



DINAMICA

TAI CHI CHUAN E ARTI ASSOCiate

La rivista

N. 10 - 2019 October

太極拳



2019

**EDITORIAL**

pag. 3

ROOTS

pag. 5

When weapons cross, he who yealds wins

by Roberto Seghetti

TAI CHI CHUAN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF...

pag. 7

"Meditation helps those who practice Tai Chi Chuan"

Anna Siniscalco interviews Frank Grothstück

DE RERUM NATURAE

pag. 10

Summer! "Cerevisiam bibunt hominis"!

by Alberta Tomassini

Being a body, having a body

pag. 14

by Fausta Romano

ARTE AND HABITAT

pag. 17

Black vein, sublime defect

by Maria Michaela Pani

EVENTS AND REVIEWS

pag. 19

Taoist by chance

by Paola Corsaro

A walk at home among my books

pag. 21

by Alfredo Miccheli

On the cover: "Wild Orchid", dedicated to Teresa Zuniga, disciple of Master Yang Jun, who has taken the name "Yang Yalan", which means "Orchid". Watercolour by Donata Piccioli ©

Dinamica Tai Chi Chuan e Arti Associate A.S.D. was born from the union of people who are willing to activate and share their potential through arts and psychophysical disciplines, Tai Chi Chuan in particular. Alongside Tai Chi Chuan, it proposes other arts and activities: meditation techniques, breathing and Qi Gong, Taoist Yoga (Tao Yin). The association is affiliated to the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association (IYFTCCA©). Its aim is to promote Tai Chi Chuan and to offer the opportunity to learn and practice the traditional Tai Chi Chuan following the method and teachings of Master Yang Jun, the current 5th generation lineage holder from the creator of the Yang style Tai Chi Chuan.



Symposium, Italia, Selvino 2019

The Tai Chi Chuan Symposium is an unforgettable, positive and encouraging experience.

Being able to meet the direct representatives of officially recognized traditional styles is a fundamental opportunity for a Tai Chi Chuan practitioner and researcher. And it is not obvious to have it in your own country.

I remember when I started practicing Tai Chi Chuan, in Italy there were no schools or Masters who were in direct contact with the Yang Family. It was 1996 when I was lucky enough to meet my first Tai Chi teacher, Claudio Mingarini. Already an expert teacher in various styles of Kung Fu, he was constantly searching for the sources of the teachings he had received, and in particular he was looking for the origins of the Yang style Tai Chi Chuan.

Believing in the value of the sources of a teaching, and recognizing the greatness of the opportunity to know and study with a master of a true lineage, I decided to commit myself to make a dream come true, to bring the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan to Italy. In 1998, working hard alongside Claudio Mingarini, we brought Grand Master Yang Zhenduo and his nephew Master Yang Jun to Italy, organizing from 8th to 14th June the first Tai Chi Chuan seminar directed by Grand Master Yang Zhenduo and his nephew Yang Jun, who is now 5th generations lineage holder of the Yang family Tai Chi Chuan.

Twenty years ago it was very difficult to get in touch with a Chinese Master, just think about the bureaucracy, the difficulty of finding Chinese language interpreters, and the fact that YouTube did not yet exist. Furthermore, nobody had ever seen a member of the Yang Family practicing or teaching in Italy.

Little was known about Tai Chi Chuan, and only in very restricted environments; for many people a Tai Chi practitioner could be something to talk about in social gatherings, and little was known about the effects of this practice on health. After 20 years, medical research has made significant progress in understanding and enhancing this discipline; since 2005 YouTube is a showcase of videos and interviews of various kinds and quality; with social networks you are in immediate contact with the whole world, and a lot of information can be shared in real time. From that first seminar of 1998, our Grand Master Yang Jun wanted to realize an even bigger dream for us Italians: the Symposium. Thanks to the work of the director of the Yanchengfu Center of Milan, Giuseppe Turturo, and of

Rome, Claudio Mingarini, the extraordinary dedication of Yilaria Giorgia Fiori, all the volunteers and supporters, students, teachers, directors of affiliated schools and center directors, the The Tai Chi Chuan Symposium gave us the opportunity to meet the current Grand Masters of Chen, Wu, Wu Hao, Sun and He styles, and to experience the value of the presence of a Master and of his firsthand teaching.

It is really inspiring to be able to grasp the peculiar aspects of the different styles, and at the same time witness the common roots, just as the Grand Master Yang Zhenduo said, "all the practitioners of Tai Chi Chuan are part of one big family".

And there, like a big family, we shared ideas, training, proposals, projects. Much has been done in the research, and much more will be done, and it feels good to share and grow together, drawing tradition, science and people together.

Anna Siniscalco



By Anna Siniscalco
Yang Yamei
Director of IYFTCCA Rome affiliated school



“When weapons cross, he who yields wins”

By Roberto Seghetti



“Therefore the clever combatant imposes his will on the enemy, but does not allow the enemy's will to be imposed on him...”

“Water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in relation to the foe whom he is facing. Therefore, just as water retains no constant shape, so in warfare there are no constant conditions. He who can modify his tactics in relation to his opponent and thereby succeed in winning, may be called a heaven-born captain.”

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*,
Lionel Giles Translation.

Ping fa, translated by most as “The Art of War”, is the most ancient strategy treaty from China. Sun Wu, the author, was a military commander of the “Spring and Fall” period, spanning from 722 to 481 b.C. (Sun Tzu – Sunzi in Pinyin system – means “master Sun”). We need to pay attention to the expression “military commander”, as in the Western world this term could be misleading. In Eastern societies, the military warrior is almost always intrinsically also an intellectual, a politician, a literate, an artist, an administrator. On this matter, Sun Wu was no exception: he was the maker of the notable success of the king of Wu

during the war against Ch'u, and at the same time he was a supporter of important reforms.

In the two extracts of *The Art of War* here reported, the practitioner of Tai Chi Chuan can recognise the teachings received, and the things he is trying to achieve and realise when practicing. Realising at the same time how far back it all goes, from the birth of the art,

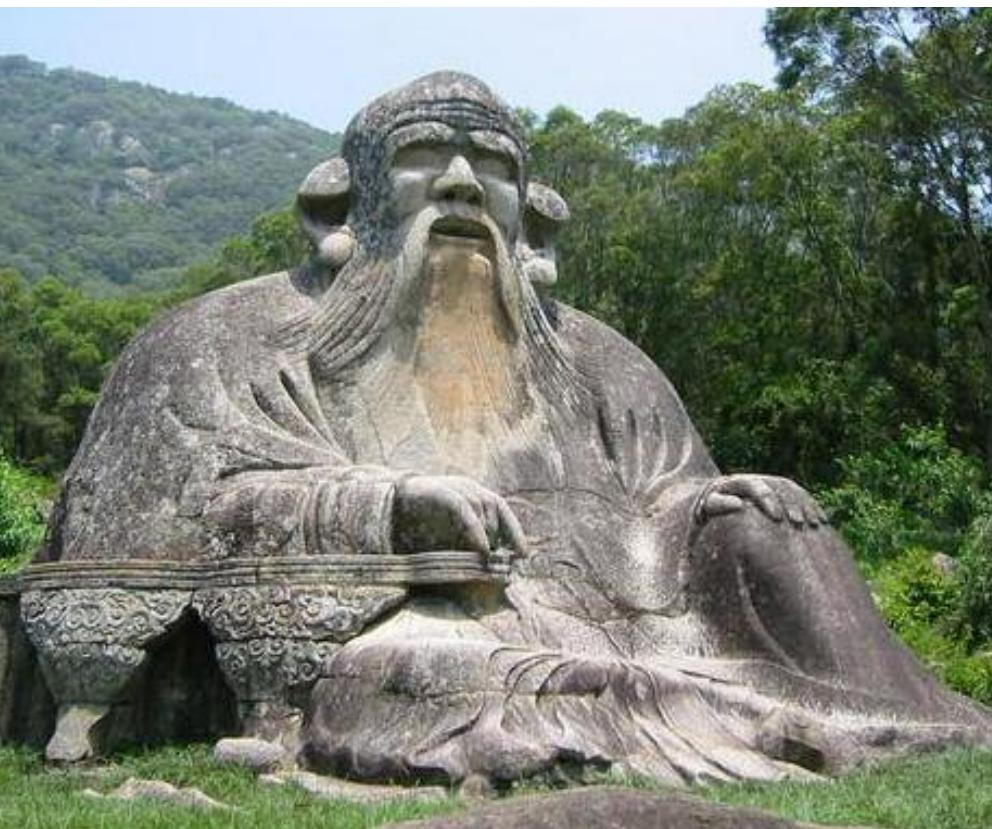
to the recognition of the fundamental principles that are shared between Tai Chi Chuan and other martial arts: if the enemy stands still, you don't move; if he moves, you get there first; adhere, keep the contact, "conform" to the opponent's movements; perceive the intention; yield, storing and deflecting the opponent's energy; taking advantage by redirecting the energies into attack while defending.

Master Sun is not alone. The whole of his work shows the influence of Taoism, which is indeed one of the main and most ancient origin of Tai Chi Chuan. The ideal fighter, according to Sun, is the one who does not fight, nor attacks unless the circumstances force him to do so. The best winner is the one who wins without fighting.

In fact, to realise the influences on Sun Tzu, we only need to read the works attributed to Lao Tzu (Pinyin, Laozi), father of Taoism, and fundamental philosopher in Chinese history and culture, that lived between VI and III century b.C.

"I do not dare being a host, I prefer being a guest", it is stated in the *Tao Te Ching*. The host is the one who takes the initiative, the guest needs waiting. And more: "I do not dare advancing of one inch, I'd rather retreat one foot. This is what is called, 'Walking without a path, rolling up the sleeves on no arms, drawing the sword with no sword, putting up a fight with no opponent'. There is no greater disgrace than underestimating the opponent. Underestimating my opponent, I put my treasures at stake. Because, when fighting weapons cross, the winner is him who yields."

Control; adhering; understanding the intentions; deflecting the opponent's force; using the energy mindfully; clarifying the intent; balancing; finding calm in the movement: the skilful – as Sun Tzu says – induce the other's movement, and, centred in the unity of body and mind, win the challenge with themselves and the fight with the hasty impatience dictated by fear.



“Meditation helps practitioners of Tai Chi Chuan”

Conversations with Frank Grothstück

By Anna Siniscalco



The first part of the interview (published in our magazine #8) closed on the theme of applications in the practice of Tai Chi Chuan...

AS: *From what you're telling me, applications have more to do with energy than with movement?*

FG: Right.

AS: *Changing points of view, can one say that change is part of the practice of Tai Chi Chuan?*

FG: Interesting question. I think that in order to change something, I have to know myself. I have to know myself and then maybe I can change something. If my emotions are strong, it is like water which is very dirty, there is a lot of sand, dust, or whatever is in the water. So if I'm nervous and emotional, I have a lot of emotions. And it's the same with thoughts. They can be emotions, they can be thoughts; head or heart. If you're very confused and a lot of emotions are going on, then I can't really see myself, because I'm not these emotions. A part of me is, but if I want to look

through, I have to calm down. If I don't calm down, if I don't calm my heart, my mind, how can I know myself, how can I look deeper. That's why I have to let the sand and dirt sink down. If they sink down, they are always there, they are not gone. They're still part of me, but I can see better what's there. That's what I feel. I control, yes, first I have to control my emotions, but my goal is to become calm, to let things sink, and be able to see better through the water, see more clearly. It's not just controlling: I control my emotions, but it has another goal, the goal of changing myself for sure.

AS: *Last question: do you think meditation helps a Tai Chi Chuan practitioner in his Tai Chi?*

FG: Yes, I think so, very much. We have standing posture in the Yang family, and Master also talks about sitting position. So we have standing posture and sitting positions, and this is an aspect of the still practice of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan. Then we have the all forms for the practice of movement. There are sitting positions, but the Masters usually don't call it meditation, because many people, when they hear the word meditation, have a certain idea of meditation which is perhaps not exactly what the Master wants us to use as a method. But I'm not sure, I don't know, because the Master doesn't talk so much about sitting practice, but he often mentions it, saying that part of the system is sitting practice. I am learning the sitting practice of a tradition, the Yang Family, that I feel is helping me a lot. But it is a very individual thing, I think it is really necessary to have a good balance between still and moving practice. For me it's a help, yes, but I think you can also have it in the moving practice, or in standing practice, in various ways. But since these questions mainly concern the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan, I don't want to go into too much detail about how I meditate.

Regarding meditation in general, I think meditation can help us to keep our minds calm, to keep the focus on what we are doing, or what we are trying to focus on. For example, if I want to keep the focus on being relaxed, which is the theme of the sixth principle, use the mind rather than force, this means that your mind must remain focused on relaxing, not on strength. For example, if we want to do it in one of the three forms, maybe we can be relaxed (keep the focus on relaxation) for a few minutes, and if we can do it for a few minutes, that's a lot. Then our mind goes somewhere, anywhere, and sometimes we don't even notice it, we don't realize that our mind is drifting away, but it just happens. Most people practice this way. So I feel that in this case sometimes practicing meditation too can help us to really observe ourselves, to observe our thoughts, our mind, and to control our mind better, so then we can use it better in Tai Chi Chuan, keeping our attention and concentration. I also think that if I do the form twice while maintaining attention, maybe attention is not the right word because our mind has many aspects, but if I can stay on my idea, intention, and attention to form, then doing the form twice is much better than doing the form five times when the mind is not connected to the outside.

AS: *Besides Tai Chi Chuan I know you have a real passion for another art, music. Do you want to tell us something?*

FG: I've been making music since I was 11 years old. Before, at the age of six, I was very interested in music, I listened to a lot of music, and when I was 11 I started playing guitar. So I got into music long before I started martial arts and Tai Chi Chuan. When I was practicing Tai Chi Chuan I had problems with my wrist because I had practiced the guitar a lot, since I wanted to study at the conservatory, in Cologne (Germany), and before the test to enter the conservatory I got this problem with my wrist. This was one of the reasons why I started with Tai Chi Chuan, to solve this wrist problem. And then I fell in love with Tai Chi Chuan, so I stayed with Tai Chi Chuan. I wanted to become a guitar player and teacher, I was actually doing this in my youth, and after that I became a Tai Chi Chuan teacher. So for me from the beginning there was a strong

connection between music and Tai Chi. I also think that in music I can find something to express, something that I have inside, in a way that is different from talking, from being in a normal social environment. With music, things come out that I don't know much about, so it's interesting. I can learn a lot about myself and the kind of music I study. In Tai Chi Chuan in a certain way it is similar. There also, I tried to find my own calm, I used my intention to move things. In music it's different: things move me and so what I express is a bit different. And yet both work on many aspects of the human being, I think. For example, I find it very interesting to do competitions, demonstrations. When I do the competitions or demonstrations, or prepare for a level exam, I always feel very nervous, like most people, I think, and it's not easy to do the form in a calm way when you're nervous. It lasts a little while until I become calm. Even in music, when I do a concert, when I'm on stage, I'm very nervous, but I can immediately express what I have inside and bring it out. This is also very interesting for me to see and understand, to find things that are controversial in music and Tai Chi Chuan.

AS: *In music a note, a harmony is the result of combining different sounds. Even in Tai Chi Chuan, energy is a combination of yin yang. Tai Chi Chuan and music bring us closer to harmony?*

FG: It can be the same, but also very different because in music I can also decide to bring out what isn't harmony, because I think it's there anyway, and I like tension when things aren't harmony. Also in Tai Chi I look for harmony, but I don't express the non-harmonic part; I try to express harmony because if I imitate harmony, then harmony comes. In applications, if there is an opponent attacking you, he is disturbing harmony. So there is not only harmony in Tai Chi Chuan. If we seek harmony between the inside and the outside, but also between the opponent and myself: if the opponent destroys harmony I try to restore it, which can lead the opponent to lose his balance if he can't stay in harmony. It's not simple... it's an ongoing quest.

AS: *Thank you Frank, we will continue to seek harmony, holding our heads high and lifting the Spirit.*



Summer! «Cerevisiam bibunt hominis»! - *Part I*

By Alberta Tomassini



“Knowing the places near or far is not worth it, it’s just theory; knowing where the beer is best is real practice, it’s geography!” (Goethe)

All animals, from fruit flies to elephants, derive a substantial part of their energy from sugary compounds that in temperate zones, where the human species originated, could contain up to 5 percent alcohol by spontaneous fermentation.

Fermented foods are generally those foods or beverages obtained through controlled bacteria growth and enzymatic transformation of their original components. Fermentative processes can be characterized by the metabolites and/or microorganisms involved, as well as by initial foods such as meat, fish, milk and dairy products, vegetables, legumes, cereals, sugar roots, grapes or other fruits.

Throughout history and throughout the world, human societies at all levels of complexity discovered how to obtain fermented beverages from sugary sources present in their habitats. Fermented beverages, made from sweet fruits, honey and sugary cereals, have been used by

man since ancient times. Ten thousand years ago, after the appearance of agriculture, human dietary adaptation gave rise to new techniques to increase nutritional composition while reducing the undesirable effects of food. The permanent settlements forced man to accumulate food as stocks to ensure their availability during unfavourable periods. In this respect, fermentation increases the storage capacity of food as well as the transformation of raw matter into products with new sensory properties and new nutritional characteristics. Pickled fruits and vegetables are very popular in many areas of Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and America. Fermented juices, tea leaves and brine products are widely consumed in Asia, while, in Western societies, drinks obtained by fermentation with yeasts, such as beer and wine, play a dominant role.

In ancient times it was believed that fermented malt beer contained a spirit, or a god, and was a beverage with supernatural properties. Considered divine, wine and beer were called elixirs of long life, and appeared in religious ceremonies, mythology, and social gatherings such as Greek symposia.

They were also considered effective remedies for virtually all diseases, and were used as anaesthetics, stimulants, analgesics, antiseptics, emetics, digestive, antidotes for poisoning, stings and bites, purifying and also facilitated social communication.

From a medical point of view, alcohol in fermented plants allows the passage in solution of compounds of plants, be they fruits, resins, nectars, roots, herbs, or spices. Ethanol promotes the release of serotonin, dopamine and endorphins in the brain, all chemical compounds that make us happy and less anxious. Moreover, our friend *Streptomyces Cerevisiae* yeast, in fermenting sugars, in addition to ethanol, produces a large amount of nutrients including B vitamins such as folic acid, niacin, thiamine and riboflavin.

But when did we start consuming ethanol? Let's have a look at some **history...**

"Non sit acetosa cerevisia, sed bene clara, de validis cocta granis, satis ac veterata": "You will choose the cervogy for your drink, which has no acid in itself, and is very clear, and well fermented, and good wheat, and purged over time of the lees" (from the "Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum", XI-XIII c.).

In a historical model, ethanol did not represent a significant part of the "Palaeolithic" diet and would only enter the diet after man began to store extra food (probably due to the emergence of agriculture) and later developed the ability to voluntarily ferment food for conservation purposes (about 9000 years ago).

In another model, primates may have already ingested ethanol through fruit consumption at least 80 million years ago when angiosperms, for the first time, produced fleshy fruits that were infected with yeasts capable of accumulating ethanol by fermentation. Traces of ethanol in rotten fruits hanging from trees would have attracted arboreal primates.

According to legend, beer is female! In fact, it was a woman, in 10,000 b.C., in the Fertile Crescent, precisely in Mesopotamia, who forgot about the cereals in an amphora after harvesting. The rain that fell filled the latter by wetting the seeds and triggering, in a



Drink Ebla beer, the beer with the heart of a lion!
(Ebla tablets 2500 B.C.)



The mummification process, which lasted months, was preceded by a beer-based wash, a clear symbol of purification for the sacred character and the divine origin of the drink.

Yellow River valley. Mijaya farmers probably had small amounts of barley through trade, or cultivated the plant along with other cereals, and used it first for the production of alcohol than as food.

At present, the oldest evidence of the use of an alcoholic beverage in the world comes from the Neolithic site of Jiahu in the Yellow River Valley in China, dating back to about 7000 b.C. Archaeological biomolecular analyses of the jars containing the drink have demonstrated the formula: rice, honey, grapes and hawthorn fruit.

It is impossible to say when and where the brewing process began. It is mentioned by Manathos, high prelate of Heliopolis, an Egyptian of Greek upbringing, who lived around 300 b.C. and, by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus, translated ancient Egyptian history into Greek. He claimed that Egyptians had had beer thousands of years earlier and that its invention was attributed to Osiris, a god who represents all the beneficial principles, and that famous breweries already existed at the time in El Kahirc (Cairo) and Pelusinum on the banks of the Nile. Curiously, the mummification process was preceded by a beer-based wash, a clear symbol of purification for the sacred and divine character of the drink.

Certainly the Sumerians, who lived 5000 years ago in present-day Iran, were capable of producing beer, and indeed they had sixteen varieties, all barley like today.

The Greeks had their barley *zythos* ("beer") as mentioned by Sophocles and Aeschylus in 470 b.C. Diodorus of Sicily, in a writing dating back to 400 b.C., states that the inhabitants of Armenia use fermented barley drinks.

In Italy, the Etruscans were the first to drink and brew beer ("pevakh"), which also infected the Romans.

The Romans had their "*cerevisia*", which was a luxury among them. Julius Caesar was a great admirer of beer, and Plutarch and Suetonius, writing about him, tell us that after the crossing of the Rubicon in 49 b.C., there was a big party with the commanders where beer was the main drink. Lucullus, in his famous banquets, served it in gold cups. And at that time Romans used to sing "*cerevisiam bibunt hominis*"! Noteworthy characters of their society became avid supporters

completely random way, the fermentation; this gave rise to a sweet liquid substance that man immediately liked for the physical and emotional well-being it released, prompting him to specialize in its production.

In China, the oldest evidence on beer has been found on inscriptions of divinatory bones from the late Shang dynasty (ca. 1250-1046 b.C.). According to these inscriptions, the Shang population used cereals containing malt including millet, barley and wheat as the main ingredients. Scholars believe that the Shang tradition of brewing dates back to the Yangshao Neolithic period (5000-2900 b.C.) when large farming villages settled in the

of beer, such as Agricola, governor of Britain, who once back in Rome in 83 a.C. brought three master brewers from Glevum (now Gloucester) and opened the first "pub" of our peninsula. In Germany beer was known at the same time, and Tacitus says that General Varo, who was sent by Augustus to conquer the country and to subdue the inhabitants, defeated by Arminius, leader of the Teutons, attributed the extreme value of the enemy and their success to their free use of "bior" (beer).

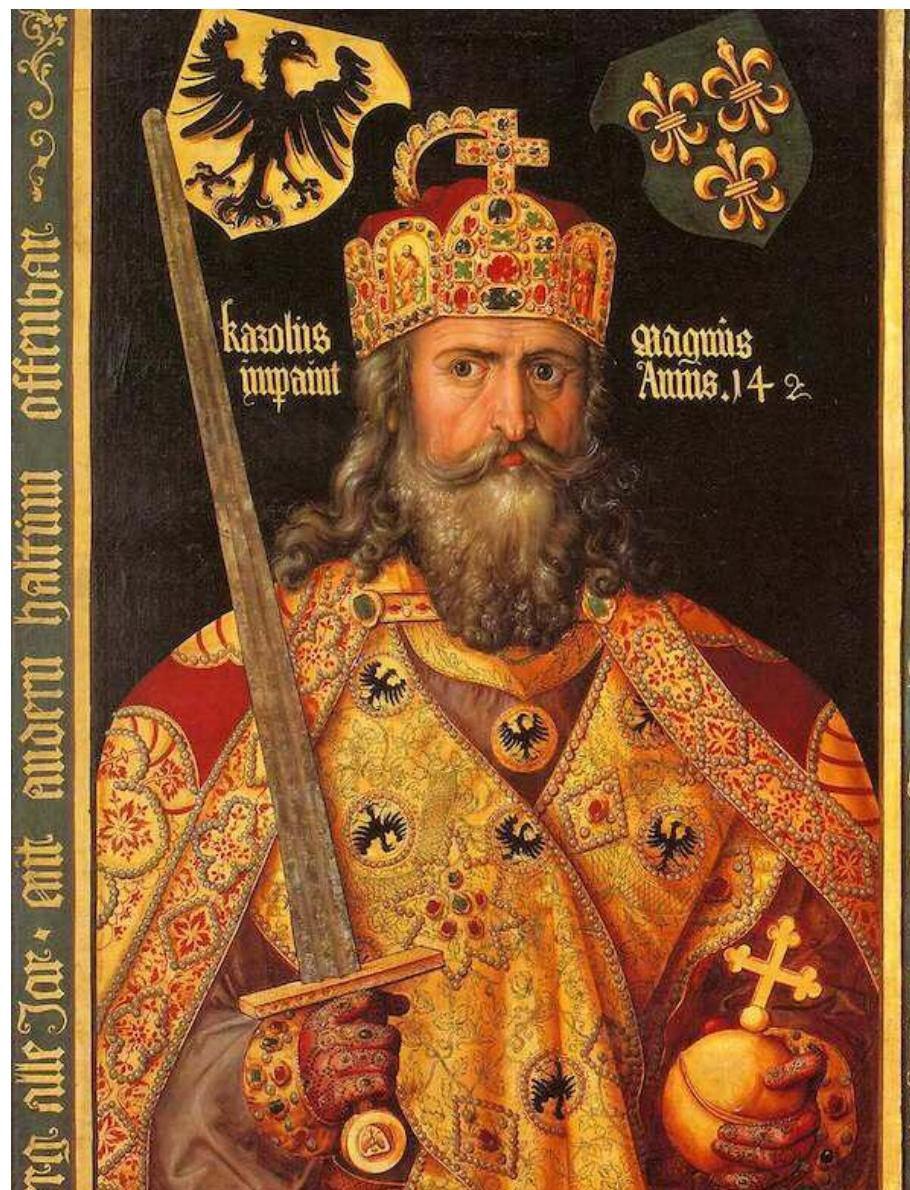
The Alemanni, a large Germanic tribe, first mentioned by Dion Cassius in 218, who occupied the country between the Main and Danube rivers, were great enemies of the Romans and the Gauls. They attached great importance to their beer which they prepared under the supervision of religious people and which was blessed with solemn rites before consumption. The emperor Julian, who defeated them in 357 near Strasbourg, found numerous brewing tools on the battlefield.

When the ancient Saxons in the VII and VIII centuries sat in council to deliberate on matters of the utmost importance, they did so only after drinking beer that they drew from a huge common stone cup.

Charlemagne himself (742-814) gave direct guidelines on how to produce beer for his court and was equally careful in the choice of his brewers, his consultants and his commanders.

In the Middle Ages, beer was an extremely popular drink, at least because it was much safer than water. In the 14th century, the monks were the licensed brewers, and the brewery they founded in Dobraw near Pilsen in Bohemia, donated to them by Charles IV shortly before his death along with the right to brew, is probably the oldest brewery in the world.

It is said that, after a drinker had drained a mug, it could happen that his sight was obscured, making him an easy prey for pickpockets. For this reason, already at the time of the Saxon king Edward the Confessor, controls were established. A little beer was poured onto a wooden stool where the controller sat; if he struggled to get up, it meant that the beer contained added sugar, which was definitely illegal. (In 1516, Count Wilhelm IV of Bavaria issued the "*Reinheitsgebot*", the purity law still in force today, which required the exclusive use of barley, hops and water).



Being a body, having a body

By Fausta Romano ¹



"We don't know, and perhaps never will, what is like to be a bat (Thomas Nagel), [...] but actually we do not know what is like to be a 'homo sapiens' either. In fact, it is not about knowing, but rather 'feeling', so to speak".²

In my job of psychotherapist, it is necessary to work on the harmonisation of the mind-body-emotions system with my patients, in order to activate all those transformation processes and thoughts, seemingly blocked at the beginning.

A practical approach can be very helpful in this work: once the person I am analysing accepts and respects their own corporeality as a well of emotions and thoughts, then it becomes also possible, if they wish, to access something which allows a concrete experience of those.

I have been wondering for a while now whether Tai Chi Chuan – which I have been practicing for four years³ – can be a valuable tool to integrate and complete the psychoanalytic work. That is, if the patient can experience what it is like "being a body" through the practice of this martial art. It's a crucial point. What does "body" mean? If we pay attention to our body functioning, we discover that we are facing a sophisticated system. Let me give some examples. Our skin is able to select and filter, distinguishing the internal from the external. Not everything can get in, and

neither it can go out. It is the means of a continuous exchange body-environment. The digestive system receives, selects, filters, discerns, transforms, welcomes and expels. The immune system is able to distinguish the self from the non-self, expels, refuses all that does not belong to the body, and it protects it from external pathogens threatening its survival. Our mind does the same: it receives, distinguishes, and differentiates, selects, welcomes, expels!

I mean that our body-mind-emotions system can work beautifully, having different levels of organizations, all interconnected amongst them. Our body is the outcome of millennia of selecting, and is striving for ways for living with wisdom.

For this reason, the all-Western idea of a mind completely separated from our material body, a mind that can lead a life that mistreats this sophisticated system that is our body, can lead to suffering. Eating disorderly, breaking the sleep cycles, breathing and moving carelessly... Thinking that vulnerability and finiteness have nothing to do with us, and that we can endlessly mistreat this matter we're made of, will lead us to some serious consequences. This only friend we have, our body, at a certain point will have enough of this, it won't be able to cope any more, and will voice its discomfort: a series of colds, flu, little ailments, more and more frequently perceived... End should these warnings not be enough, then our body will SCREAM. And then ignoring it will be difficult.

In my job, I meet also people who suffer from cancer, degenerative illnesses, severe allergies, or cardiopathy. I think I can state that illness, for how serious it is, represents an extreme help request from our body to our mind, an extreme expression of vitality from that very system that is going towards self-destruction⁴.

The very warfare-like language that patients and medicine itself use towards the illness does not allow the illness itself to be considered a sign of life. Cancer, diabetes, or other illnesses, are the enemy to defeat. "We shall fight; we will prevail; we need to love ourselves to win over it; we need to use all the weapons we have to defeat it". They sound like reassuring words, for the person that found about their illness and fears it.

When they knock at my door in terror, I try to discover together with them how many times their bodies had sent some signals, being ignored; I try to make them realise how important it is not to assault the illness, at times cancer, because it belongs to that body. How important it is instead to give the body what it needs to live, in order to strengthen it, to help it. If not to heal, at least to *live* what is left to live. I try to help people's minds to turn towards the source of life, what makes their mind live in every moment, that is, the body. In a respectful and mild way, trying to soothe their fears, trying to love life, even when it brings the unknown, the finiteness, and the sorrow (of course, assuming the latter is bearable).

If the fear is overcome, and they resume the former way of life, the body will be back screaming its own pain; if it becomes recidivous, people come back knocking on my door.

When they understand, they make peace with that very same body they felt betrayed by, and the analytical process starts to work, another life becomes possible: limited by death, that now may seem nearer, but with the possibility of discovering another universe, made of taste, of pleasure, of attention to the own wishes and



needs; in other words, now life seems to have a meaning.

The key for living is to embody our own finiteness and vulnerability, pain as well as pleasure, however hard it may be.

For this reason, I am convinced that with my clinical practice I can do very little if I do not manage first to instil in my patients some curiosity towards their own self and their own way of functioning, starting right from realising they *"have a body"*. A body that right from the beginning is trying to say something but does not get much attention. Trying to get them to turn their eyes towards their own selves, to start being aware of their own corporeality, to make peace with their own limits, to take responsibility of being what they actually are.

There are other times where we all ARE our own body. In these cases, we lack the necessary distance for self-observing: we are a whole, we are in the present time, immanent in our time being. *To be a body, to have a body*: in a sense, we are a paradoxical ensemble of unity within otherness.

At this point Tai Chi Chuan comes in. I am discovering in this martial art the chance of a hard and passionate training that is leading me exactly to what I was missing: the continuous and ever deeper human paradox – *"being a body"* while knowing we *"have a body"*, simultaneously.

The practice of Tai Chi Chuan is teaching me to be present in my present time; to softly lead my mind towards my body; to be patient; to get to and accept my limits, my time, my pace. Slowly, day after day, and for however long I will wish to, I will be listening to the transformations that occur in me, in my system, in my mind towards my body, and in my body towards my mind.

The constant attention to the directions and axes of movement I need to place my body, so that it can find balance, openness, extension in space, in the only time in which the body exist: the present time.

I am wondering then if the conscience to be and have a body – which one can achieve through an experience of analysis – can be significantly extended by a careful and continuous practice and learning of this ancient martial art that is Tai Chi Chuan. That is, for whoever may be interested.

And here, a new path of research and study opens ahead. For me, and for whomever might be into it. Surely new questions and issues will lie ahead on this possible integration.

Notes

- 1 Psychologist, psychotherapist, formerly manager at the Mental Health Service in Roma B, current president of the Psychoanalytical Research and Training Institute "A.B. Ferrari". She worked together with prof. Ferrari for twenty years at a recent psychoanalytical hypothesis aimed at re-establishing a link between the corporal dimension and the practice and thought of psychoanalysis, based on the thought of S. Freud, M. Klein and W.R. Bion. The hypothesis of the Concrete Original Object proposes to consider the corporal dimension as the origin and only object of the mind: "not the mother, nor the maternal breast is the object of the baby, but its own hunger" (see A.B. Ferrari, *L'eclissi del corpo, un'ipotesi psicoanalitica*, Borla, 1992. Following that, he published other books and papers as clinical and theoretical expansion of his hypothesis).
- 2 E. Garroni, "Introduzione" (Introduction) to A.B. Ferrari, *L'eclissi del corpo, cit.*
- 3 I am getting to know this martial art through the learning and practice of the traditional form of the Yang Family, following the lineage of M. Yang Jun, through the teachings of Anna Siniscalco and Teresa Zuniga, c/o Associazione Dinamica Tai Chi Chuan e Arti Associate ASD, Rome, Italy.
- 4 On this issue, see the work by Paolo Bucci, "La malattia, un'occasione per pensare la vita" (Illness as a chance to think life), in *Instabili equilibri. Dalla fisicità al pensiero*, ed. by C. Bergerone, D. Radano, S. Tauriello, Venezia, Cafoscarina, 2013.

Black vein, sublime defect

By Maria Michaela Pani



The end-of-year seminar in June was an opportunity for all practitioners at all levels to train and grow together.

For the second consecutive year it was held in Bassano Romano, a village in the province of Viterbo, particularly known to directors, who used it as a set for some scenes of cult films, such as *La dolce vita*, *The Leopard*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *White, Red and Green*.

The seminar was hosted by the monastery of San Vincenzo, which houses a priceless treasure that has remained unknown for centuries: the statue of the *Christ Bearing the Cross*, carved in two different moments by Michelangelo Buonarroti and Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

Commissioned to Michelangelo Buonarroti during his Roman period in 1514, the *Christ Bearing the Cross* was intended to embellish the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, but just at the turning point of the four years intended for its manufacture, emerged a black vein in the marble, a "black hair", on the left cheek. The sculpture was left unfinished, and a second one was immediately begun, which did not satisfy the Master but was anyway accepted by the client Metello Vari. It would take such a long time to restart the sculpture, so Metello kept also the unfinished one for his courtyard as a gift for the time loss. In 1607, the unfinished *Christ* was sold at auction and bought at the price of the raw material by Marquis Vincenzo Giustiniani for his gallery in Bassano Romano, who had it finished by a promising young man: Gian Lorenzo Bernini. After having covered it as it was convenient not to cause confusion, he placed it there where it had been imagined: behind the altar of the church of San Vincenzo, just finished.

From that moment the statue was no longer mentioned in any correspondence, it literally

disappeared from any official and unofficial document, so that it was considered the work of an unknown sculptor. The silence about its origin allowed it to be saved from the looting of the French Revolution and the World Wars, and from the passage of time, which brought the building to the brink of collapse several times. In response to the disaster of the wars, the monastery devoted itself to young people, providing accommodation and education for those who had been deprived of it. The professors who followed one another at the boarding school aroused interest in this statue without origins, so that, in 1979, the Abbot had it moved to the right side chapel, where it still stands, because in his opinion it inspired more admiration than devotion.

The veil of silence over the *Christ Bearing the Cross*, the only known case in which the chisels of the two most famous Italian sculptors are added, was torn in 1998, when for the preparation of the exhibition on the Giustiniani Gallery the local archives were retaken. Like a flash in a dark night, in 2001, in the middle of the installation, a document of 1600 was found attesting to the names of the sculptors. After removing the bronze cloth, the *Christ Bearing the Cross* had the recognition it deserved, travelling around Europe, America and Japan, thus returning to the hymn of the beauty and sacredness of the human body, as described by Vari, who was fascinated by it when it was only a draft. While we look at it, we still wonder, in the light of a history that has not recognized its merits, how it could have survived intact until now.

Sources:

Father Cleto Tuderti's writings on the *Christ Bearing the Cross* and on the Church of St. Vincent.



Taoists by chance

Travel notes for the well-being of body and spirit from East to West and vice versa

Ischia 14-20 July 2019

By Paola Corsaro

"Taoisti per caso" (Taoists by chance) is the brainchild of Paola Corsaro, a Neapolitan by birth who practiced Tai Chi Chuan and Neapolitan philosophy by passion. The event was held in the most beautiful places in Ischia, such as Villa Arbusto in Lacco Ameno and Giardini Ravino in Forio, with public and critical acclaim. Many people have constantly followed the lessons. Copious was the press review.

Practicing Tai Chi Chuan at sunset, with the teachers Anna Siniscalco and Teresa Zuniga, together with the literary aperitif on various themes, from literature to philosophy, archaeology and physics, have shown how close Eastern philosophy and Neapolitan philosophy are.

Set in a land where the Creator wanted to "please himself with", such as Ischia, the purpose of the event was to let people know and reflect on the "complicity" that exists between Eastern and Neapolitan culture, both of ancient origin, in a circular journey aimed to bring together physical and spiritual well-being.

Based on these premises, the event served to raise awareness of the many aspects of this contiguity which constitute the core of a unique philosophy, the "Taoism by chance", or precisely to answer the question: «What do Neapolitan Western culture and ancient Chinese Tao have in common?»

In other words, if you walk along the path which reveals his own original spirit to each man, according to the Eastern teaching, you will also find the "Neapolitanism" that preserves and expresses a constant acceptance of reality for what it is, in the "here and now".

The Tao, in its apparent simplicity, is transmitted beyond verbal language, as the Great Masters indicate, using gestures, eyes expression, hands, the whole body; the essence is transmitted only in person, "from my soul to your soul", thus letting go of the ego and with it of the concept of duality.

"Here and now", simply and only now, without worries, without judgements and conditioning, a complete experience of the daily life, being immersed in the wonderful reality of Nature.



So, day and night, life and death, good and evil, all the separations and duality that the mind creates disappear, leaving room for the value of every single moment in life, to be accepted in total unity and harmony.

Isn't this, perhaps, the DNA of Neapolitan thinking?

Are not the gestures more eloquent than words, in the tradition of this country?

Neapolitanism is the Western translation of Tao thinking.

Marked by a past of continuous domination, the Neapolitan land has never lived on certainties and absolute truth, but living every moment, day by day, welcoming and integrating life and death, love and the inevitability of its loss, in a continuous cycle.

Life can more than death, as shown by the ancient cult of the dead at the cemetery of the Fontanelle ("little wells"): abandoned skulls are "adopted" by believers, placed in altars decorated with flowers and offerings, expensive even for those who can afford them, with the prayer to intercede for graces, weddings, numbers.

"Frisco e rifrisco, anime d'o priatorio, anime pezzentelle..." recites the prayer to these skulls, invoking a duality (Frisco and rifrisco) which, wishing "poor" souls to refresh themselves from the fire of purgatory, through the intercession of the praying, repeats the transformation of yin and yang and the overcoming of duality in the Eternity.

Neapolitanism sings the Mediterranean present: cups of coffee, friends, "ammore" (love), dream and an ancient desire for peace.

Isn't this, perhaps, the DNA of the Tao philosophy that sings a contemplative art, separating any profit from the activity, for the sheer pleasure of living one's own time, beyond the concepts of productivity and profit?

Time has no dimension, because dimensions do not exist, says the Tao.

In the land of Partenope (ancient name of Naples) we always feel at home, in a cultural continuity that makes us one with the Greeks and Romans, Angevins and Bourbons, with the splendours of the seventeenth century and the miseries of the last war: like a principle of physics, immersed in a "continuum" that knows no time or space.

What novelty can upset a Neapolitan anymore? We always survive. This is what experience, what life teaches us. Even today, "Neapolitanity" preserves and expresses a constant acceptance of what is *Here and Now*.



A walk at home among my books

By Alfredo Miccheli



The wreck of one of Serge and Franklin's expedition ships was discovered at the bottom of the Arctic Sea, Canada; it mysteriously disappeared in 1846 in an attempt to navigate the legendary Northwest Passage. Sonar image of the wreck (National Geographic 2014: photography by Parks Canada via EPA) Found the Terror, the second ship of the Franklin expedition (National Geographic 2016). The wreck was located in a bay on the island of King Williams, in the Canadian Arctic. It is 50 km away from the twin Erebus, which found two years ago.

Having to find a novel in my bookstore that had a connection with Tai Chi Chuan, I thought that "The Discovery of Slowness" by Sten Nadolny, is certainly what already in the title contains the keystone. An old book from 1985 (Garzanti) where the story of John Franklin (1786-1847) is told, from his childhood to his adventurous death.

Already at the first line you can understand: "John Franklin was ten years old, and he was still so slow that he couldn't catch a ball." But ..."He was suited to be a rope-holder as no other child" "Perhaps there was no one in the whole of England who could stand still for over an hour holding up the end of a rope. He stood without moving, like a cross on a grave, towering like a statue" A poor disabled and misfit child who couldn't follow the games of the other faster boys? John reflects, accumulates experiences in his memory, deciphers them and gradually builds within himself an unshakable security.

Slowness becomes the art of giving meaning and value to the time of life (as Claudio Magris reports in his review in Corriere della Sera). Franklin makes of his slowness the strength to know himself and others, becoming a sailor, sailor commander during the siege of Copenhagen, explorer of the Arctic and the North West passage, governor of Tasmania.

Franklin's expedition set sail from England in 1845. The ships, upon their arrival in the icy Canadian waters, crossed some whalers, but then nothing was known. But it's enough to tell: this beautiful novel, for those who are intrigued, is still available in bookstores in the reprint last year.

DINAMICA

TAI CHI CHUAN E ARTI ASSOCIADE

Editor in chief: Roberto Seghetti

Editors: Anna Siniscalco, Teresa Zuniga

Editorial board: Carlo Cazzola, Paola Corsaro, Daniela Famulari, Costanza Longo, Alfredo Miccheli, Maria Michela Pani, Fausta Romano, Roberto Seghetti, Nicoletta Seregni, Anna Siniscalco, Alberta Tomassini, Lamberto Tomassini, Teresa Zuniga

太極拳

Graphic design: Donata Piccioli

Images and drawings: Donata Piccioli, Lamberto Tomassini

Translations: Diana Alliata

Web support: Stefano Longo, Maria Michela Pani



TOMAS-19