as I looked in Erle’s direction, I simply saw him standing there smiling.

“Now you understand!”

Those were his words to me at the time.

“These things cannot be explained or put into words, only experienced and they happen when the student is ready!”

That wasn’t the epiphany — no! The epiphany was the realization that I had seen this all before — way back in 1999 and although Erle was doing the ‘same’, it was yet totally different — he had evolved again another decade later, but this time the evolution had occurred right before my eyes and I had captured most of it on

film!

I remember mentioning this to him on that day in Llangadog and his reply still rings clearly in my head 5 years later:

“Thank f**k someone was paying attention! Everyone keeps saying that I keep changing the form or making things up!”

I was a witness to this. I had oft heard students say, “Why does he keep changing the form?” or my personal favourite — “Why didn’t he teach us this way from the beginning?”

The arrogance, naivety and stupidity should be self-evident in the above statements!

The form was evolving Erle NOT the other way around and this evolution occurred over several decades.

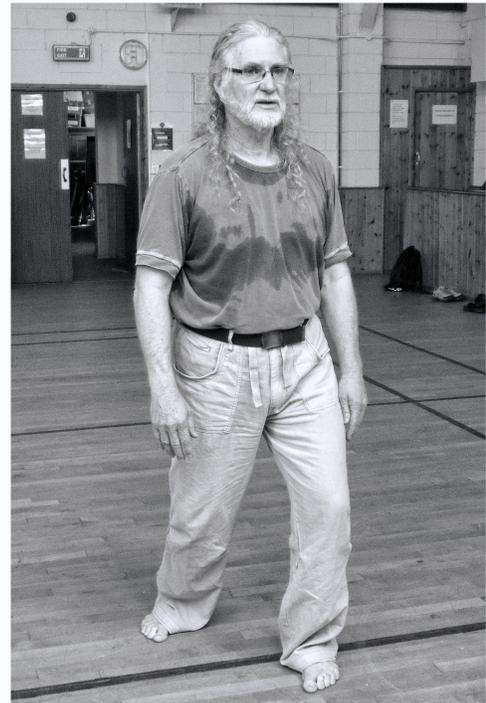
If the form could have been taught that way then I have no doubt the founders would have taught it in exactly such a manner — but they didn't.

And this is my point...

We have today, from the top down, instructors and students, who pick up a particular series of tapes, mimic Erle's movements and think that they have it after a few weeks or months of training — they don't!

It doesn't work that way. I've heard crazy statements like "perfect" being used with regard to some practitioners — these are delusions!

Most of these folk never saw Erle move in the flesh, especially what turned out to be the final years of his life and even those who did rarely paid attention when he was showing or explaining things as they were too busy trying to do themselves, instead of listening and observing ... he hadn't stopped, he was



Erle demonstrating 'his' "Bow Stance" in 2010 during one of our Q&As - which form the backbone of my notes.

The Q&As would occur between Erle and I *in situ* during training sessions and in-between breaks. These would continue even after training had ended and we had headed home.

still evolving and that's because he never stopped being a student! This was perhaps the reason why he shunned titles... especially master.

Erle made mistakes in his form. He told me so after seeing me get angry with myself after struggling to get a particular movement right. I responded with disbelief, whereupon he said: "You are not at a level to see my mistakes, if my teacher were alive he would spot them immediately! We all make mistakes and if you start to spot my mistakes then I have stopped learning and evolving!"

So, if you think that you are doing something 'perfectly' — I suggest you take a good hard look at yourself and think again!