

## **THE PLAY WITHIN THE PLAY**

From the 2005 T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Conference, Albuquerque, NM

by Justin Stone

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Some time ago, the committee that's running this wonderful affair we're having said to me, "We want you to give a spiritual talk." I said, "I don't want to give a spiritual talk." I gave them two reasons. The first is that I'm not a preacher and I don't want to preach to you. T'ai Chi Chih is doing enough preaching to you. When you say, "spiritual," people immediately think of a church, doctrine, and dogma. They never stop to think: If all the churches in the world had the truth, they'd all be in agreement. Instead, they're fighting. They're not in agreement. Obviously, there can't be that many different truths.

The second reason I didn't want to give a spiritual talk is a deeper one. I've been meditating since 1954, including a spell with the yogis in the mountains of India and at Zen temples in Japan. (Carmen [Brocklehurst] was at one of them). During that time, certain things were revealed to me from time to time.

Years ago, it was revealed to me, "Things are as they have always been." I was puzzled by that for many years. If "things are as they've always been" that means there's been no change in what appears to be change in our world.

A few months ago, I had another major revelation, although I don't like to call it a revelation. When I say it was "revealed to me," it has nothing to do with intellect at all. It has nothing to do with examining whether it's true or not because the facts were so outlandish. It was very hard to assimilate them. They answered the question of what was meant by, "things are as they've always been." I thought, "What am I supposed to do with this information?" The only person who has any record of it is Sister Antonia [Cooper], and she's agreed not to reveal it until after I'm no longer here.

I said, "There's no sense in giving a spiritual talk because people won't understand, and they're not really interested. They're not interested because it won't affect their everyday life." It's not going to help you get a better job, or make more money, or stuff like that. But Ann [Rutherford], the head of the T'ai Chi Chih Center here in Albuquerque, wrote me a letter in which she said, "There may be a few people there who want to know truth." I'd

run across many of them in the [East] who'd given up their normal lives.

I just told two old friends here about one of them, a young fellow named Robert. He was staying at a Zen place downtown, and he wasn't getting what he was looking for. He asked to come see me. He said he was leaving for Seattle to see his parents. I realize now that meant he would disappear from sight. We had a long talk.

His life was somewhat parallel to mine as far as music goes, the stock market, various other things, and India. He'd reached the point where he had what everybody was looking for. He had it made. He was the head of a brokerage firm in Los Angeles; he had a very good salary. Being an attractive young man in Hollywood, he got an awful lot of invitations. He drove a beautiful car. Anybody would say, "What else do you want? You've got everything!" But none of it mattered to him. He was on a quest for truth.

I've met quite a few people traveling in the Orient who've given up *everything* in life because they had to know truth. I don't mean the "truth" of dogma when you're told, "This is so, and that is so, and you should believe it." If you haven't experienced it, you believe it because you're told to believe it.

After this last revelation, which I discussed with Carmen at some length, I said, "What am I supposed to do with it?" It makes it seem as though your situation in life is that of a *play within a play*. If you've ever seen a play that attempts to put on a play for the audience within the big play, then you know what I mean by *the play within the play*.

You could also say that is so when you go to the movies. You see a good picture; there's a screen and on it they show a view of life; and you become emotionally involved in it. Some people cry and react to it. But when the movie is over and they turn on the lights, what is left? A screen. The screen was there all the time, and the only real thing was the screen. The whole picture was only make-believe, a fantasy. This will give you an idea of what I mean by a *play within a play*.

Now, how many of you are interested in truth? I don't know. The people who come to the meditation sessions I have *are* interested, and if they keep on faithfully practicing their meditation, they will come to know truth for themselves.

Judging by our senses, we live in the world, in a universe that appears to be huge. And we learn all sorts of theories about how it

was created. But they're just theories. Listeners are astounded when you tell them what some of us who've meditated for a long time (over 50 years) realize: This is not the only universe. There are countless universes. Their conception is one of a superhuman who runs a big computer, taking care of all their demands, all the prayers of this universe. But what if there are a million universes? Very few, and I think very few of you (who have formed the best group I've ever seen at a teachers' conference), are interested in this subject.

I'm not here because I *want* to speak. I'm here because of the letter from Ann.

It was made plain to me that the sense of having an individual life is due to Time. Those of you who've studied [Eastern] teaching know the word *Maya*. *Maya* is the creator of illusion. The idea that Time is *Maya*, I've never heard of it. I've never read it. I've never even thought about it. The sense of Time gives you the sense of individuality. So this explained the meaning of "things are as they've always been." Time is an illusion; time brings about the illusion. Now ... how is this going to help get you a better job or make more money? It's not going to help you at all. To most of you, it has no meaning.

But Ann had written that, "There may be four or five there who want to hear what you've experienced." But how much I should talk about is a big question. Why was any of this revealed to me? What am I supposed to do with it? I think eventually I'll know.

The Chinese have a phrase -- the "Un-carved Block." According to what I understand, the Un-carved Block has never been carved. Adam and Eve never left the Garden of Eden. I began to realize, from the studies when I was interested in Zen, that Zuigan was a great Zen teacher. After he had his enlightenment, he found two things. One, he no longer had any interest in Zuigan. The ego had disappeared. The ego, of course, is a big hindrance. He also, immediately after he went to the latrine, looked out the window, and saw birds flying as he was relieving himself, and he said, "Nothing was moving." It seems pretty obvious -- he had gone beyond time. His enlightenment experience had taken him beyond time. I hear people use this expression "enlightenment" very loosely. It's not some intellectual exercise or mathematical problem, where you get the answer or something.

The meditation we do (it's called *turiya*, that's my name for it) is the fourth state of consciousness. There is waking, sleeping, dreaming, all ordinary states of consciousness, all of which,

according to this, are an illusion. The fourth state of consciousness, which is spoken of in the East, is *turiya*. There's no thought when you're in the *turiya* state. You can't remember what may have happened in that state because there's no thought. So there can't be any memory.

I've said to the meditation group, "When I taught meditation in India, people told me it takes twenty or twenty-five years to reach that state." The people who've joined the meditation group (and I don't think they're there by accident) have talked to me about their experiences [that have come relatively quickly]. I've said, "If I wanted to give you a gift, the greatest gift that I could give you is the touch of Reality, to have you enter the state of Reality, such as Zuigan had done, and you will come to know these things." You won't think them out; they have nothing to do with thinking. You will come to know bits of truth, little by little. You will come (as I and many of the yogis I have meditated with) to visit these other universes. They're not somewhere here or there or somewhere way out in the distance. They are a different vibration. If you do work to raise your vibration, you will experience these things.

The idea of Divinity is a very difficult one because, if things are as they've always been, then there's been no creation. What would that do to Church teaching, which is all about creation?

We have to think in terms of a *play within a play*. Perhaps the only person I've known who has realized this, aside from those in India, is my friend Lynette. (Carmen met her once; she's a very remarkable lady -- very joyful, very spiritual). I told her one time, "You're lucky to have two daughters like yours, who come around with your grandchildren." She said, "I don't think of it that way. There are two nice girls around the house." She didn't have any sense of possession at all. Lynette would say to people, "Are we talking about the world of people, or are we talking about the truth, which is that there's only one thing going on?" Many other teachers, of course, have said that -- Ramana Maharshi and others.

You appear to be leading an individual life. But that's because you're thinking from an individual standpoint. To know Truth, you must think from the universal standpoint. All the details from your life don't matter. You're not going to know Truth any other way. You can go to church every day and pray, and it won't do you any good at all.

I first had an experience in India that continued, after meditation, for two years. I had an experience that completely puzzled me. I met a great teacher, Ramurti Mishra, who was also a

fine writer and a medical doctor. He was the only medical man I've ever met who was both a holy man and a doctor. He asked, "Have you had any experiences?" I said, "There's one that really puzzles me. In it, I would see a table, and on the table was a head, just a head of the Buddha in profile. Then flames would come which completely burned it away, and then there would be nothing. Then I would see a table with a head on it. There, in profile, was my own head. Then the flame would come along, envelop it, and take it away, and then there was nothing." He said, "Don't you understand what it means?" I said, "I don't have the slightest idea what it means!" He said, "It means universal thought, universal viewpoint, is overtaking the individual viewpoint." From that time on, I never had that experience again.

This is what I'm talking about. How many people can envision things from the universal viewpoint? Some concepts that they've been taught in childhood, in school, in church, are childish. One teacher said to me once, "If a dog thought about divinity, he'd think of a super-dog. That's all the individual does, look from an individual standpoint.

Other things revealed to me are hard to come by, just considering Time as the great illusion. Other people doing various disciplines are looking to get beyond Time. Very few accomplish it. They don't accomplish it because they are starting out with certain conceptions.

Let me bring it back down to *the play within the play*. What you're living, what your senses are revealing, is *the play within the play*. In the original play, the vast play, where there is no change, it's hard to conceive (although many teachers have spoken about it). There's been no beginning and there'll be no ending. It's hard to picture. The human mind can't believe that something doesn't have a beginning, or something doesn't have an ending. The *play within the play* is the world you're familiar with.

When Lynette said, "There's only one thing going on," she was talking about the big play, the great play. Only one thing *is* going on. But we see many things going on every minute. Someone asked me, "Will T'ai Chi Chih help me see these truths?" I said, "Yes, T'ai Chi Chih has the ability (depending on how serious you are, how much you do, and how well you do it) to do many things.

Some of us have had experiences that convinced us of the efficacy of T'ai Chi Chih. I had two experiences. I was with Victor [Berg] and I took a bad fall in the desert; I fell on concrete. At my age, when people fall, they break a hip and suffer for the rest of

their lives. I had a bad bruise on my arm and a bad bruise on my hip, but I was able to do my share of the driving for the rest of the day. A doctor friend, who saw an x-ray, explained to me why I hadn't broken both bones. He said, "You have the bones of a thirty year old man." I'm in my eighties, late eighties. Why would I have the bones of a thirty-year-old man? This is just one of the things that can happen with T'ai Chi Chih. I think most of you have had experiences of one sort or another like that.

I don't know whether to reveal this or not, but about a month and a half ago, Connie [Hyde's] husband [a physician] told me, "You've had a minor stroke." I've always been healthy, active, and it was a surprise to me. There were two things I could then do. I could sit there and feel sorry for myself, and wait for it to happen again. Or I could keep on with my regular schedule. I kept doing T'ai Chi Chih twice a day, meditating, and meeting with the teacher practice group at the T'ai Chi Chih Center on Tuesdays. Jim [Houle, the doctor] said, "It's going to take you three or four months to recuperate." But I never interrupted my schedule. What is this due to? T'ai Chi Chih practice. Also, it's due to knowing certain things.

In *the play within the play* (I don't want to appear to be preaching -- that's the big difficulty here), in your ordinary life, it's very easy to have a good life. One word tells you how: Gratitude. If you live with gratitude and express the gratitude, you can't be unhappy. You can't be unhappy and feel gratitude. The two don't go together. I say (many times during the day) what I'm grateful for. True gratitude doesn't come from getting a new car, or from when something good has happened. That lasts two or three days before it wears off. True gratitude and bliss are synonymous. I would say from my experience: If you're looking for a good life, be grateful. Particularly, the people here should be grateful. Complainers are very unhappy people. They may enjoy complaining, but....!

You see, it's hard to know how to talk about this because, one, T'ai Chi Chih is involved; two, there are experiences which I don't want to go into too deeply; and three, when you sit up here talking about "spiritual matters," it's preaching. I don't know why anyone would want to preach to anyone else. I believe that teachers who've taught you T'ai Chi Chih have helped your lives very greatly. Do you agree? If you're doing T'ai Chi Chih and getting the benefits of it, it's not hard to be grateful. That's the secret of a

happy life. That's as much as I'm going to talk about having to do with experiences.

The illusion we live in is due to Time. Many teachers have said over and over again that Time is a concept. It's hard to imagine living in our ordinary world without Time. Some of us find it very difficult to live with Time. Everywhere we go, we're always late. There were two people, a T'ai Chi Chih teacher and a psychologist (in Carmel, California, where I used to live), who were always late for appointments. I invited them to a luncheon and said, "I'm going to tell you exactly why you're always late. You think your time is more important than everybody else's time." They were never late again. The person who is always late expects *you* to be there. So they expect something from you that you can't expect from them.

Along those lines, many people live with fantasy. They imagine things happen for reasons that have no relation to what we call reality. (Of course, that's not Reality.)

It's hard to know how to continue because there are so many things involved here... Basically, I'm interested in the welfare of each person who is here. Whether you understand truth or not, I don't think it's going to affect your life, although it may affect future lives. We often see the word *TEH* used in connection with T'ai Chi Chih. It refers to sincerity. Sincerity requires truth, not fantasy, but truth.

Have I talked long enough? I think I've given these people something to think about. I'll get back to the world within the world now.

I want to thank very much the Committee that planned and carried out this very fine conference. Years ago I kidded Rhonda [St. Martin], who headed the Conference and planned it. She's the one who's planned the food for this one. After the conference and hubbub was over, I spoke to her and said, "What's the big deal? You get a key, you unlock the door, you go in and do T'ai Chi Chih, you eat dinner, you go up to your room, and you go to sleep." She said, "That's right, dear, there's not much to it." There's an awful lot to it.

Here's a good example of what can happen with T'ai Chi Chih. My good friend Liz Humphrey, who is part of our meditation group, is here doing T'ai Chi Chih with you. She meditates; she looks very healthy. She recently had a brain operation. You'd expect that she would lie around for a long time. But she was up in a couple of days doing T'ai Chi Chih. When she was told certain

things by the doctor, I told her, “Maybe a power higher than the doctor will decide your future.” I know meditating has helped her. You can’t imagine her wonderful attitude. (I haven’t told you the whole story.) T’ai Chi Chih done daily is a tremendous boost and should give you a longer life, for one thing.

There are many experiments going on now to study the effects of T’ai Chi Chih. And I asked Roberta Taggart [who was spearheading the efforts at UCLA], “Are the people in the studies doing T’ai Chi Chih correctly, and are they practicing every day?” If the doctor gives you medicine, it doesn’t any good if you don’t take it.

The yogis in India couldn’t talk to me because I couldn’t speak their languages. (There are 108 languages in India.) But I saw and heard many unusual things. I’d heard of one scientific experiment in particular. They had put one very advanced yogi in a coffin and put him under water. He was there for a week. Any scientist will tell you it’s impossible to survive that. But when they got him out (it took a while for him to come back to normal consciousness) he was perfectly fine. That seems impossible; in this universe of ours, you have to have breath. Many other things are hard to explain too.

I don’t expect you to go home and start worrying about what I’ve said. It’s not part of your life in the world within the world, that is, *the play within the play*. But a few of you want to know the truth, and it’s all important. People say, “Why was I born?” Were you born?

Nisargadatta, the great Indian sage who died in the 1960s said, “You owe your life to the *Prana*.” *Prana* is Sanskrit for *chi*. You owe your life to the *chi*. When your *chi* leaves your body, you’re no longer conscious. You’re dead. Nisargadatta said, “If you can become familiar with the *chi*, it will help you greatly in your death.” Some people have a lot of pain when they die. He said, “Everything that you have and everything you are is because of the *chi*.” He said, “I’d like you to know it better, but I don’t know of any way you can do it.” That was before T’ai Chi Chih -- but not too much before, because T’ai Chi Chih started in 1974.

Practically all the great teachers have said there is a life force. Most people don’t know it, or they don’t know what to do with it. You do though. So you have a big advantage and it will affect your life, your health, and the length of your life. Everybody here looks pretty healthy to me, including Liz.

I don’t know what more to tell you without seeming to preach. Is there something that I said that you doubt? When we’re together

sometime, I'll go over it with you, or you can get it from Sister Antonia [Cooper]. Eventually it will be revealed to me why this came to me.

Teachers of *the play within a play* say that each person is born for a purpose and that purpose will be carried out. Perhaps my purpose is T'ai Chi Chih. T'ai Chi Chih is spreading very rapidly through the world. There'll be a teacher training in Italy early next year. There are people here from quite a few foreign places. I look around and see how many people are here? Imagine when we get up to 500?

I do want to compliment the people who are here. I was watching you do T'ai Chi Chih yesterday in practice. Most of you are doing it very well. It's very important to do it properly to get the benefits of it. That's why I gave you the reminders yesterday morning. You have to do it properly to get the benefits. It's not hard. Move correctly and the rest will take care of itself.

I think I've used up enough time. I'll say that I wish the very best to all of you. If you disagree with what I've said, that's your privilege. Thank you.

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