

**Introduction article by TAO Technical Director, TONY SWANSON
from TAO 20th ANNIVERSARY NEWSLETTER July 2016**

‘BODY, MIND & SPIRIT’

It wasn't planned this way, but, by a happy accident, each author writing on a different subject (Shamanism, women in martial arts and training) but the underlying theme you can see in all of them is the interaction of body, mind and spirit in the journey they are each taking through life with the Arts. In all three accounts, we can see that they all find the physical, mental and spiritual benefits of training to be inextricably linked.

Together they form a wonderfully rich illustration of the Way (the Tao) discussed by Taoist philosophers. There is no one single Way to which all are expected to conform. Rather, there is a single principle of adapting from moment to moment to find the next best step in your personal journey. Like playing 'Push Hands' with existence itself as your partner, you are constantly challenged to see how you can best deal with what is thrown at you without betraying your physical, mental and spiritual structure.

The huge variety between the three journeys that Dave, Jane and Abe have generously underlined, the uniqueness of each individual and how the practice of the Arts can enrich each life at very level.

This time last year, I received many compliments and much praise on the 20th. Anniversary of the T.A.O. I thanked people at the presentations but, as the T.A.O. Newsletter took a break after that, I realise I have forgotten to thank the whole membership for their generous good wishes. Twenty years is a long time but the material in these articles (and many others we have had over the past years) is what makes it worthwhile. Seeing how the Arts continue to give our students the tools they need to improve and strengthen their lives is what motivates me to carry on.

We do not often discuss the philosophical or spiritual side of the Arts – mainly because I believe the lessons are there to be learned from the training process and I would not want to interfere in people making their own choices about how they wish to interpret them. At this level, I see myself, not as a teacher or director, but as a fellow traveller willing to try to help if wanted. This seems to me to be the best expression I can give to the principle of respect for the Self and Other which lies at the pinnacle of our system.

However, over the years I have been privileged to see many people make amazing changes in their lives through their practice of the Arts within the respectful and supportive community created within the T.A.O. by the members. Just as I know the value of our Martial Arts because of the success we achieve in competition, these results allow me to assert, with great confidence, the value of the practice of our Li family Arts.

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