

# WHEN TWO MASTERS MEET

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Amongst students of the School of T'ai Chi Chuan questions are often asked about the relationship between T'ai Chi and Arica. **Roger Bason** reviews the origin of this connection and looks at how the two schools mutually enrich each other.

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## The Beginning

What happens when two Masters meet? From my experience, one answer is Unity.

This was certainly the result of the meeting of T'ai Chi Grand Master Prof. Cheng Man-Ch'ing with mystic, philosopher and teaching master Oscar Ichazo. Ichazo is director and developer of the Arica Way, a spiritual school established in 1970.

Patrick Watson, who was a student under Prof. Cheng for nine years and continues to study with Oscar Ichazo, arranged their first meeting. Oscar Ichazo related a story of this encounter during a lecture sponsored by the School of T'ai Chi Chuan, at Hampshire College in 1979. He said:

'This first visit really amazed me. Professor Cheng was taking pulses at the T'ai Chi Association at Shr Jung. He looked up and I thought the first thing he would say might be "Hello". He didn't say that. He said immediately, "I am not afraid of anything!" For me it was not only amazing, but it was a key point, in this sense: I am in front of a real master. A master in that he has gone beyond any stress and is a manifestation of all the cosmic laws themselves. There are really no contradictions. How can the master be afraid of nothing? Everything outside is a projection of himself. How can he be afraid of nothing? . And it means also that his behavior was decisive, that he can give an answer to any situation that may be.'<sup>1</sup>

He goes on to describe the peacefulness he observed in Prof. Cheng at that first meeting and comments on his power of concentration when taking pulses and focusing on a task.

He related another early encounter:

'...I remember the strange and strong impression I got the first time he shook my hand. This was uncommon since it was not his custom to shake hands for greeting; instead he would salute, closing his



hands in the traditional symbol of Yin Yang, but eventually he would shake hands, when he actually wanted to transmit instruction. His hand, once you shook it, would startle you because of the strange and impossible double condition of softness and inhuman hardness at the same time. I remember my first impression was that I grasped a hand of marble, something so smooth and hard that it was impossible for me to scratch or damage it in any way.

'Another impression was that it was so uncommonly heavy and strong. He gave me the hand in a totally relaxed fashion, but for an instant it felt, in my hand, like a piece of marble, but as heavy as metal.

Still another impression was that it was charged with tremendous power; in fact, with almost an unnoticeable movement, he transmitted to my hand and arm a shock of energy that I felt through all my body in a way that I can only compare to an electrical discharge. The difference was that it didn't have the mordant bite of electricity; instead this energy stayed within me as a powerful warmth for many hours following....'<sup>2</sup>

Such was the beginning of a deep and rewarding friendship between Oscar Ichazo and Prof. Cheng. Patrick Watson refers to the arranging of this meeting as one of the highlights of his life. Oscar referred to his relationship with Prof. Cheng on numerous occasions in lectures and in his writings in the years following the Professor's death in 1975.

In that year Patrick Watson, as a senior student of Prof. Cheng with permission to teach, emerged with a clear vision of the mission of the School of T'ai Chi Chuan Inc. In 1975 he clarified the basic teaching format of STCC, the levels of the School, the apprentice program and the teaching methods.

Since then the School of T'ai Chi Chuan has grown from humble beginnings to become one of the world's largest T'ai Chi teaching schools.

### The Mission of STCC

The nature of a path, organization, or school is often disclosed in its purpose, or mission and in this sense the mission of the T'ai Chi and Arica schools are closely related. It can be said that STCC is really a school within a school, distinct but completely consistent with the objectives of the Arica Way. Both the Arica School and the School of T'ai Chi Chuan

embody objective and true traditions for the health and benefit of humanity.

There is a unity in the goals of the two schools which is based on the depth of understanding and friendship of two enlightened Masters, the nature of the path, as well as the unity of mission as perceived and carried out by Patrick Watson and STCC.

Patrick Watson has presented the mission of STCC as threefold:

- To complete the mission of Prof. Cheng to introduce and spread the healing benefits of T'ai Chi Chuan to the world.
- To introduce the Arica work to the general public through the vehicle of STCC programs, field offices, certified staff, facilities, and public trainings.
- To teach T'ai Chi Chuan with all its health benefits and discipline to Aricans.

### The Arica Mission

Oscar Ichazo has described the essence of Arica in this way: 'Arica is a mystical school, a school for self realization. It opens the possibility for us to evolve to a degree where human relations become a different instrument for achievement of our natural internal self in complete maturity...'

In the Arica Way we see the school as a complete system for the clarification of consciousness and enlightenment and as a social unit that supports the individual on the path, and which also seeks to impact on society at large. Spiritual work done for the benefit of all humanity immediately changes the quality of life of the individual.

The goal of the individual in the Arica school is to achieve the state of void.

The goal for the school as a whole is to accomplish metasociety, or a society which seeks to achieve unity based on an understanding of the internal laws of the human psyche.

Oscar Ichazo explains that metasociety means a transcendental society in which one is not living for the individual, but for humanity as a whole:

'Metasociety really starts when we become aware that our internal possibilities are much better than our external ones. The external ones have always led us to suffering—craving, compromise, loss of freedom, and loss of self in all possible ways.

'The worst way of losing our self is believing that we are masters of our own world. That is not so. The

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laws are the masters of our lives and we can only deal with our lives when we know the laws. It is said by all traditions that at the end of time these negative forces (movement and behavior in contradiction to these objective laws - authors note), the ego forces, are going to be very strong.'<sup>4</sup>

## T'ai Chi as a Way to Unity

The foremost gift of the school is the clear teaching of T'ai Chi Chuan, a jewel of Chinese culture, which is presented as a way of unity achieved through the traditional path of the martial arts.

Our resources for developing unity as individuals include the T'ai Chi Form work, Sword work and Push Hands, allied with the meditations, group work, tunings, and daily ritual of the Arica School.

To achieve unity within our community we use the *Teamwork, Cooperation & Interaction* and *The Couple for Evolution* trainings of the Arica School, and through participation in apprentice programs, group trainings, and winter and summer intensives.

Unity with society is achieved through the rich diversity of our students, teaching teams, theatre presentations, participation in social events, and the sponsoring of cultural and educational programs such as the *Arica Line of the School Trainings, T'ai Chi for the Elderly—the Eight Ways of T'ai Chi Chuan, Tibetan Medicine, Traditional Chinese Acupuncture, Hawaiian Hula, Hawaiian Swimming, and Native American* cultural programs.

The School of T'ai Chi Chuan interacts throughout the world in many nations and cultures in a dynamic way to present an enlightened approach to social ills, discord and stress.

## The Arica Way

Oscar Ichazo has clearly stated in recent writings that the mission of the Arica Way is achieved through the four lines of the Arica school, which are the *Daily Routine, Line of the School Trainings, The Arica Velocity Method for Sudden Enlightenment, and Arica Trialectics*.

The Arica Daily routine consists of work performed as everyday support work. Ichazo describes this element as 'fundamental' and as a 'vessel that contains all the daily spiritual nourishment we need'. This work includes both individual meditations and exercise and also introductory level work, such as the *Octagon, the Zhikr, Tunings, and the Violet Door Meditation*, among others.

Oscar outlines the Arica system as follows:

'And so, this first line could be considered as the bone and marrow of the body of the School, that is, the support and root for its life as a social organism. All the routines and exercises of this line of Arica are to be published under the title of *The Arica Way*.

The second line is formed by the nine levels of spiritual transformation, composed of the *Levels of Self-formation, Self-actualization, and Self-realization*. This is a way of internal transformation, and it can be compared to the viscera of an organism and the way in which an organism is nourished for its own growth and development. This line is presented in the Arica system of self-transformation and is presently being published by the Arica Institute.

The third line is the Arica Way of instant realization or sudden enlightenment which we call the Arica Velocity Method, and will be published under the title of *Arica Velocity Method: The Way of Sudden Enlightenment*. This way is a reference to the integrator of life itself as a method of realization and can be compared to the vital circulation of blood in an organism.

The fourth line is formed by Arica *Trialectics*, or integral logic, philosophy, psychology, theology, and doctrines of ethics and values. This can be compared to the central nervous system and the tendons and muscles, which move the organism. This is to say, this line gives the Arica view of the world in its organic development to the global society known in Arica as metasociety. This line will be published under the name: *Arica: From Society to Metasociety*.'<sup>5</sup>

## Comparisons

It is said that the best way to really learn something is to teach it to others. This is an essential characteristic of STCC: that it is a school which teaches teachers, and that the embodiment of the art is really completed across the teaching process in the school. It also reflects the unique talents of the teaching master of the school, as Patrick Watson is a Sifu, or teacher of teachers.

The process of teaching as learning highlights a difference between Arica and STCC. In the Arica Way at this time, a student of the path can complete the Seventh Level of the Line of the School and be current with the *Monastery* (Eighth Level) without becoming involved in the teaching process.

To complete the higher levels of T'ai Chi work taught by STCC, one must be involved in the apprentice teaching process.

The School of T'ai Chi Chuan uses the Arica *Teamwork* principles clarified by Oscar Ichazo.



When sticking points in personal or group interaction develop, the karma processing techniques developed by Oscar Ichazo and the Arica Institute help in the resolution of conflicts.

The teaching methods of STCC require the embodiment, and commitment to memory, of teaching material at all levels of work. The teaching programs of the Arica School generally work from precise written indications, or audio tapes, for group presentation.

Each school has its own completely separate financial and administrative infrastructure.

Each school has nine distinct levels for the realization of the path.

The curriculum of STCC is sequential in its organization for each course and each level. The curriculum of the Arica School allows students to choose the order in which they complete the first six levels of work.

Patrick has described his view of the relationship in the following way, 'The two schools will start out together, then break apart and move along parallel tracks, then become one.'<sup>6</sup>

## Oscar Ichazo on the two Schools

The School of T'ai Chi Chuan helps sustain the Chinese traditional path of the martial arts as a vehicle for true teaching, health, and enlightenment.

I asked Oscar Ichazo about the relationship of the two schools during the question and answer part of his address to the T'ai Chi School at the Hampshire College summer program in 1979. During this lecture (available on audio tape from the Arica Institute) he addressed the topic of the martial arts. He commented on the fact that the study of many martial arts in America will give spirit to the culture and eventually produce a greater unity.

**Q.** In the T'ai Chi tradition for many years the mastery of the school stayed in one family. Can you talk about the transmission of the tradition within one family? How did it stay in one family?

**A.** There are at least two main forms of T'ai Chi. There is the Yang style of T'ai Chi and the Wu style of T'ai Chi.

T'ai Chi became secluded in one family in China where it was secluded in families. It could be a family by blood or it could be that people or disciples make a community and live as a family. The warriors in China always then used to have families normally because the arts were not for teaching everybody because they were very violent arts. That kind of art

was not to give to everybody. There was a responsibility about that.

Now fortunately for us, Master Cheng came here to America. This was amazing because the Master never goes nowhere. It is the disciples that seek the Master. Not the Master that seeks disciples.

In that sense, M.C. Cheng even went beyond tradition because he felt that it was time for it. And only a Master of the stature of Master Cheng can do that. Fortunately he did it and the tradition of the real T'ai Chi is in us (Aricans) because of the most close disciples, one of whom—beyond any doubt—was Professor Watson.<sup>7</sup> ■

<sup>1</sup> Ichazo, Oscar. Taped Lecture, *The Martial Arts* (Arica Institute. NY 1979)

<sup>2</sup> Ichazo, Oscar. *Master Level Exercise: Psychocalisthenics* (Sequoia Press, NY, 1986)

<sup>3</sup> Ichazo, Oscar. *Mentational Analysis—What is Arica? What is the substance?* (Arica Institute, NY, 1982)

<sup>4</sup> Ichazo, Oscar. *I am the Root of a New Tradition* (The Movement Newspaper. Los Angeles, Vol 6, Issue 5, May 1981)

<sup>5</sup> Ichazo, Oscar. *The School*. (The Arican. The Arica Institute. NY Winter 1990)

<sup>6</sup> Watson, Patrick. Talk to senior students. 1980.

<sup>7</sup> Ichazo, Oscar. Taped lecture, *The Martial Arts*. (The Arica Institute. NY 1979)

