

The following interview to Oscar Muñoz Galeano was published in the Dutch magazine online: „BewustZijn Online”, in the month of July 2015

See the original interview in Dutch here:

<http://bewustzijnonline.nl/www.bewustzijnonline.nl/interview.html>

Qigong and Taiji, awareness exercises

Bewustzijn Online met with Oscar Munoz in Amsterdam, where he lives and has his "Taijiquan and Qigong Centre".

In addition to teaching at his Center in Amsterdam Oscar is also invited in other European countries and is a guest lecturer at the University of Antioquia in Colombia. We are primarily curious about the difference between Taijiquan and Qigong.

Oscar: Tai Chi chuan is also a form of Qigong, Qigong has a history of five thousand years. Taiji is more recent, emerged around the year 1600, and is also a martial art. Qigong can be seen as exercises to understand your energy, your Qi, balance it and make it flow freely throughout your body. ' Qi ' means ' internal power ' and ' gong ' stands for practice. The word ' Qigong ' can best be understood as ' cultivating energy '. ' Taiji ' stands for the yin-yang sign and ' quan ' means ' fist '. Taijiquan also brings about a harmonious integration of body and mind. ,

Three basic energies

"There are three qualities that form us as human beings known as the „three treasures”, three primary energies Jing, Qi and Shen. The first (Jing) is the basic energy - the physical body- that must be supplied with food. The second (Qi), life force or internal energy expressed in the physical heat, and that also needs to be fed with the breath. Finally, the spiritual energy (Shen), to this belong the concentration, the intention and the attention. Of the three energies, the Jing is the most dense, its essence lies in the sexual energy. Qi is more refined, and the most subtle energy is the Shen. The conscious practice of Qigong helps you to integrate these three powers. With progress in practice you can feel the flow of Qi throughout the body. Which means to be healthy, just as we preferably would like to function as human beings.

There are several forms of Qigong, all of them serve to improve the flow of energy (Qi) through the whole body. The movements are carried out in such a way that the energy is not blocked. We first take the body posture, make it open to allow the energy to be released and to flow, but the intent is there first, because each act is intended from the mind. The order is then: first the intention- Shen- then the Qi follows and eventually the form is expressed with the physical body (Jing). The body shows precisely the changes of energy."

Balance

"How often is not taught to children: shoulders back, chest forward, stomach in? Maybe that's very common, but in this way the gravity is being completely ignored. Your lower back is hollow and other parts of the body will be strained and blocked. You take this posture over a long period of time, then in the long run, problems will arise with your diaphragm and therefore respiratory issues. The lower part of the back hardens, there are the kidneys, if they do not have the space, its performance will stunt without a doubt. The back pain, organic problems and the breathing - everything is interconnected. Many people who come to my lessons and workshops are seeking to relieve their chronic back pain."

Gravity

"The first thing I teach them is to feel and obey gravity. That is something very concrete. We know that we stand, connected to the Earth, but this has mainly become a theoretical concept. The majority of the people do not feel their body correctly. We should know the proper amount of force that is needed to simply stand up, be aware that we are always connected to Earth with gravity". Oscar stands up, with his knees slightly bent. "This is the basic position. Initially, everyone does it wrong, after all, our muscles are not trained in the correct position, and if you're inexperienced, the muscles of the thighs will soon begin to hurt and 'burn'. During my classes I do a warm-up and I teach my students to stay around three minutes standing in this position. Initially, the position needs much correction. It is a form of meditation, after some time you come into another sense of energy. Eventually, you get to experience standing without tension in legs or feet, since you're already getting the power directly from your Center."

Opening of the channels

"Qigong is an effective way to open up the channels of Qi, this gives your meditation a deeper quality. In fact, both the Taiji and Qigong are also meditation techniques. If one sits to meditate without prior preparation, it won't be so easy to get the Qi to flow freely, then struggling with the posture is unavoidable. You feel pain and discomfort throughout the body and that state of concentration and deep tranquility, will not be achieved". Oscar shows how a series of exercises of Qigong can make the Qi energy flow in all directions of the body and through the organs. "After these exercises the meditation will feel completely different. Everything is relaxed, open and flexible. Qi is our real strength, at first we can't really understand or even imagine it. It is a direct experience that one has to feel, to experience. You can write many books on the subject, but none come even close to that feeling."

Natural breathing

"Breathing is also an interesting topic. We use the natural breathing in Qigong, but this naturalness needs to be learned again. Or rather to rediscover it. A two-year-old child breathes as it should be, this is the natural breathing. The older you get, the less deep the breath gets and eventually it becomes very shallow. So we must learn again to use all the capacity of the lungs, in such a way that the diaphragm moves up and down. This creates space for the lungs and thus gets more oxygen. The mastering of this gives a great feeling of well-being."

Transformation

"The Taiji and Qigong practice makes you aware of the posture and breathing. It is a process of transformation of something that you've done your whole life in a different way. This transformation is only achieved in a gradual and systematic way. Only this way you make it your own achievement, you get it recorded on your 'hard disk', through constant practice. Excuses for not practicing won't help you at all, on the contrary, you won't be able to change the old "program". At the beginning it is a real challenge, sometimes you must strive to maintain continuity, even if you feel a little sick. The Taiji and Qigong exercises are gentle and when energy starts to flow free through the body, you get that distinct and pleasant feeling. In my experience the greatest difficulty for the majority of the people is to make the decision: I do this training every day. There is where you start, in your mind, when you decide to do so. This also has to be done cautiously, training daily and without exceeding certain limits of the body, to not block the flow of Qi."

Constant change

"Because we are always in constant change, every day we need to find balance again. You do that by getting in touch with yourself, with your Centre. In such a way to maintain the Qi as much as possible in balance. 'How' depends on the moment, emotionally or in terms of the concentration one does not feel the same every day. Every day again we must try to find harmony... There is no such a thing as perfect balance, one aims to get it and try to go deeper in one's efforts. It is a process. 100% does not exist, 80% is already very far, in the beginning it is possible that you reach a 10%. Qigong and Taiji are pure exercising in awareness."

Text in Dutch: Simone Thomasse
Translation to English: Oscar Muñoz Galeano
www.taijicentre.nl