



Notes from Justin

I had a good friend who asked me, many years ago, "Perhaps we should all belong to the Church of Rome?" I asked him why, and he answered that it had dogma, doctrine, tradition and extensive ritual. I asked him if he was more interested in ritual than in finding out "who" and "what" he was. Surprised, he asked, "How do you do that?" I answered that it was the purpose of Zen practice, and also of Yoga. It gave him something to think about. Ritual makes us feel secure in sharing some action with others, it does not help us to know ourselves in the largest sense.

There are some lazy people who do not want to take the trouble to do something properly and therefore invent rationalizations for not making the effort, usually using generalities such as "love," "freedom," etc., which are meaningless unless lived.

When I was learning Japanese, a man from Japan said to me, "If you are going to speak the language, learn to speak it properly." This made a big impression on me. If you are going to become a doctor, you must pass medical exams and learn to do the procedures correctly. If you want to play a Mozart sonata, or sing a Mozart opera, I suggest you follow the marks that Mozart wrote. People will differ in the way they sound because of the difference in capabilities, but they will all be playing or singing the notes Mozart wrote. I have never heard of an undisciplined opera singer or a lazy concert pianist. Similarly, if you want to teach T'ai Chi Chih, you must first do it correctly yourself or it becomes a sham. Teh — inner sincerity — demands that you practice what you preach. The Japanese monk, Senzaki, said, "It is better to discipline ourselves than to have life do it for us." Those who drift aimlessly might take note of this remark.

At a recent T'ai Chi Chih meeting at the Center, I mentioned several sentences to give insight into the truth of T'ai Chi Chih and to motivate those who practice it. I was asked to make these available to readers. Of course, they could become whole paragraphs; they are from ancient Chinese writings, as follows:

"It is Chi that determines human mental and physical conditions. The way in which Chi is expressed is commonly known as the nature of things."

"Chi is the origin of our life energy: in other words, our life is determined by our Chi."

"Chi is not an element of any kind, but rather it is the origin of everything."

"Since Chi is the ultimate energy from which the universe and the essence of all existence is derived, Chi is immune from the limitations of time and space."

Justin Stow

Reprinted from the March 1997 News

