

3rd Dan Test Paper

Dr John Christensen

May 2013

*APPLICANTS TESTING FOR 3rd DEGREE:*

- 1. Discuss ways in which you adapt your teaching styles to different students' learning styles and abilities.*
- 2. Explain the concept of kudo (self-discovery) as a central principle of martial arts training, using personal discoveries of your own as examples. How would or do you structure a Taekwon-Do program to foster the attitude and philosophy behind this concept?*
- 3. Discuss Big I/little I (big eye/little eye) using examples from your personal experience.*

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- 1. Discuss ways in which you adapt your teaching styles to different students' learning styles and abilities.*

Students have different abilities and challenges in their learning, and although the instruction may be very similar, emphasis may be different.

For some students, I have seen my suggestions cause them to get "in their head" and break up their coordination rather than be helpful. Usually these students have a fairly good ability to do techniques that are well coordinated already. They may have more innate athletic ability or more experience with the technique. Maybe we can call them kinetic learners: they have a pretty good idea of how to do a technique and need active repetition. With these students I focus more on rhythm and timing rather than parts of a technique. We may start with basics of proper technique such as alignment, and do some drills to encourage core initiation, sequential activation, relaxation and so forth, but with these students I like to get to the full technique or even bag work fairly quickly. If they are struggling with technique, we look for sort of a "swing thought"... one simple idea to get them started on the right track. If they are struggling with the jump in Chung moo for example, I may give them one idea such as spine alignment, and let them practice.

Other students are less experienced and confident and their techniques lack coordination. They may have less innate athleticism or simply be less experienced. They have good technique when taught in a sequential manner, and at first have trouble doing complicated techniques such as jumping or spinning. Maybe we can call them proprioception learners: ( I made that up) they are still figuring out where their bodies are in space. So with them I spend more time building up to the full technique, practicing parts of it so they can get the feel, and not move on to the whole technique so soon. For example with side kick, we'll spend more time working on initiating with the core, then do drills bringing the knee up, then finally move to doing the full technique. If they are struggling with technique, I will then go back those basics and work our way back up again. Or if they are struggling with, for example , the first time they do the spinning jump in Chung Moo, I will have them simply start with pieces of the jump: begin by jumping 90 degrees, then 180 degrees, then when they are ready, go to the full 360. This is a more bottom up approach, build on fundamentals and gain confidence then begin to explore their abilities

The most frustrating "learning style" if you will is the student that struggles with motivation and focus, is not interested in class, is not engaged and trying, or is actively disrupting class. For these students I believe it is helpful to have very clear expectations set ahead of time, a disciplined class environment (start on time, follow protocol during class, finish on time, etc) and not divert attention to the

misbehaving student. I make sure I address them by name and set expectations before class (for example, use the bathroom now, not during class). During class I try to ignore them when they are not following along, and pay attention to them when they are. I also will try to use more inventive and "playful" instruction, for example they may love doing patterns on the ground or sparring while tied together. I may use that as a reward for good behavior in class earlier. Sometimes I have found that asking a poorly focused student to teach another student is a good approach that brings them into the game. Ultimately, consistency builds expectations and a relationship that work together to help the student connect with class.

Some students do their techniques with a lot of shoulder tension, during their patterns for example. I will have them do the pattern with no arms, then floppy arms, then gradually work up to adding back in the arm techniques. I would tend not to bring out the dyna strike to hit during patterns, as that may bring about more tension. But eventually the dyna strike is important, so they learn to hit without tension.

Other students do their techniques with "noodle arms", no acceleration or focus in their pattern. Here I will go back to basic sequencing exercises, begin with core activation crunches, then add shoulder movement then the arm technique. I am trying to get them to connect the arms to their core. We then return to doing patterns, possibly with a dyna strike so they can hit it during moves in their pattern to gain focus and acceleration. With the tense-armed student, the dyna-strike may make them tense up even more.

Some students do their pattern or spar with techniques that are focused and powerful, but choppy and lack flow. With them I may have them do their patterns slowly and work on starting one technique from the point where the last one ended, beginning the gather for the next technique at the end of the current technique to encourage flow. Bringing out the dynastrike early on may increase the tendency toward tension, but eventually will help them learn to strike with relaxation. Others may have the opposite issue. Their patterns and sparring look like they are just walking through it. They may have flow but lack acceleration and focus. They benefit from the same teaching above, but here bringing out the dynastrike sooner may help them strike with focus.

So although emphasis may be different, the same teaching techniques work with students of opposite apparent abilities or tendencies.

For example, if student is highly energetic and has trouble focusing, I may try getting them to focus by doing one simple technique, or I might go to slow motion techniques to get them to engage more fully with what is happening. Sometimes I will try jumping techniques or move to the blastmaster. But all these techniques can be likewise effective if the student is lethargic. Both students exhibit symptoms of an issue with engagement and focus. So both respond to the same methods.

In sparring, there are students who tend to dominate or do multiple techniques without flow and connection with their partner. And there are students who tend to be more timid and do lackluster or single techniques, lacking connection and flow with their partner in that way. For both types, I like to have them warm up with 3-step free sparring to encourage awareness, empty mind, confidence, and flow. So different strengths and weaknesses may have the same root cause and so can benefit from the same exercise.

*2. Explain the concept of kudo (self-discovery) as a central principle of martial arts training, using personal discoveries of your own as examples. How would or do you structure a Taekwon-Do program to foster the attitude and philosophy behind this concept?*

Discovery comes from exploration. Self-discovery comes from exploration of our physical, mental, and spiritual skills, weaknesses, and strengths. Challenge and being vulnerable are key ingredients.

In martial arts, we are always learning, exploring, and discovering about ourselves. There is physical self discovery: How does my body work, sequence and timing and alignment, what am I capable of. There is mental self discovery: how do I figure out the process, learn the ropes, keep going when I am tired or out of breath, or when I am not sure I know what to do. There is spiritual self discovery: Why do I come here, how do I affect and relate to those around me. In all these realms we are exploring our capabilities and limitations, learning about our selves and how much more is possible, thus gaining confidence and at the same time humility.

Small things start the whole process. With me, an example is connection to my center. Often my senior simply holds my shoulder or arm to illuminate that at this particular point in the technique, there is no connection and thus no power. Physically I begin to explore where the connection comes from. I work on core connection and sequential timing and alignment. Mentally I learn that I am rushing things, casting from above and not letting the process develop in the proper sequence. Suddenly I realize this carries outside the Dojang: a tendency to rush. Self discovery. Arising out of exploration.

In martial arts we are constantly challenged, and when challenged we learn about ourselves – that is, self discovery occurs- very efficiently! Challenge is the fast track to self-discovery. It is easy to avoid challenge, stay where you are. Nothing is threatened. No new self-discoveries.

Challenge tests what we think we know about ourselves. I remember setting up a board break I didn't think I could do. And sparring a partner who was much larger or much more skilled. And leading a class by myself. These are each challenges to what I felt I was capable of. Maybe I succeeded, maybe I failed. Either way, it is the act of accepting the challenge that makes the difference. Without challenging ourselves, self-discovery is theoretical. Accepting challenge, seeking challenge, learning to be challenged and explore outside our comfort zone, and to walk where we are unfamiliar, that is the essence of the martial artist.

And to do this we need one other ingredient: a willingness to be vulnerable. When I step out at the annual dinner to say a few words, or try to lead a class, I have to accept that I may fail, and that that my success also depends on the actions of those around me, forces outside my self.

Self discovery comes from exploring what we can do and learning new things. To do this we have to accept and seek new challenges. In order to accept challenges, we have to be willing to fail, we have to be comfortable with vulnerability.

To help students in self-discovery, one could structure class by having a fairly simple concept for the day, then let them practice and build on that. This approach helps illuminate how one thought can lead to discovery of many layers as in my example further up. Some days, the concept would not present itself until after the start of class, when I might see something in the student's actions or attitude that day that gives me direction. For example, if I see a lot of extraneous hand and leg movement in techniques, I may make the focus of that day's class to do kicks with hands at the sides. Then students can discover and explore what may have been causing the extraneous movements. In order to motivate the students to think and explore, I would periodically pause and ask them to share their findings and experiences with the group. Also I may ask them to lead the class or their juniors in training for a while. Being asked to teach is a powerful way to help them think about and explore what they learning. All of these approaches are simply examples of ways to challenge the students to do something they did not think they could do, or

do it in a new way, with mindfulness to what they are discovering. In this way, they explore their own abilities and discover about themselves.

3. Discuss *Big I/little I (big eye/little eye)* using examples from your personal experience.

Big I/little i;

Here I think about aspects of self, self within the community, and self as it relates to integrity. Little i for example could be thought of as me, a person in the Dojang. I have my concerns, needs, wants, aches, joys, etc. Big I could be thought of as how I affect those around me, how I relate and contribute to the community. Or in a similar vein, Big I is the integrity with which little i goes about it's business..

Big Eye, little eye:

Here I think about awareness as it relates to seeing. Or perhaps, awareness (Big Eye) as it relates to focus (little eye) . Or perhaps seeing the big picture vs looking at myself. With little eye, for example, I may see a student doing a technique in the Dojang a certain way. With Big Eye, I may see how this training affects how the student learns to learn, and how he acts outside the dojang and in the world.

It is interesting to look at how these each relate to each other:

Big I influences little i and vice versa: Integrity cannot exist without self. Little i has to go through my day, be born , eat, move about, meet people. Big I, the effect I have on the community around me and how I influence others and the world cannot exist otherwise. But the self, without integrity is misdirected and ineffective (and may end up alone or in jail).

Big Eye influences little eye and vice versa: Awareness needs focus to have an effect on the world. Focus, without Awareness is weak or misdirected. Little eye sees the sweet spot on the board and directs the tool to that spot. Big Eye brings awareness of proper sequence and connection, so more power is delivered to the spot. Or for example we may see a student struggling with a technique (little eye). Awareness of his learning style, limitations, and motivation (Big Eye) helps us choose ways to help him improve. Little eye sees the details of the day and needs Big Eye to see how they relate. Big Eye sees where we are in the scheme of things and so we know where to put our focus to be most effective.

How these concepts cross relate is interesting to explore. For example, my sense of purpose and integrity as a person in the community (Big I) is influenced by my awareness of the structure and needs of the community (Big Eye). Or maybe it's as simple as when I see a student struggling with a technique (little eye), I can share my own experience with that struggle (little i). And our efforts together to work on a technique (little eye) reinforce our role in the community (Big I).

Or, in broader terms, they cross relate something like this:

Without focus (eye) and self (i) , integrity (I) and awareness (Eye) have no impact. The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Without integrity and awareness, focus and self do not have the *right* impact

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Dr John Christensen

May 2013

### 3rd Dan Test Paper Follow-up Assignment

Dr John Christensen

June 2013

#### Assignments Table of Contents:

*Section 1 - Discuss ways in which you adapt your teaching styles to different students' learning styles and abilities.*

F/U question: Do you find much (any?) difference(s) between adults and children in this regard?

*Section 2 - Explain the concept of kudo (self-discovery) as a central principle of martial arts training, using personal discoveries of your own as examples. How would or do you structure a Taekwon-Do program to foster the attitude and philosophy behind this concept?*

#### F/U questions:

A. What about having say, a midlevel student critique another's pattern during class? The 1<sup>st</sup> time the student does this is often very interesting and perhaps enlightening. ( I wasn't sure if this was part of the f/u questions)

B. Can you write a little more about the spiritual aspects of Kudo?

#### Ending Instructor assignments - choose one:

Do you continue to have kudo during non-explorative living? Give personal examples of discoveries that came unexpected while in "condition white".

(OR)

Give some personal examples of Big I (eye) ? Little I (eye) being used well in your life and some examples of how you could improve your awareness and influence. Be specific.

*Section 1 - Discuss ways in which you adapt your teaching styles to different students' learning styles and abilities.*

F/U question: Do you find much (any?) difference(s) between adults and children in this regard?

I do. Mainly I find that adults in general are more able to focus on their training while in class, and more able to participate in the class community in a positive and helpful manner than are children.

I think this may stem from the adult having more awareness of how their actions affect themselves and others. Another way to say this is that adults have more of a Big I/ Big eye viewpoint. For example, when training with a partner, adults are more apt to hold the pad well and promptly for their partner, and

children are more apt to let their mind wander and hold the pad in a lackluster manner for their partner, not the effect they have on their partner's training.

Methods to counter this may therefore include techniques that help the children be more aware of how their choices affect themselves, and more aware of their role in the class and in the community. In other words, methods to foster their Big I/ Big eye awareness that in turn supports the little I/ little eye aspect of the actions of the self.

I mentioned steps that can help attract and channel a student's focus, such as calling them by name, or choosing novel training techniques that they enjoy such as doing patterns laying on the floor.

But I think in the long run it is more important to try to foster their awareness of the larger community rather than just try to stay one step ahead of attracting their focus, on a merry go round of trying to keep them interested..

To do this, I mentioned asking the non-engaged student to take a turn teaching another student. This will sometimes work quite well at least for the moment as the student realizes his or her actions now directly affect another member of the class.

Another endeavor I have tried is to involve the children in community service, to experience being involved in something that is not just about them, thus fostering their awareness of their impact on the community. Interestingly the students who already have a strong sense of community awareness, and thus focus well and engage well in class, are the ones who typically show up at community service events. Getting the less mature student who do not have a strong sense of community awareness to actually show up at a community service event takes some persistence. Enlisting the aid of the parents may help, explaining that community service may help build the child's larger awareness and thus their ability to focus.

*Section 2 - Explain the concept of kudo (self-discovery) as a central principle of martial arts training, using personal discoveries of your own as examples. How would or do you structure a Taekwon-Do program to foster the attitude and philosophy behind this concept?*

F/U questions:

A. What about having say, a midlevel student critique another's pattern during class? The 1<sup>st</sup> time the student does this is often very interesting and perhaps enlightening. (Note: I wasn't sure if this was part of the f/u questions)

I think this is an excellent avenue to self discovery for all involved. The student offering the critique will need to look into themselves more carefully to understand the technique better, and to understand how to communicate any ideas for improvement to the student they are critiquing. This process also reflects the instructor's style and teachings, so as the instructor observes he or she may learn how the students are incorporating any concepts. And of course the student receiving the critique has an opportunity to learn. Both students also get to experience a different aspect of the junior senior relationship. In fact, I think it is often very interesting and enlightening to have a junior observe and critique a senior.

B. Can you write a little more about the spiritual aspects of Kudo?

I don't know how I left that out, as spiritual self discovery is part of what I think of as one of the three main pillars of self discovery in martial arts, the other two being physical self discovery and mental self discovery.

Spiritual self discovery I think can be defined as learning more about your own principles, values, relationships (with others and with the community), and place in the universe.

These central concepts guide behavior and character, they are part of the notion of Big I/ Big eye.

Naturally the question arises, how does spiritual self discovery happen? I discussed how physical and mental self-discovery can occur by accepting challenge and being open to new learning. Spiritual self discovery can likewise arise from accepting challenge. In prior tests, I have seen students injure themselves and keep testing, even with a broken bone. As an observer and medical professional I felt that was probably something that was ill-advised. So when I noted I had damaged my finger during the TKD test, it would have been reasonable and expected for me to stop the test and not risk further injury. But I discovered that I wanted to proceed, and not just because of the goal of testing for another belt. I realized that one of my principles is to carry on and not be easily deterred. And I discovered that I felt it was valuable to the other students to see me stay calm and proceed as a demonstration of this value. So challenges in our lives expose the principles by which we actually operate, which make up our spiritual self.

General Questions:

Do you continue to have kudo during non-explorative living? Give personal examples of discoveries that came unexpected while in "condition white".

Yes.

In my paper, I explored how being open to challenge leads to self discovery.

But I think there is another aspect to all discovery, including self discovery, that certainly pertains to non-explorative living or "condition white". I have been thinking about how ego (or self direction or self agenda) plays a part. Or, more accurately, how the ego-less state plays a role. I have found that setting ego or self agenda aside opens me up to new discoveries about the world and myself, which occur unexpectedly and unpredictably in the course of normal living.

The most frequent example that recurs every day (and is forgotten and relearned every day) involves simply having a conversation with another person. I discovered that with self-agenda, the conversation tends to follow lines that I wish to follow, usually about things or ideas that are familiar to me. This happens every day in conversations with my family, friends, people at work, etc. But I discovered that if I can set aside my ego/agenda and follow the flow, the conversation takes its own natural direction (or maybe the other person's agenda is followed). In this way, the conversation goes in directions that I often have not thought of before, or we discuss things that are entirely new to me. I discover a lot more about the other person. And by exploring new areas and ideas, I discover a lot about more myself. A similar example involves participating in activities with friends.. On a regular basis, my wife will set up an excursion to something that at first I am against, especially if it involves dealing with crowds. But I have learned that she is a genius at finding interesting and varied things to do, and if I just go along (setting ego aside and being open to flow), we always have a terrific experience. Much like the person who normally

only will eat meat and potatoes may learn they actually like a lot of other foods by simply setting aside their pre-existing agenda.

As a corollary, I have noticed in myself a reluctance to set ego aside. This seems to come from a fear that I will end up involved or committed with endeavors that I am not sure I want to spend time on. Much like the meat and potatoes person may be afraid they will eat something they do not like. So, I find myself in this sort of negotiation between the self agenda and the open-ness to the new. I think martial arts training has helped me see that it is not a threat to be open to new discoveries. Martial artists retain the autonomy to choose, and in fact may therefore be more aware of the options and choices they are making.