

Modern Adopted and Renamed Mystical Fitness Practices

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Having formerly spent 17 years in the practice of various forms of Martial Arts I have come to recognise the same practices renamed for a Western World. The renaming is not only of the various styles developed for the west, but also, maybe not unsurprisingly, the re-imagining of these Eastern practices being redefined and incorporated in to general health and medically approved systems and regimes of today. And yes, you can gain some health benefits from the practice of these systems, but as Christians, should we? And is it only benefits we receive?

So what kind of practices am I talking about?

I am talking about the modern practices that have their origins firmly planted in Eastern religion and the physical manifestations that come from them. Manifestations is a word that is usually associated with an illness or even perhaps demon possession, when afflicted with one of these, shall we say maladies, one is acting outside the norm of what is deemed acceptable or, showing in the visible world what is happening within, certainly from a scriptural basis.

So in this article I would like to look at a few of the practices that have become acceptable to the West, yet come from a non-biblical and mystical background.

I would like to take a brief look at a few issues which, sadly only touch the surface, though having said that, a quick scan on the internet will reveal the source of many others not covered here but come from the same roots.

- Feldenkrais
- Pilates
- Tai Chi

Before we start, I want to point out one of the most obvious facts about all the practices we will examine – They are all are based around and derived from – various forms of Martial Arts. (To know more on this topic please download my article on Martial Arts [Here](http://www.maxddl.org/Martial%20Arts%20and%20Christianity.pdf) - <http://www.maxddl.org/Martial%20Arts%20and%20Christianity.pdf>).

Feldenkrais

“Dr Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984) was a Russian-born Israeli engineer and atomic physicist who had studied mechanical and electrical engineering and physics in Paris where he worked until the invasion of France in 1940, when he escaped to Britain. He was also a keen soccer player and a judo black belt (he opened the first judo school in Europe).

“When an old knee injury kept flaring up and doctors suggested surgery with only a 50% chance of success, Feldenkrais decided to study the mechanics of human movement and teach himself to walk without pain. He found that most people tend to use their bodies inefficiently and often uncomfortably resulting in long-term problems such as a loss of flexibility, bad breathing habits, poor

co-ordination and joint or muscular problems. Feldenkrais concluded that these problems could be avoided or improved by learning how to use the body's interrelating framework efficiently. Using his diverse background in martial arts, engineering and physics he went on to study anatomy, physiology, neurology and psychology, evolving a method which he taught extensively around the world until his death in 1984 — the Feldenkrais Method.”ⁱ



Moshe Feldenkrais (Pictured Bottom) practicing Judo, one of the major influences of his workⁱⁱ

The claims made by Moshe Feldenkrais seem innocuous enough on the surface:

“One of the Method’s central aims is to help people regain what they once knew as small children: heightened awareness of ourselves, fearlessness, self-reliance and a wonderful feeling of well-being. Its proven value entails the creation of learning conditions capable of enhancing contact with oneself”ⁱⁱⁱ

This sounds good in our modern society, what could be wrong with something that makes you feel good, gives you confidence in yourself and promotes feelings of euphoria or good health?

Well, actually by societies standards, nothing. But then society promotes abortion and homosexuality, so is societies moral compass the point at which we set our morality and Christian walk and virtues? Well I would have to say, No.

Without even looking at the Martial arts aspect of the issues which we will examine, these promoted outcomes should, on their own, sound off some warning bells. What does Scripture say we are to do, that is in opposition to what this teaches? We are not to lift ourselves up, but to die to self and live for Christ, seek Him first and make him our focus. What are the teachings of all the eastern mystical practices? You can be as god, you are god, and you need to be in charge of your life. You are taught to that god is within you and the focus of your efforts should be – The Self. Where else have we heard this said? You can be like God (Gen 3:5).

This is in direct contrast to Scripture which says:

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. (1Ti 4:8)

In other words, don't focus on the body but focus on God, too much focus on the body has negative effects as it profits little according to scripture. If we put our focus on our bodies we are not looking to God but ourselves. There is a vast difference between being and living a healthy lifestyle and making our bodies our focus. One of the direct results of this focus on the body is to be opened up to the teachings of mysticism and occultic beliefs'. Contrary to the popular belief of many Christians, it

is not possible to have these Eastern practices in the physical without accepting the spiritual, they are inextricably interlinked. In fact it is easy to see this in practice by examining many of the practices that have come into the Church: Breath Prayers, Meditation, Contemplative Prayer, spiritual realignment etc... These are all eastern mysticism renamed, and how have they come in? Yoga, a distinctly Hindu practice and belief system that the Church has renamed Christian Yoga, but what is the result of the observance physically of this practice, well it is as I just stated, the mystical that goes along with it is following along behind – and worst of all, it is being called Christian or ancient Christianity or lost Christianity.

Let me tell you clearly and frankly – this has never been in any way a previous form of Christianity. These practices and beliefs however are directly taken from eastern religions and worship. If you want to know more about understanding the roots of the Christian faith – then look to the Jews, Christianity is a continuation of Judaism. The Judaism God made and initiated, not the way sinful men had made it at the time of our Messiah. Jesus or Yeshua as He was known was Jewish – the Apostles were all Jews (Paul was actually Rabbi Sha’ul). Did the Jews practice these things, NO.? And how do we know, “it is not in Scripture”, in fact, Scripture clearly calls these things abominations before the Lord.

The Physical practice will bring along the spiritual belief, they are linked.

Back to Feldenkrais, this technique was developed directly out of the practice of Martial arts, in this case the style known as Judo. If you remember, as stated earlier, he opened the first Judo school in Europe, a simple statement but with many deeper connotations. If he did not learn in Europe as there were no schools teaching it, he will have moved to the east to learn it, or at least had a personal tutor from the east. In the east, all martial arts are based around Buddhist teaching, he would have been well educated in Buddhist belief and practice coming from this background. So his approach to developing the techniques he used are derived from the health benefits and practices of this occult technique.

These teachings he had were then incorporated into the psychology he studied, psychology, which I will remind you is based upon Humanism and manmade understanding with a direct rejection of the Bible and the God of the Bible. A psychology that rejects the idea of sin, and, as a result, replaces it with psychobabble, in order to justify man as an evolved creature, as opposed to a created one.

So overall, what do we see with the Feldenkrais Method? We see Buddhist and Humanistic teaching promoted through the physical practices of a Martial Art, in this case Judo. As a result of this teaching we gain feelings of euphoria and a self-centred focus, which helps us to further focus on our physical well-being and not on God. We also find that as a result we are taught to be confident in our own abilities and have a positive outlook that promotes the abilities of man. We know this because a further result of being sucked into this practice and others like it is we then promote it to other Christians. We are literally the wolf in sheep’s clothing that Scripture warns us to beware of.

Pilates

Basically, “Pilates was created in the 1920s by the physical trainer Joseph Pilates (1880-1967) for the purpose of rehabilitation. Some of the first people treated by Pilates were soldiers returning from war and dancers such as Martha Graham and George Balanchine (to strengthen their bodies and heal their aches and pains). Since the 1920s, the basic tenets that Joseph Pilates set down have been preserved, and to this day, even with some modifications, the Pilates remains true to its origins”.^{iv}

At least that is what it says on most websites, what is not examined or explained is Joseph Pilates association with Yoga and Tai Chi and how he developed the technique from these practices. “Pilates had his challenges as a child, suffering from asthma, rickets and rheumatic fever. His determination to heal led to his study of Eastern and Western forms of exercise, including yoga and ancient Greek and Roman exercise regimens”.^v

He was also a student of other eastern mystical practices relating to bringing in line the various aspects of body, mind and spirit. And as with Judo, Yoga was not taught in widely Europe, so where did Joseph Pilates get his training – either India or personal tuition from a Yogi (A Hindu Mystic). He was fully versed in Yoga and the Hindu belief system associated with it.

So basically what we find is that, Pilates is a direct descendent of Yoga and other mystical eastern practices developed into a technique and used by millions. I have no doubt that physical development and improvement can come from the practice of Yoga and Pilates, just as it did for me doing Martial Arts, however, it is the spiritual aspect behind these practices that lead into bondage. Some of the results of which can and do manifest themselves in the physical world, from depression and suicidal tendencies, to anger and control issues as well as an addiction to the practice that cause one to preclude the importance of other parts of our physical and spiritual life. Through continued practice by Christians, God becomes a god or force we are connected to as the teachings of these religions begin to permeate our reality as a direct result of the practices maintained. Scripture then becomes purely allegorical so that we can justify ourselves by continued practice.

Just as with the Feldenkrais method, Pilates also has its roots firmly planted in Eastern practices.

Joseph Pilates called his technique “Contrology” and says about it: “Contrology is complete coordination of body, mind, and spirit. Through Contrology you first purposefully acquire complete control of your own body and then through proper repetition of exercises you progressively acquire that natural rhythm and coordination associated with all your subconscious activities. It develops the body uniformly, corrects wrong postures, restores physical vitality, invigorates the mind, and elevates the spirit.” - Joseph Pilates

This is exactly the same teaching that can be found in Buddhism as regards the Martial Arts and also Hinduism as regards Yoga. This should now be ringing warning bells to any Christian readers, Pilates is unabashedly promoting the developers belief in Eastern Mysticism and Hindu belief on spiritual elevation through physical practice. Completely in contradiction to Scripture.

What we do physically becomes what we believe is right. If our practice is living Scripture and following the King of the Universe, then our internal focus becomes that, we focus on God and what He wants. However, if we focus on the body through these techniques, we get to the point where our internal focus centres on the teachings behind these practices because we want to get better at

them. We try and justify ourselves as Christians, to convince ourselves that we are not really doing anything wrong, but are we just searing our conscience with a hot iron (1Timothy 4:2) to justify our continued practice!

God has something to say about this in Scripture: Deuteronomy 29:19 "Some people might hear these curses and comfort themselves by saying, 'I will continue doing what I want. Nothing bad will happen to me.' But that attitude will bring total disaster. (ESV)

Tai Chi

Tai Chi is an offshoot of various styles of Martial Arts and was adopted into Taoism. The religion of Taoism emphasizes spiritual development through cultivation of both mind and body, with the ultimate goal of achieving harmony within oneself and with the world.

The Chi in Tai Chi stands for life energy or life force, it is found in all Martial Arts and is a spiritual force that lives in your stomach and attached to the spine. Through the continual practice and repetitive movements, this spiritual force is given strength which in turn strengthens, and enables the practitioner to become one with himself and thus the universe. If you have ever heard Practitioners of the Various Martial Arts shout K-I (Pronounced kee-eye another word for Chi) you are hearing them call upon the power of the spirit of Chi within them. Even if they have not been told this, this is still what they are doing.

Tai Chi is a fluid moving practice all based around the spine. It is also known as a soft Martial Art or internal Martial Art. And yes, it is a Martial Art, don't be fooled into thinking it isn't. Tai Chi Chuan and the other various names for it translate as: "supreme ultimate fist", "boundless fist", "supreme ultimate boxing" or "great extremes boxing".

Conclusion

This article is examining briefly just three of the more common re-named forms of Eastern Mystical Practices imported to the west. And sad to say, this only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Churches and their willingness to accept these practices as OK, Just because the medical profession promotes these as beneficial, that does not mean it is right. Scripture, Yeshua (Jesus our Messiah), Adonai (God – King of the Universe) and our relationship and desire to walk in righteousness guide us away from these practices and prompt us to warn others if we are truly serious about our faith. Do not be a wolf in sheep's clothing. Be a watchman on the wall, warning other believers of deception, and above all – "seek ye first the kingdom of God".

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ⁱ <http://www.feldenkrais.co.uk/articles/ethics.html>

ⁱⁱ Photo copied from Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feldenkrais_Method

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.feldenkrais.co.uk/articles/ethics.html>

^{iv} <http://www.jenniferkries.com/blog/integrated-wellness/pilates-vs-yoga-vive-la-difference/>

^v Ibid