

# Being one with the *dao*

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I was asked to say more about what I mean by 'being one with the *dao*'. This is my attempt at an explanation:

I am continually fascinated by the way in which slowly and attentively practising my Taiji form creates this deep calmness and feeling of connection within me.

Practising this form takes me between 20 and 50 minutes. Sometimes, I do two or three forms one after another. It really feels as if I were flowing with an old great river. I move through time and space but within, it's as if I were sitting on a raft, moving yet motionless; as if I were floating on a slow, ancient stream. My thoughts calm down or even come to a halt entirely. Over time, this practice gives rise to tranquillity and a sense of deep connection. The separation between outside and inside appears to dissolve. Finally, a space emerges, a 'something' beyond time and space. There, everything is good just the way it is. It feels truly wonderful.

I had my first experience of this tranquillity and flowing within me and in the world not while practising forms but during standing meditation. I was not moving at all. This practice helps us calm down. We focus on what's within us, we open the body and connect it internally. We orient ourselves to our own centre, the *dantian*.

This calming of our mind is something of a requirement for us to move from the *dantian* as our starting point in further Taiji training. To practise this form with care and concentration, our mind must be still. First, there is *wuji*, a state without yin or yang, sometimes translated as 'without limit'. Some call it the primordial state or the primordial foundation. It's a state without polarity, before yin and yang. Only once yin and yang split up, Taiji emerges: continuous change.

To approach this state of *wuji* in our system, we practise standing meditation. This is why it is often recommended to do standing meditation before form practice. We need a calm mind to practise forms slowly and attentively, to notice when we deviate. To achieve this, we first become still, moving towards *wuji*. Taijiquan then emerges from that *wuji*.

Looking back, I realise that practising this meditation (in the Standing Pole) has led me to a more relaxed and thus happier life. It provided the foundation for continuing my spiritual path with the help of Taijiquan.

To this day, my Taiji practice often begins with this standing meditation, which is like a prolonged preparatory form. At some point, my mind decides to do a first movement, and this movement emerges from the *dantian*. I begin to carefully observe deviations while practising

forms. I am in a state of intense concentration and observe how my movements keep flowing back into the *dantian* and start anew. Everything flows and returns to its origin. A wonderful feeling already at the start of the form.

After some time, this leads me to an even deeper stillness. Everything becomes effortless and calm. Everything flows, as if by itself. The movements are coming from my mind yet seem to happen on their own. This stillness is soon joined by a wonderful vastness. The separation between outside and inside seems to dissolve more and more. It's an incredibly warm and comforting feeling.

I give myself more and more to this stream, this flow, with this Taiji form and in this world.

Everything is permeated by the same energy. My self steps more and more behind the form. All is flowing on its own. A magical space emerges, a 'something' that is beyond time and space. There/now, everything is good the way it is. Everything is perfect. I feel a pleasant absence of need and desire; nothing is missing. There is all-encompassing peace. Everything is beautiful and good.

Out of this feeling of oneness – of 'all being one' – a fondness for all life emerges all on its own. A fondness for all people and all beings, for the entire world. Gratefulness for being alive. 'May all beings be happy.' This wish arises within in me all by itself.

Isn't it this fondness for all living beings, this love, that can unite all spiritual, mystical, and religious paths?

I believe that these experiences of oneness are neither necessary nor the aim of spiritual practice. In them, the 'I' may not matter anymore, but afterwards, life still goes on. The 'I' returns eventually; and then it might return to wanting this or that but not that other thing, and so on – daily life with all its challenges. I return to being annoyed at the neighbours, or I worry about the political situation. Nevertheless, these experiences of oneness can be very helpful for a more relaxed and relaxed approach to everyday life.

These days, what helps me in these situations are the many hours of practice. I can return to this feeling of 'everything is permeated by everything' more and more easily and quickly. It's like a form of conditioning. If I consciously touch the roof of my mouth with my tongue, as we do it at the start of the methodical way in standing meditation or during form practice, my body immediately remembers and relaxes. My mind opens, and I feel connected to and fond of life again.

In this sense, I experience Taiji as a way of not only making these experiences of oneness possible but also integrating them into my own presence. Even better, this also leads me to act

for the world in kindness and love. The experience does not instil a desire to stop working against the inequalities in the world nor does it mean that I am content with my own, individual progress alone. On the contrary, my own progress no longer matters. A liberating feeling.

I feel very lucky to have found this Taijiquan, which has developed and evolved over the course of centuries. It keeps bringing me back to this feeling that there is a divine spark to everything after all. In this way, I feel supported in my practice by many generations and the presence of others who do the same: the Taiji community – and, in the end, the community of all of humanity.

Rediscovering this feeling of oneness within me again and again allows me to experience a hint of what we call *dao*. However, what is most important to me is what happens afterwards, what comes out of it. The action in this world, the active force of the *dao*: the *de*, often translated also as ‘meaning’ or ‘life’.

I cannot stop a single moment from happening. Everything flows and changes. Unceasingly. Everything is inseparably connected. Flow and its underlying source. Being and non-being. Whether I am able to perceive it or not, I am already, in this lifetime, inseparably connected to this original foundation. It’s Heaven on Earth, in a way. A wonderful feeling of happiness. I wish it for everyone.

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