

Beyond The Brain: The Spiritual Aspect of TCC

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Brain science continues to develop research that indicates that the practice of mindfulness-based meditation practices changes the brain in significant ways. It is important to recognize that T'ai Chi Chih is a mindfulness moving meditation. Therefore this research provides scientific evidence of the power and value of this practice.

In my presentation at the Boulder conference a few years ago I presented specific brain research led by Dr. Richard Davidson that indicated that there are four constituents that have been investigated scientifically that are known to be influenced by brain plasticity (the ability of the brain to change in relationship to experiences).

The four constituents are attention, positive outlook, resilience, and generosity. Research shows that when people practice various forms of mindfulness practices that these areas of the brain change in a positive direction. In a Mind and Life meeting with the Dalai Lama, Dr. Davidson asked the Dalai Lama if there is an interactive process between the subtle energy body (*Chi*) and the physical body. After a pause the Dalai Lama said that with the practice of certain meditative and other types of energy practices that the subtle body is activated and the physical body is influenced by the flow.

The idea that the *Chi* is activated, and the flow of the *Chi* increased by mindfulness practices, is a well-known aspect of the various wisdom teachings and it is now being investigated and verified by scientific findings.

When I considered how to approach presenting the spiritual aspects of T'ai Chi Chih it occurred to me to find someone living a spiritual life that could speak about T'ai Chi Chih. In this part of the presentation I presented a 20-minute video of an interview I did recently with Sister Antonia Cooper who has served as the guide for T'ai Chi Chih. Here are some of the gems she shared:

"Human beings are spiritual beings." "T'ai Chi Chih gives us a way to get through the hurts of life." "When we find something worthwhile, the good news is we can share it." "The more we can share T'ai Chi Chih the more chances everybody has to come upon a different level of being who they were meant to be." "Be true to your inner Self, your growth in certainty, knowing who and what you are, which is sincerity, *teh*, the process of honesty." "The energy goes out. It is not just the person you're with, but it effects the consciousness of the world, that energy and who you are, will not only raise that consciousness for yourself, it will for others, for the world, and for a much better future."

Sister Antonia also shared about how when she was going through a difficult period, she discovered T'ai Chi Chih and that it became part of her daily practice. She shared

that she was having difficulty meditating and that she stopped and did a T'ai Chi Chih practice and it opened up a vortex that moved through her and immediately brought peace. After that she knew this was something she had to share.

Sister Antonia was serving in a leadership role in her order in Germany so she could not attend the conference this year. I was so happy to be able to make it possible for her to share in my presentation. When I did the interview with her, she gave me and all of the other participants in the retreat a Reiki treatment in which she asked God to heal us. This is the expression of a spiritual being.

Thank you to sister Antonia Cooper for her love and wisdom and for the leadership she has given to T'ai Chi Chih and the contribution she is to the world.

For me spirituality is a matter of discovering the truth of who we are and recognizing the world as an opportunity to learn and love. My T'ai Chi Chih practice has clearly opened my mind and energized the realization of my true nature. I recently published a book that summarizes the core teachings that Justin Stone spoke about in the talks he gave that are available in pamphlets. The book is called "Dying To Live" and it is my expression of the Advaita Vedanta teachings in contemporary psychological terms. I hope many of the teachers read it and see how the practice of T'ai Chi Chih serves, as Justin said, to accelerate spiritual evolution.