

What's Going On Here?

The law of the wise is a fountain of life, that he may decline from the ruin of death.

Letter from Rhondell

EXERCISE

Frequently we get calls that request some exercise to enhance spiritual actualization. In-asmuch as this seems to be of considerable interest, we will devote this portion of the newsletter to describing an exercise that is interesting and at the same time very valuable.

Everyone remembers the Four Forces - INITIATIVE, RESISTANCE, FORM and RESULT. However, knowing about the Four Forces and not paying attention to them in action is a long way from actually engaging in a spiritual exercise.

For the exercise, one pays attention to the Four Forces in action in self, in others and even in the mechanical world.

One excellent place to start is to review the ideas of the man-made world, the world we all live in. In the man-made world, most INITIATIVE is a *result*, not a consciously chosen INITIATIVE but a *reaction* to something else whether consciously chosen or a mere reaction.

RESISTANCE comes about, which of course is most often unrecognized for what it is but seen as misfortune, bad luck, or just plain cussedness on the part of someone or Life in general. Anyway, a FORM takes shape in some way, and the RESULT follows, which usually is the start of a reaction which serves as the INITIATIVE for the start of a new cycle.

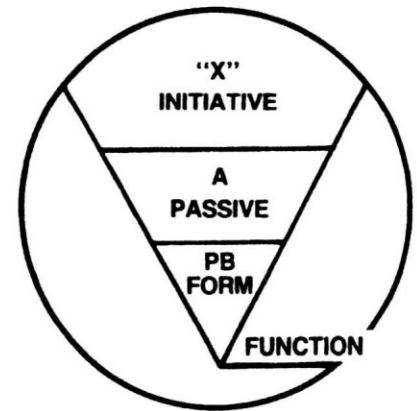
It is interesting to observe without condemnation or justification that the four great games that mankind has invented with the idea that one or another great game will keep him non-disturbed and relieve all mankind of responsibility. This is the major source of *Second Force* (RESISTANCE) in everyday affairs.

The great value of this exercise over a period of time is to make clear that BALANCING is the Law of Life, and that every effort on the part of mankind to establish a system that would circumvent this fundamental law keeps mankind in spiritual darkness with all the frustration, confusion, misery and grief that goes with existing in a state of spiritual darkness.

One can only live in that which one radiates, and one radiates that which one INITIATES.

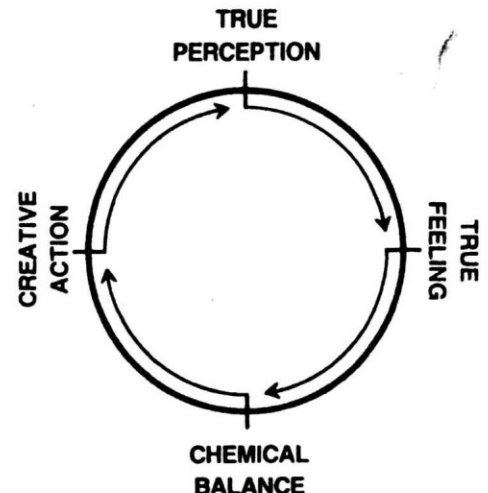
MAN AS HE CAN BE

Objective: Not to change you nor to help you change yourself, but to increase your understanding of yourself and the world you live in.



Awareness, as a passive observer, perceives that which is the environment, relays the true perception to X which causes the body to respond with feeling, causing chemical function to do what is necessary to meet the true conditions in the environment. When A is passive, X takes the initiative, and the body remains in true form and functions in balance with reality.

THE LIVING CYCLE



BARRIERS TO LEARNING

By Tina Vickers

There are many barriers to learning. In any classroom situation, as a teacher I join other teachers in extolling the virtues of gripping the pen lightly, sitting in a comfortable position, breathing evenly and deeply, relaxing body muscles. I also make sure the lighting is correct, the room is neither too hot nor too cold and that major distractions or loud noises are eliminated. All of the aforementioned at their worst can bar the student from learning, from experiencing, from creating.

But over the years, after hundreds of students, it has become obvious to me that if all the above conditions are right, there still exist students who have difficulty learning. I, myself, have participated in classes with the most sensitive, dynamic, talented and caring calligraphic teachers in the field today. And still some students don't learn or progress well. And still I hear the same thing from all over the world, from the art majors with years of experience to the new students freshly weaned from a fountain pen - "*I want to do better!*"

And in their sincere desire to create more beautiful things, they attend more classes, join other guilds, buy more and better and different tools, purchase one more book. These actions produce results in some. For others, they go on - looking for that one thing or person or combination thereof that will be the key that unlocks their creativity.

Let's say that the teacher is extremely good, the environment is comfortable, the body is at ease, the mind is hungry ... what then could prevent any student from learning at optimum, from remembering, from creating to the best of his or her ability?

This article is not written for all who are interested in calligraphy; only for you out there who are frustrated or discontent with your work, those of you who are tired of repeatedly taking classes, buying things, practicing long hours and still feeling that you're not where you want to be in your development. For you who seek the "magic key" that unlocks your understanding and your ability, what follow are some experiences and observations that may help. (*Please note: These are merely statements. It is to your disadvantage to agree or disagree with them. Instead, try experimenting with these ideas and see what happens.*) For those of you who seek the "magic key," look inside. From what I've observed, the barriers to learning that are most debilitating and most powerful are within the student, not without. These barriers to learning are our own mental attitudes.

AUTHORITIES

One teacher says always to use gum arabic in gouache; another says it doesn't matter. One says only a true quill knife butts a good quill; another cuts a perfectly beautiful quill with a penknife. One says layouts must balance; another emphasizes the need to be expressive whether the design balances or not. One teaches Italic ONLY at 45 degrees; another says it doesn't matter as long as it's consistent. One says only hematite burnishers will do; another burnishes gold leaf perfectly with a fingernail polish bottle.

This conflicting information could be confusing to a student. The barrier to learning here is not the conflicting information, however, but the student's need to have an authority. *There are no authorities.* There is only information based on experience. And each person's experience will somewhat differ. I propose a small revolution: listen carefully, take notes, but *believe only what you experience yourself.* This slight change of attitude can take you out of the realm of thinking of yourself as a neophyte, up and out of the realm of the "lesser" next to this "great calligrapher."

I hear so many students say that they feel intimidated. The teacher may have a higher skill level and more years of experience, but you are still equal. The student is not less as a person, as a mind, as a thinker. Try seeing yourself as an equal; try viewing your teacher not as a demigod, but simply as a person with information to share. Slowly, you may find that you will begin to take control over your work. This feeling of being in charge of your work imparts confidence, a necessary ingredient in the creative process. And as you work with different teachers, note that the truly inspiring and great ones are not dogmatic about letterform, technique or methodology. A really good teacher encourages students to discover on their own and is not intimidated by questions, prowess or disagreement.

COMPARISONS

Another internal barrier to learning is the propensity some students have to compare themselves with others. We are snowflakes - no two alike. The strange thing is, almost everyone I talk with agrees that each human being is totally unique. From bone structure to psychological make-up to fine motor control to growth patterns and information absorption rates, all humans differ. If this is so, why do some students think, "My work looks terrible next to his ... The whole group is doing better than I am ... I wish I could be as good as she ..."? These internalized statements breed feelings of envy, frustration, disappointment, and even lack of

self-respect and confidence. Comparisons are only possible if one sees things in opposites. I personally doubt that such a thing as opposites exists. I *have* observed degrees of things ... e.g., degrees of temperature ... degrees of well-being, degrees of health, etc. Experiment for a little while with seeing the world as having no good or bad, no right or wrong, no ugly or beautiful, and see what happens. When one experiences the world and calligraphy (or anything else) as simply "what *is* for that moment," it becomes extremely difficult to see your work or yourself as worse or better, behind or ahead. Try to disprove the statement that you are totally unique. If you can't, then you are doing the very best you can do at that moment ... for you *are* unique and that makes you not worse or better - only different. And if you still feel comparisons are necessary, make the comparison that is really possible ... you to you. Note your *own* growth. Then be proud.

CAN'T

There is a term out now called "mind sets," part of the psychological jargon of our times. It's a pretty good term, too, in that it refers to the mold we create for ourselves by the things we say, do and think. During the first class of each session, I ask the students to refrain from the only dirty four-letter word I know: can't. They laugh then, and even harder when later I catch them "in the act." They soon change "I can't" to "I can, but at the moment I'm having difficulty ..." When a person says he or she can't do something they throw a mold, just as a potter does; the size of the mold determines the size of the content. Don't limit your content. After working with many "can't-do-its" over the years, we've determined that simply refraining from using that four-letter word has helped students to do exactly what they want to do. Try taking something you're having trouble with. Try saying to yourself, "I CAN do it!", then try again. You might be amazed at what happens. A previous psychological block comes tumbling down. But don't take my word for it. Check it out for yourself.

EXPECTATIONS

The last barrier to learning to be covered in this article is expectations. We all have them. If we didn't, we wouldn't put the key in the doorknob or turn the faucet to the right. They are a part of life. But there are two kinds of expectations: expectations based on reality and expectations based on ideals. Ideals are illusions, fantasies in the head that are based on totally perfect circumstances. For things to be totally perfect is a rarity. If expectations are based on an ideal (a fantasy), it is easy to be disappointed. In fact, it's almost guaranteed!

And as previously noted, disappointment leads to frustration, both contributing to stress, blocking creativity. A most interesting thing is to write down your expectations before starting a class. Don't just think about them - write them down. And be honest: if you're expecting to get lots of attention and approval, say it. What are you expecting to get from the class, from the teacher, from yourself? Now study these notes and try to determine whether the expectations are based on a reality or an ideal situation. For example, a student who takes a class in order to do Roman Caps just like the teacher's will no doubt be disappointed. Or a student who expects to make a living at calligraphy after one course will feel frustrated halfway through as it becomes obvious how impractical that ideal is.

If your expectations are realistic, you won't be disappointed in anything. The word "disappointment" is the key here; when you feel disappointed, go back one step and look for your expectation. I always ask students the first day of class exactly what they expect to be able to do at the end of the course. This information helps me as a teacher to deal with any misconceptions they may have. Once the misconceptions are righted and realistic aims are established, disappointments are eliminated making for more happy and contented students.

The above are tools for self-discovery. Try them for yourself. Try doing away with the excuses like, "It's only human nature ..." or "Old dogs just don't learn new tricks ..." If you're having trouble learning, feel that you aren't growing at your potential, experiment with these different ways of seeing the world of calligraphy and the world of you. There are many other internal barriers to learning ("The noise upstairs," "The Have-to-Must-Should-Gotta-Syndrome," and several others). But for now, start with these few changes, these new ways of approaching calligraphy. I have watched students make quantum leaps within minutes just because they began to accept themselves, trust their intuitions, believe in their experiences, stop comparing their work with others', judging it, and finding it always lacking. Eliminating the barriers to learning is something only you can do for yourself.

Check it out.

[NOTE: While this article appears to be about learning to create calligraphy, the information contained can be applied to learning anything.]

Bulletin Board

LOS ANGELES WORKSHOP - Sunday, March 23 at 10:00am, Lawry's California Center. Call Lawry's for directions (213) 225-2491. For other information please call Patti Howeth during the day at (213) 550-4104 or Elaine Lipnitsky evenings as (818) 984-3420 or call the office. \$50 per person

NOTES ON PERSONAL INTEGRATION & HEALTH is temporarily out of print. A new edition will be ready as soon as possible.

School Talk Tape Subscribers: Please return the top half of your invoice with payment; it saves a lot of time in the office, and helps get proper credit to your account. If you are a subscriber and do not receive a tape, it means our records show you are two months behind in paying. Check your records; if they don't agree with ours, please let us know and it will be rectified immediately.

We received three bad checks last month. The bank charges us \$20 for each returned check. If you have a financial problem and can't pay for books or tapes, please call and most likely some arrangements can be made to see that you have materials you need. Thank you!

WHAT *am I?*
WHERE *am I?*
WHAT'S *going on here?*
WHAT *can I do?*



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RESISTANCE

Every completed effort has some resistance to that effort. This is necessary; however most find that there is considerable resistance to almost everything undertaken. The reason is that most effort originated is intended to produce the Four Dual Basic Urges, non-disturbance.

Inasmuch as individuals are experiencing beings, effort to be non-disturbed is thus impossible to achieve. In any effort to achieve the impossible much frustration is ready and waiting. For instance, try walking up the wall and one finds frustration.

The purpose one puts on an effort has a decided effect on how much resistance one experiences. For instance, one originates an effort to make some contribution to Life. There will be some passive resistance, just as the soil is a passive resistance to the sprouting seed developing into a plant. However there will be little if any active resistance - really, no one objects to or tries to prevent a contribution.

Let us take another example: suppose one takes effort to have ones own way to gain non-disturbance, or asserts one's rights to gain non-disturbance. Considerable active resistance will be manifested and will probably continue for some time. Most have and probably are now experiencing this form of resistance.

Now, suppose one originates effort to contribute to a pleasant harmonious mood. Very little active resistance is experienced. But then one asks, "But how will this kind of originating help me have a better income?"

Check out very successful people and you will discover that they are intent on making a contribution and raising the mood. The most necessary effort is to raise one's own mood; remember one lives in that which one radiates.

Go into any successful business place and you will find an up mood. Go to a failing business, you will find a down mood.

If one wants to be less disturbed or to have your own way, remember that what one wants is realized by the indirect method of radiating rather than by the direct method of forcing; one finds active resistance is practically eliminated.



Bits & Pieces from School Work

We are surrounded by a wall built of our conceptions of the world, and are unable to look over this wall at the real world. The Kabala presents an effort to break this "enchanted circle." It investigates the world as it is, the world in itself.

The world in itself, as the Kabalists hold, consists of four elements, or the four principles forming One. These four principles are represented by the four letters of the name of Jehovah. The basic idea of the Kabala consists in the study of the Name of God in its manifestation. Jehovah in Hebrew is spelt by four letters, *Yod, He, Vau* and *He - I.H.V.H.* To these four letters is given the deepest symbolical meaning. The first letter expresses the active principle, the beginning or first cause, motion, energy, "I"; the second letter expresses the passive element, inertia, quietude, "Not I"; the third, the balance of opposites, "form"; and the fourth, the result or latent energy.

The Kabalists affirm that every phenomenon and every object consists of these four principles, i.e., that every object and every phenomenon and every object consists of the Name of God (The Word), - Logos. --P.D.Ouspensky, *The Symbolism of the Tarot*

In the mind of him who is pure and good will be found neither corruption nor defilement nor any malignant taint. Unlike the actor who leaves the stage before his part is played, the life of such a man is complete whenever death may come. He is neither cowardly nor presuming; not enslaved to life nor indifferent to its duties; and in him is found nothing worthy of condemnation nor that which putteth to shame.

Test by a trial how excellent is the life of the good man - the man who rejoices at the portion given him in a universal lot and abides therein content; just in all his ways and kindly minded toward all men.

This is moral perfection: to live each day as though it were the last; to be tranquil, sincere, yet not indifferent to one's fate.

--Marcus Aurelius

Simplicity is an exact medium between too little and too much.

--Sir Joshua Reynolds

Religion is what motivates living on a daily basis. Everyone has a religion, whether it's identified as such or not. Sin has been defined by men as pride, aggressiveness, and so on, which are not the besetting temptations of female human beings. Our temptations tend to be more in the direction of wasting one's talents, using someone else as a means of self-esteem. --Margaret R. Miles, Ph.D., Harvard Divinity School

When a firm, decisive spirit is recognized it is curious to see how the space clears around a man and leaves him room for freedom.

--John Foster

When Love and Skill work together, expect a masterpiece.

--John Ruskin