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**EDITORIAL**

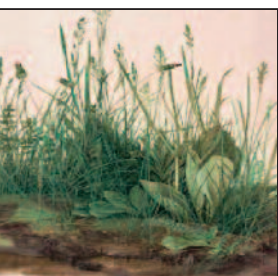
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The Association 'Dinamica® Tai Chi Chuan e Arti Associate A.S. .D.' was created by people who gathered in order to activate and share their potential through arts and psycho-physical disciplines, specifically Tai Chi Chuan. Alongside Tai Chi Chuan, it deals with other arts and activities, meditation techniques, breathing and Qi Gong, Taoist Yoga ( Tao Yin ) to name a few. The association is affiliated to the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association (IYFTCCA©). Its aim is to promote Tai Chi Chuan and to offer the opportunity to learn and practice the traditional Tai Chi Chuan following the method and teachings of Master Yang Jun, the current 5th generation lineage holder of the creator of the Yang style Tai Chi Chuan.



This autumn issue of our magazine “Dinamica” is full of various contents, starting from the interview with Grandmaster Yang Jun, world leader of the Tai chi Chuan Yang family style (in this edition you can read the former part, the latter will be published in the winter issue). Not just that: we talk about the origins of Zen Buddhism with Master Cikuan; in the section on “Nature” we deal again with the topic “Grasses”, in this case the healthy-property weeds that we have to re-evaluate; in the section named “Roots” we recall the philosophical origins of martial virtues; in the “Readings” you find an interesting reflection on emotions and the relationship between the inner world and the body.

Last but not the least you can read about the experience of first-level trainers of Tai Chi Chuan of the traditional Yang style organized for the first time by Dinamica together with AICS.

In short, here is an important issue both for all practitioners and followers of Tai Chi Chuan.

**Roberto Seghetti**

# A wonderful day with Grand Master Yang Jun in Rome

Part 1

**By Anna Siniscalco**

*Technical Director Dinamica®Tai Chi Chuan e Arty Associate asd.  
IYFTCCA Academy Instructor, Disciple of Grand Master Yang Jun*



After the international seminar in Bassano Romano, and before leaving Italy to continue his European tour, Grand Master Yang Jun, a direct descendant of the founder and world head of Yang-style Tai Chi Chuan, expressed a desire to spend a day in Rome to visit the city and be together for a while.

It is one of those days of October that only Rome can give, the warm light illuminating its beauties, the historic buildings, the squares, the monuments. We walk through the alleys of the center and talk about history and philosophy, the glorious past of empires and present history, philosophy and Tai Chi Chuan.

After a few hours of being immersed in such beauty, and a few kilometers on foot, we decide to take a lunch break. We stop at a restaurant from which you can admire the domes of the city and



the conversation continues, pleasant and full of teachings, albeit between a plate of spaghetti and a good glass of wine.

I then decide to suggest an interview to be published in our magazine. The Master enthusiastically accepts. So I throw myself into it.

**Question:** In an increasingly chaotic, hectic world, in general and for each of us, where we are even returning to talk about nuclear war, what can be (or how important can be) the contribution of Tai Chi Chuan to regain balance and humanity in the Confucius meant?

**GM Yang Jun.** We must always bear in mind that the philosophy of Taichi is about balance. Balance can be about individuals, or a group, or a nation. It depends on your point of view, and I'm not saying who is wrong or who is right, just that in Tai Chi Chuan we seek balance. In practice, this research is mainly about the technical aspect, the details, but we should not forget the general balance.

It is difficult to find a definition of balance that works for everyone or that could be extended to a whole nation, for example.

I believe that in the world there has always been this state of conflict, among religions or groups of people, because we are divided by politics and religion beliefs, and we are always searching for the best. We are conditioned by the group, or the nation to which we belong, and we lose sight of the essentials that affects all human beings: it is easy to forget it and we enter into conflict. We hurt each other. Each group is looking for what they think suits them. We believe we are looking for the best without looking around and widening our gaze, without being sufficiently open-minded.

There's a movie, Independence day. In this film you can see that, if there is a common higher goal that unites, the party or religion is no longer important. It is more important to unify, humanity. If there were an alien invasion we could work together and agree. And that's because we didn't focus on what divides. Even in the Martial Arts, the thought of being the best is often dominant and it is not possible to have a general vision that makes us feel more united. What creates this kind of problem is to see others exclusively from a competitive point of view, and in doing so an endless conflict follows.

That is why I think having and cultivating the attitude to unify both individually and in groups and nations would help everyone. Common 'common sense'. We could all benefit from it.

Tai Chi Chuan is a method of unifying. If, regardless where you are, your are trying to achieve this, Tai Chi Chuan puts us in a position to create a better balance. This is why practicing iis fundamental and essential: because it always requires mental balance. When we are able to build and propose the search and practice of such a balance, then we realise what we call application skill, which includes bringing Tai Chi Chuan into daily life, personal life, groups and nations.



*(Follows in the next issue of Dynamics)*

# The way of humanity

by **Roberto Seghetti**

*Journalist and Editor-in-Chief*



' Yan Hui asked what benevolence was. The Master said, 'By disciplining oneself and returning to the ancient ritual rules, one achieves benevolence. If for a whole day man could discipline himself by returning to the ancient ritual rules, the whole world would recognise benevolence in him. Achieving benevolence depends on ourselves, not on others!'

"Zhonggong asked what benevolence was. The Master said: "Outside the family circle, act as if you were receiving a distinguished guest and treat the people as if you were celebrating a solemn sacrifice. Do not impose on others what you do not want for yourself so that you do not arouse



resentment either in public or in private."

"Zizhang questioned Confucius on the virtue of humanity. Confucius said. 'To know how to practise the five virtues: this is benevolence.'" "May I ask what they are?" The Master said: deference, magnanimity, sincerity, diligence, and generosity. If you are deferential you will not be insulted, if you are magnanimous you will conquer multitudes, if you are sincere others will trust you, if you are diligent you will achieve many successes, and if you are generous you will be able to give orders."

"The Master said, 'Master Zeng, along my Way there is a thread that unites everything.'" Master Zeng replied: "I understand". When Master Zeng left, the others asked, "What did he mean by that?" Master Zeng replied, "The Way of the Master consists of acting with utmost loyalty and not imposing on others what one does not want for oneself; nothing else."

"Acting with utmost loyalty" (zhong) and "not imposing on others what one does not wish for oneself (shu)" are ultimately the way to follow the Way indicated by the Master.

The one who undertakes this path is not the common man, but the noble man of soul (junzi), who, with the exercise of thinking (si), studying (xue) and mastering one's own selfish impulse (keji), achieves the virtue par excellence, human benevolence (ren), a disposition of mind that reveals generosity, unconditional love and dedication to the good of others".

Confucius represents one of the philosophical sources of Chinese martial arts, along with Taoism and Buddhism. As it can be seen from the excerpts above, the model of humanity to which those who set out on the Martial Arts Path are asked to adhere comes from his teaching. Of course, in an imperfect world and among men made of flesh and blood, feelings and aspirations, interests, of loves and hates, as well as spirituality, it is a direction, however categorical. But important and pressing. In the mists of time, adherence to such an ethic was required of those who wanted to enter a martial arts school. But in real and serious schools, even today, it is required to follow the Wu De, the martial virtue, which consists in different, numerous commitments, which end up drawing, all put together, precisely the figure of the noble man Confucius talks about. Suffice to mention, among others: respect your teacher; be honest and keep your word; be loyal, just and brave, be humble and kind, don't be dishonest, mean and cruel; do not use your power to take advantage of the weak; don't be impatient but be strong, tenacious and persevere till the end.



Confucius ,Dialogues, edited by Tiziana Lippiello, pag. 132. 12.1. Einaudi 2006

Ibid. pag. 132/133. 12.2

Ibid. Pag. 209.17.6

Ibid. Pag.39. 4.15

Ibid. introduction, pag XV, XVI

# In the weeds??

By **Alberta Tomassini**<sup>1</sup> and **Elisa Brasili**



Claude Lorraine – “Landscape with David and the three heroes” – 1658 (Bardana)

This was the question in our last issue. Why then talk about spontaneous weeds again? Because weeds, or infesting plants, are certainly also spontaneous, but they have something more: in our opinion, they have an 'intelligence' of their own. High seed production, enormous adaptability, enviable genetic diversity, long and well-developed roots, the ability to occupy different environments, longevity and more.

The Stramonium (*Datura stramonium*), for example, is capable of flowering within a few days of emergence, thus favouring the maturation and dispersal of seeds in a very short time (ruderalisation).

The Vilucchio (*Convolus arvensis*) can cope with any circumstance by implementing a wide range of reproductive and regenerative techniques. Each plant produces around six hundred seeds in each reproductive cycle, which can germinate either in summer or autumn and, at worst, in the next forty years if buried deep underground. It has a system of underground stems that can spread 27 square metres in a season and vertical roots that can go down to five metres or more. New shoots can sprout from both the stems and the roots, and if you try to cut the root, a latex immediately seals the wound. Near the wound, within a few days, dormant buds are activated, growing new plants.



One might say, with Doug Larson, that 'a weed is a plant that has mastered all survival skills except that of growing in neat rows'.

And here comes the issue with man and agriculture. Weeds create problems: they compete with cultivated plants for light, water, nutrients, space; they reduce the quantity and quality of crops; they can, in some cases, produce substances that are toxic to cultivated plants, animals and humans. Just to be clear, the estimated cost of crop loss and weed control practices is roughly around USD 33 trillion in the US.

Sometimes a plant is turned into a weed because man has exterminated all the other wild plants with which it lived in balance. An example? Between '64 and '71 the USA, in order to raze entire rainforests to the ground, preventing the Vietcong from hiding, feeding or breeding animals, rained on Vietnam 12 million tonnes of Agent Orange, an herbicide, now banned by the Geneva Convention, containing dioxin and turpentine, used as a defoliant. In its place is now 'Cogon', which has taken over, occupying seventh place on the list of the world's most troublesome weeds.

So troublesome that even in the Middle Ages weeds were identified as the devil's plants. Some examples? Fetid chamomile (devil's daisy), buttercup (devil's claw), nightshade (devil's rhubarb), nettle (devil's leaf), dandelion (devil's milk pail).

Religious practices and the identification of deities capable of protecting crops from pests can also be found earlier. In the Roman tradition, religious rituals were practised and prayers were addressed to the protector gods of the fields. To prevent the invasion of thorny plants, the god Spiniensis was prayed to, and to make the weeding operation effective, the god Sarritor was invoked at sowing time.

To contain the growth of Bindweed, oleander branches were placed at the four corners of the fields, and to combat weeds, chalk shells with the image of Hercules strangling a lion were useful.

Weed control was taken more seriously by, among others, Theophrastus (a Greek philosopher and botanist who lived in 300 BC) in his *History of Plants* and his contemporary Xenophon. Oil, pitch and grease were recommended by Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.) in his *Naturalis Historia* to devitalise seeds, while Cato (234-149 B.C.) advocated the use of amurca, a bitter liquid derived from decanting oil after pressing.

But it is simple salt which has been used since ancient times as a herbicide, as some may recall from the Roman takeover of Carthage.

And writers and painters could not fail to address such a widespread problem. The power of a weed is the basis of a well-known play! Puck, the fairy king's servant, squeezes pansy juice into the eyes of sleeping characters, making them fall in love with the first creature they see when they wake up (*A Summer Night's Dream* - William



Durer "La grande zolla"



George Stubbs – “A lion devouring a horse” – 1769 (Bardana)

Shakespeare)! 'Lapland', mentioned again in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, appears under the name of burdock in 17th century landscape painting. The first images of burdock appear here and there, never in the centre, in seventeenth-century Dutch painting to become more prominent in Claude Lorrain's paintings: lower right (*Landscape with dancing figures*, 1648), lower left (*Landscape with rustic dance*, 1640), lower centre (*Landscape with Narcissus and Echo*, 1645), and then become the protagonist in 'A lion devouring a horse' (George Stubbs, 1769): under the left hoof of the white horse with its snout turned towards the lion devouring it, one can see a burdock plant with accurately portrayed leaves and veins.

If one were to ask: "But then what is a weed?", one could answer with Ralph Waldo Emerson A weed is a plant whose

good parts have not been discovered (The Later Lectures, 1843-1871).

And in introducing the other side of the weeds, in talking about their 'virtues', the burdock deserves special thanks. Its curls are a tangle of thin thorns ending in a flexible hook that makes them adhere perfectly to the fur of passing animals, not to mention their age-old use in children's games. In the 1940s, George de Mestral, a Swiss inventor, began to reflect on the adherence strength of burdock hedgehogs to his dog's fur and, in 1951, patented a locking system copied from the weed. Which one? The Velcro!

Just for starters, suffice it to say that the despised pasture weeds have better nutritional values than the forage grasses among which they grow. One hundred and sixty times more cobalt, essential for ruminants, in plantain and buttercup, five times more copper in nettle and thistles; magnesium, whose deficiency causes tetany in grazing animals, is about 0.4 per cent in pasture grasses and 1 per cent in plantain and yarrow.

Other virtues of weeds in the ecosystem? Reducing the leaching effect of rainfall, producing organic matter for the nutrient cycle and for organic and mineral balance in the soil, encouraging the presence of pollinating and other beneficial insects.

Two examples among all, not to dwell too long!

Let us sow discord (Matthew 13: 24-30)

That is, we sow discord, we deliberately provoke disagreements and disagreements, quarrels and disagreements.

Or also 'to be like crabgrass', an old popular proverb highlighting unwelcome behaviour by people, usually annoying and invasive, or 'to stick like crabgrass', highlighting the kind of people from whom we cannot free ourselves.

Couch grass (*Gramigna*) is a plant belonging to the Graminaceae family, very common and widespread, very pest-like according to farmers. Tenacious, it shows remarkable vigour and



vegetative strength that enable it to proliferate even in adverse conditions. It is able to tolerate various types of stress such as drought, scorching heat and intense cold, and also tolerates waterlogged conditions well. It also stands up well to trampling and grazing by animals and shows remarkable regenerative capabilities.

And the virtues? In the early decades of the 1900s, there was a professional figure in Rome who was dedicated to harvesting couch grass, or Gramigna. These pickers were called 'gramicciari' and after harvesting they would wash the Gramigna in the fountains of Rome, and one in particular is remembered for this purpose, the fountain near S. Maria Maggiore.

This species is also used in herbal medicine as an excellent diuretic and depurative. Its properties were already known in antiquity. Dioscorides (40AD-90AD) and Pliny (23AD-79AD) recommended the use of couch grass roots to increase the flow of urine, as well as to treat kidney stones. In 1597, the herbalist John Gerard documented that the roots of this herbaceous plant possessed laxative properties that benefited those suffering from constipation and also cleared blockages in the liver and uterus. During famine, people roasted the roots of couch grass and used it as an alternative to make both flour and coffee.

In addition, couch grass is among those plants used in the reclamation of contaminated soil (phytoremediation or biodepuration) to absorb pollutants or to metabolise and degrade contaminants into non-polluting forms.

The infesting 'Zigolo', or Purple Nutsedge, the King of Weeds

I have personally encountered this weed when asked: 'It ruins all my crops, I can't get rid of it! See what you can do'. I set out to investigate and it was love at first sight!

The *Cyperus rotundus*, ranks first in the world's worst weed rankings due to its ability to steal nutrients from crops, its resistance to herbicides, and its high adaptability. It is the cause of documented problems in at least 52 crops (cabbage, carrots, potatoes, cucumbers, maize, green beans, onions, garlic, etc.) in 92 countries with crop failures of up to 89%.

It does not pose major problems of adaptation. In fact, it can be found from sea level to high mountains, from arctic tundra to tropical forests and wet pastures.

What a challenge!

But my love grew when the agronomist told me: 'If you try to uproot the aerial part, the dense tangle of roots immediately shatters, releasing a chain of small tubers, each of which forms a new seedling. It is an intelligent war machine!'

And indeed it propagates through roots and tubers of the different seedlings in constant contact with each other. A square metre of soil can have as many as 500 plants with 53,000 tubers distributed from a few centimetres up to a metre deep where they can wait, dormant, for several years.



Gramigna



"When you plow the soil," the agronomist used to tell me, "you are only doing it a favour by bringing the tubers back to the right germination depth. In potatoes, then, he manages to tuck the tubers inside so that when you use them for a new sowing, you spread them too".

And so I delved deeper and two-faced Janus introduced me to 'the friend'!

If you can't uproot it, eat it, as Elisa Brasili suggested in a presentation at a botany congress!

In the 15th century B.C., the Egyptians harvested it for food and even today in Sicily, for example, its tubers are prepared a bit like struffoli (honey balls). The Egyptians also used to chew it for its anti-caries properties, a forerunner of today's toothpastes. One of its close relatives, *Cyperus esculentus*, is specially cultivated and used to prepare 'chufa' a traditional drink popular in Valencia, Spain. It was used, in powder form, to flavour meat and the starch was extracted to make noodles. Theophrastus, again, listed it among perfume plants as 'the most excellent fragrance' (*Historia Plantarum*, IX 7.3) and even today its roots are sought after by Givency for their intense violet aroma.

What can we say then if *Cyperus rotundus* is considered one of the oldest medicinal herbs used in Oriental medicine or when the Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India prescribes it in the treatment of rheumatism, inflammation, dysuria and obesity among others? (see insert)

Flexibility, adaptation, plasticity, perseverance, patience, endurance, longevity? If these are the virtuous characteristics of weeds, I imagine that the practice of Tai Chi Chuan will help us achieve our goal of becoming a 'weed'!

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Elisa Brasili, Fabio Sciubba, Alberta Tomassini, Alfredo Micheli, Gabriella Pasqua - The Janus's two faces of *Cyperus rotundus*: a system biology approach to improve crop-weed management practices

Rome 15-17 June 2022 Annual meeting of the Working Groups "Cell and Molecular Biology" and "Biotechnology and Differentiation"

**Alberta Tomassini** Researcher, Department of Environmental Biology, University of Rome, La Sapienza

**Elisa Brasili**, Researcher and Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Biology, University of Rome, La Sapienza



# **First training course for first-level Traditional Yang Tai Chi Chuan coaches**

*Organised by Dinamica Tai Chi Chuan and associated arts and the AICS (Italian Sport and Culture Association)*



It may seem easy... Many believe so. But they are wrong. Actually, teaching Tai Chi Chuan and taking the first steps in this ancient and healthy martial art is very hard.

To be precise: it can be easy to teach it in a bad way, and thus risk causing some damages but it is complex to teach it clearly and following an updated method that cannot differ from the lines indicated by tradition and codified to offer physical and psychic well-being, as well as to transmit the different martial techniques essential for its main sequences.

Thirteen practitioners (already quite advanced in the study of Tai Chi Chuan) have made this experience during the first course for first-level coaches organised last summer by the association Dinamica Tai Chi Chuan e Arti associate, together with AICS, Associazione Italiana Cultura e Sport, one of the main national sports promotion institution and under the technical direction of Anna Siniscalco, disciple of Grand Master Yang Jun.

Not only this course provides with practice, technique, but also philosophy, the principles of traditional Chinese medicine and much more. It is the best way to study, practise and improve, acquire teaching skills, and cultivate martial virtues, which are the moral basis for any practitioner if he or she intends to follow the right Way and perceive a personal, spiritual and martial improvement.



In short, this has been the first step of a remarkable training experience, based on the 16 movements hand form, which was created by Grand Master Yang Zhen Duo in order to allow the comprehension of the traditional Yang family style's features. A much shorter Form, compared to the 103 movements hand Form, that our teacher Anna Siniscalco promotes in full obedience to the Yang Family's policy, which aims at spreading the traditional Tai Chi Chuan around the world. Grandmaster Yang Zhen Duo dedicated his entire life to this mission: to have people benefit from it all over the world.

The first thirteen coaches, trained in this course by Anna Siniscalco, Teresa Zuniga and Claudio Mingarini, (all three direct disciples of Grand Master Yang Jun, 5th generation lineage holder of the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan ), have already taken the aptitude test. They will now be able to start taking their first steps as trainers under the supervision of their teachers and, if in the future they keep on studying, they could become instructors.

Last but not least, we are pleased to mention the contribution by Monica Zibellini, president of the AICS Rome provincial committee who believed in this project, supporting it with her presence and professionalism from the very first moment, as well as the Association "Insieme per fare" where teachers Anna Siniscalco and Teresa Zuniga teach, and which hosted the course for coaches. We are very grateful for their support in launching this initiative, also because a new course enrolment is on its way.

For now, then, welcome and our best wishes to the thirteen new coaches.

R.S.



# Buddhism: Zen meditation

## *Interview with Master Cikuan*

By Roberto Seghetti



This year, the traditional end-of-year seminar held by Dinamica in June in the natural Montelucco environment, allowed participants to attend a two-day experience of zen meditation with Master Luciano Santi Cikuan.

Hence the decision of our magazine "Dinamica" to investigate into some aspects of Zen, its history, and its features by interviewing Master Cikuan, who led us in this experience.

### **Question: Master Cikuan, could you tell us what Zen Buddhism is?**

Answer. Before dealing with Zen Buddhism it may be appropriate to clarify some things: Buddha is not a proper name, Prince Siddhartha Gautama Sakyamuni was called the Buddha (the awakened one) because on a Spring evening of the year 531 BC near Gaya, in the Indian region of Bihar, he achieved enlightenment or awakening (bodhi).

Another characteristic shows, from the beginning, the originality of the Buddha's teachings compared to those of other universal religions' founders: he does not speak as a God, nor as the Son of God, nor in the name of God, nor as his Prophet. His words come from an entirely human

experience, originated and accompanied by a reflection on the problem of "suffering", core belief of the famous "Four Noble Truths":

1: the presence of suffering both at birth, and in old age, in illness, in death, in accepting what we dislike, in disengaging ourselves from what we love, and what we desire;

2: the origin of suffering lies in the "thirst", that is, in the obsessive research for pleasures and in the will to assert oneself or, on the contrary, to destroy oneself;

3: the possibility of overcoming this thirst by practicing the discipline of Spiritual release

4: the means to achieve the above and, therefore, to cease the pain, is the **Noble Eightfold Path, or Middle Way**, marked in eight precepts: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Behavior, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

For forty-five years, until his death, Buddha taught everyone, men and women of all ages belonging to different social conditions, without any religious or cultural discrimination, in the belief that each man has the power of becoming a Buddha, an awakened one: because of Buddha's absence of discrimination, which gives his teachings that kind of universality, Buddhism is presently counted among the greatest universal religions.

**Question: Having clarified these main aspects of Buddhism, may you explain to us what Zen is?**

The term "zen" is the short form for "zenna", resulting from the transliteration into the Japanese language of the Chinese word "channa" which, in turn, derived from the Sanskrit word "Dhyana" meaning "meditation".

**Question: So, which are the characteristics of this form of Buddhism?**

Zen Buddhism essentially is about meditation, avoiding the predominant aspect given by all the other Buddhist schools to theoretical discussions, doctrinal aspects, references to canonical texts and the use of ceremonials.

**Question: How did Dhyana Buddhism come from India and how did it spread around in the East?**



photo Max

Zen Buddhism was spread in China by the great Indian Master Bodhidharma, (520 A.D.). It is believed to be the secret doctrine transmitted, beyond the scriptures, by the Buddha himself to his disciple Mahakasyapa on Vulture Peak. Master Bodhidharma traced his lineage directly back to the Buddha, through Mahakasyapa.

**Question: Was the Buddhism influenced by the Chinese thought and philosophy of the time?**

In China, Zen Buddhism was easily merged with the tradition of Taoism mainly due to the work performed by the great Chinese Master Hui-neng (638-713), considered the founder of Chinese Zen, which is different from Indian Zen.

After the encounter between Taoism and the Indian Buddhist tradition centred on Dhyana, Chan Buddhism strengthened those no-intellectual and no-dogmatic features, emphasizing spontaneity and simplicity that characterise Zen Buddhism.

This is why the transmission of teachings in Zen does not take place in a doctrinal manner but with an experience of communication that is usually described as 'heart-mind to heart-mind' (ishin den shin).

**Question: How did the transition from China to Japan take place?** Any influences exerted by local philosophies?

Answer: Two Japanese Masters introduced Chan Buddhism to Japan: the first, Eisai (1141-1215), went to study in China with





Master Huaichang who in 1191 gave him the certificate of approval (inka) to teach. Back in Japan he founded Shofuku-ji, the first temple of Zen Buddhism. The School founded by Eisai was called Rinzaï, the Japanese transposition of Lin-ji, the name of a great Master of Chan Buddhism died in 867. The second, Dogen (1200-1253), studied in China with Master Ruujing; after a long stay there he went back home and founded the Soto School.

**Question: Are there any differences between Soto Zen and Rinzaï Zen?**

These are the differences between them: the Soto School considers enlightenment to be the result of a gradual process of refinement based solely on silent meditation, practised while sitting in mindfulness (Shikantaza), whereas the Rinzaï School affirms that enlightenment is a sudden event, attainable either through sitting meditation (zazen) or through the use of questions (Koan) and forms of conversation (Môn-do) of a paradoxical nature.

Regardless of the differences between the Soto and Rinzaï Schools, Zen believes that enlightenment can be achieved at any time, in any place and during any activity of the daily life. In other words, Zen believes that self-knowledge is possible 'outside the scriptures', beyond 'words and letters', by practising.

**Question: Do you mean that it is important to practise and studying is not compulsory?**

Yes I do. To become acquainted with Zen, we must practice, not study and make the experience without speaking or writing about it.

To talk about Zen Buddhism in a direct way, avoiding theoretical explanations we use "Koans" or "Mondo", the only minimal "discursive" forms through which Zen Buddhism tells us not to use discourse; we must remember that Zen is still a form of Buddhism: it does not repudiate the theoretical and practical principles achieved and preached by the Buddha throughout his life.

**Question: What about Koan and Môn-do that you mention?**

In order to achieve the "enlightenment", Rinzaï School uses "Koans": they are paradoxes proposed to the students to stir their minds and linguistic habits. People often think of Koans as riddles, puzzles or problems to be solved: none of that. By Koans, the answer doesn't arrive through the ordinary mind process, rather by perceiving that our concepts can never give us a satisfactory result. Unlike school texts, neither right answers nor teacher's endorsements are part of these techniques.

The exchange between a master and his disciple, happens at a much deeper level. There are many books that claim to provide with answers to Koans, as if it consists of finding an answer. In an exchange with a real teacher, the answer offered by a written test will not be useful, it will become evident as soon as the Master formulates a consequential question, whose answer is not in a book. No concept, no idea, no intellectual work can give 'the answer'. Either talking about life or Koans there are no answers or preconceived solutions. Koans go beyond our reason, not to deny or destroy the intellect: they simply indicate that Reality (Master Cikuan uses here a capital letter e.d) is not to be caught in any thought, sentence or explanation. Reality is observing the world as it is, not as our intellect describes or conceives it. Pure Reality does not need any explanation,



embellishment or improvement. Reality is always here in the open air - a public case. Facing it is always a matter of calming down, concentrating and observing how we spend most of our time explaining everything to ourselves. Koans - as well as meditation - are a practical way to observe our mind, pay attention to what is really going on and perceive Reality directly, free from the ideas we have of it, from the explanations we give of it and our usual reactions to it. Shortly, Koans are a serious matter.

### Question: what about the môndo?

The Zen môndo is a space devoted, during meditation sessions (Sesshin), to questions that students ask the Master, whose answers are very difficult to be understood.

Hui-Neng, (638-713), sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism, to another school's monk who, during the **Môndo**, asked him his opinion regarding the long practice of zazen, with restricted times for rest and food, but with a deep study and repetition of the fundamental sutras, thus replied :

*When alive, we have been sitting and not lying down,  
When dead, we lie down and cannot sit  
A collection of smelly bones!  
What is the point of thinking and getting tired?*

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# Emotions

**By Fausta Romano**

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The man eaten by his own thoughts  
De Chirico.  
The author's home.

Can we say that emotions and feelings are either positive or negative? Or are they negative or positive depending on how we experience them, and how we handle them? A difficult and wide subject to deal with. However it is true that consciously or not, emotions (and feelings) move us from our very first breath. We can learn to live with them and manage their repercussions, on our own centered mind, as well as on our body, posture and breath, but they cannot be cancelled. Emotions are born and placed in the body dimension and in the human beings and they turn into feelings. They do not always depend on external circumstances. Guilt, just to mention one case, can grow and weigh even in the soul of an innocent person. The scientific literature very often shows such a case and also the literature in general, up to the most sensational example: the guilt of Jesus narrated in a passage of *"The Gospel according to Jesus Christ"* by the Portuguese writer José de Sousa Saramago, awarded the Nobel Prize in 1998.



Saramago writes: "He was sitting on a stone, (...) the lighted candle faintly illuminated the rough walls around, the dark stain of the coals over the hearth, his hands abandoned, limp, his face serious.

"I was born here - he thought - I slept in that manger and on this stone my father and mother sat; here we hid, while in the village Herod's soldiers were killing the newborn babies. I will not be able to hear my birth's cry again, while I perceive the screams of death of the newborns and their parents who watched them dying; nothing comes to break the silence of this cave where a beginning and an end were joined. Fathers pay for their faults, children pay for the faults they received, this is what they told me in the Temple. But if life is a judgment and death the fulfilment of justice, then there has never been more innocent people in the world than those of Bethlehem, the infants who died blamelessly and their fathers who were blameless. No one was more guilty than my father, who kept silent while he should have spoken, and now this is me, whose life was spared to let me know the crime that rescued my life, assuming no other guilt exists but this one which will kill me -. In the semi-darkness of the cave, Jesus stood up: he looked like he was on the point of fleeing, but he could just move two unsteady steps. Suddenly his legs bent, his hands covered his eyes to stop the shedding tears, poor boy, huddled there on himself rolling in the dust as if he felt a huge pain. We see him suffering from remorse for what he did not do, all his life long this will be the irreconcilable contradiction, the primary guilt. It must be said that his tears of anguish will forever leave a mark of sadness in his eyes, a continuous light in his gaze, moist and desolate, as if, at every moment, he had just stopped crying. Time passed, outside the sun set, the shadows of the earth lengthened, announcing the great shadow that will descend from above together with the night". (Saramago de Sousa J., 1991, 2010, p.223). (1)

Why did I decide to start with Saramago? First of all, to share my emotions in reading how Saramago describes the feeling of guilt in a 14-year-old Jesus Christ, an adolescent who feels on his shoulders the weight of a guilt not committed, his burdensome existence due to such a great guilt that bends his knees, generating a sadness and a pain that will never be resolved except with his own death: his father's guilt falls on his shoulders, so as his father's silence aimed at saving his life, but caused many innocents' massacre.

His birth's cry is covered by their death's cries, beginning and end at the same time, to have his life saved, to know the crime of his survival; if life is a sentence, death is the fulfilment of justice.



A destiny already sealed, a life lived so that this destiny may be completed. It is the sudden awareness that one's own existence is inseparably connected with that of other human beings, it is the sense of belonging that limits and delimits one's individuality, that attacks the young 14-year-old adolescent.

In my work experiences I often face the sense of guilt. It appears to me as an expression of an apparent contradiction: in the unconscious inability to tolerate the weight of one's own limitations and of being able to choose responsibly (free will), one omnipotently considers oneself guilty of faults not committed. Irresponsibility and omnipotence. I consider responsibility the ability to question about one's choices, thoughts and actions and their consequences. "I dream a world where we can smile and suffer without blaming the others". (2)

Responsibility, freedom and loneliness: three Siamese sisters. The freedom I acknowledge consists in being accountable first of all to oneself, as I said, even for the consequences. Then it is a non-absolute freedom, subject to the burden of responsibility and consequently of being alone with oneself, while living in the world and with others.

And yet, in the passage I just quoted, in that torment due to the awareness that life coincides with death and causes pain, I perceived a universal breath that binds all human beings in this world.

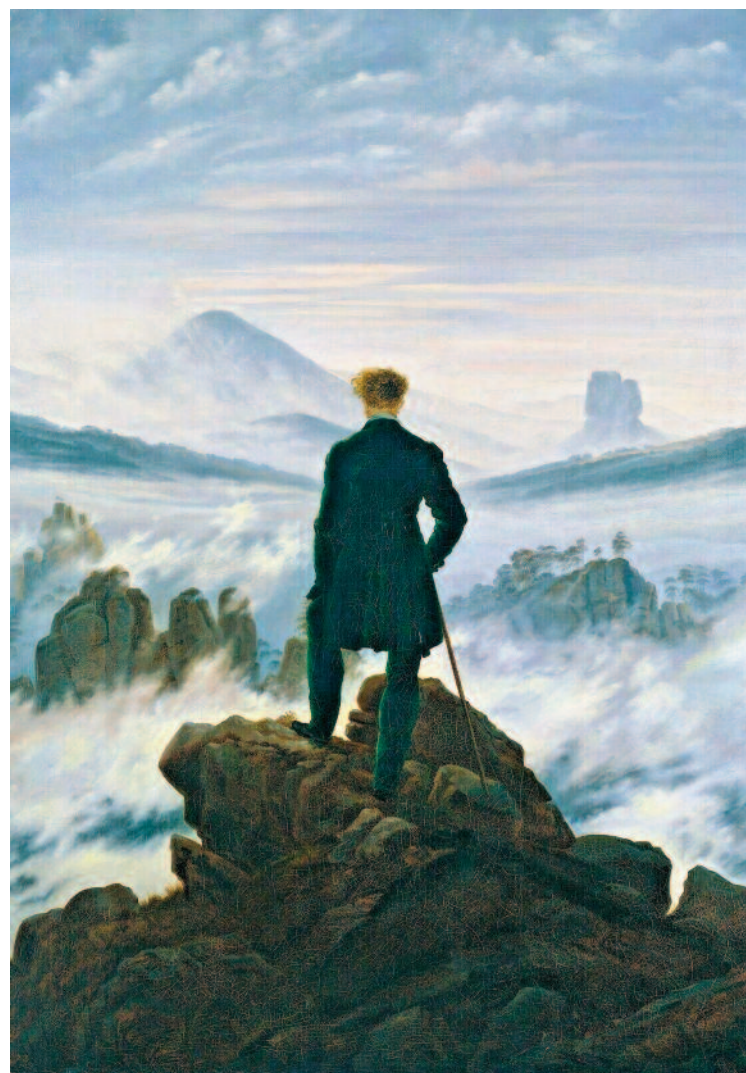
Now I am going to mention an episode I was told by the psychoanalyst Armando B. Ferrari, related to his experience as an anthropologist. During his cohabitation with an Amazonian tribe, (3) the group's survival was threatened by one of its members who broke the taboo that protected it: no

feathered animal was allowed to be killed. But this young man, driven by hunger, killed and ate a bird. He was judged guilty and locked up in a hut on the edge of the village. During the night he died, under the eyes of Ferrari (who had asked to be locked up with him in the hut) for no apparent reason: no poison, no weapon against him, no suicide committed. The young man 'died', unable to bear the guilt of having endangered his tribe, having with it an unbreakable, deep, visceral bond; he died to save the others. Not being able to tolerate that his will to live has threatened his group with death, he died. The young man and his tribe found peace again through his sacrifice.

Pleasure and pain, beginning and end, love and hate, life and death are inseparable pairings.

The question is how to deal with these feelings that are essential for every human being. Feelings, and not just emotions. Emotion, as we now know, is an expression of the corporeal dimension and the foundation of the possibility of adaptation for survival (Damasio A., 1995; Ferrari A.B., 1992). Feelings arise from emotions thanks to their function as a filter to create connections of meaning between what emerges from the perceptive-sensorial-emotional sphere and meanings that come from the experience of being in relation with the world (Ferrari A.B., 1998).

Emotions are directly connected with body states



and involve various systems: respiratory, cardiovascular, endocrine, motor. "Emotions are generated from simple reactions that promote the survival of an organism and are therefore conserved in evolution" (Damasio A., 2003, pp 42-43).

Feelings are hidden, invisible to anyone, sometimes even to their owner. They remain the most distinctly private property of the organism in whose brain they develop.

It may be said that emotions act in the theatre of the body and feelings in that of the mind.

Emotions and feelings give colour to life and orientate us in our choices. Through the process of filtering from sensation, to emotion, to feeling, our thoughts originate, and it happens that, in a circular process, thoughts originate feelings; therefore it makes no sense to speak of positive and negative feelings. Feelings are feelings, emotions are emotions. What makes the difference is how we deal with them.

We must recognise our feelings, listen to them, read them, 'dialogue' with them before deciding whether and how to turn them into action and not get carried away unconsciously.

And this process, that can seem long in describing it, can sometimes take place in a single instant.



Coming back to positive and negative feelings, for example, among the feelings considered negative, "hate" does not have the power to destroy. For this to happen it must be decided, transformed it into action. "Hate" itself, like any other feeling, demarcates an area, indicates, highlights something. Often it reveals a deep and unacknowledged pain, reveals the disappointment of an illusion, the consequence of dreaming reality instead of meeting and facing it.

And again, "envy" can be an extremely important feeling, as it highlights a desire, or something we have and do not recognise in ourselves. If used as a signal, it can open a horizon on how we treat our resources and ourselves.

There is also a dangerous use of envy, aimed at taking from the other what one does not have or believes not to have: destruction can only generate more

destruction within and without itself.

And even so, a strong passion, if not well managed and not well thought, can generate destruction, just as much as an unmanaged feeling of hate.

Therefore, we have to dialogue with our feelings. Sometimes a dream turns out to be a sensational link to open this metabolic process in the emotional sphere.

Dreaming can be considered a register of language, an expressive method (Ferrari A.B., 1998) that gives form and meaning, through the production of images, to sensations and emotions not yet defined and in search of a real meaning. Dreaming as a metabolic process of the emotional sphere contributes to the activation of thought processes.

"Jesus is sleeping now, surrendered to the merciful exhaustion of these days: his father's terrible death, the painful journey to Jerusalem (...); it is not surprising that the exhausted body has prostrated and dragged the suffering spirit with it. Both of them seemed to be resting, but suddenly the spirit moved and in a dream makes the body rise, and together they both go to Bethlehem, and there, in the middle of the square, they confess their terrible guilt.



"It is me ," says the spirit through the voice of the body, "who caused the death of your children, I judged myself and condemned my body that you see here, the body that I am, and the soul, so you may torment and torture it;the absolution and the reward of the spirit can be attained by punishment and sacrifice of the flesh." In the dream there are Bethlehem's mothers with their dead children in their arms. Only one of them is alive and his mother (...) replies: "If you cannot give them back their lives, be silent: before death there is no need for words". The humbling spirit, bending on himself, like a tunic rolled up three times, delivering his helpless body to the Bethlehem's mothers, as he does not know he could rescue his body from there: it was what the woman, still holding in her arms his son alive, was preparing to announce to him: "You are not to blame, go" ... when what it seemed a sudden and blurring light flooded the cavern and woke him up" (Saramago J., *ibid.*, pp. 224-225, p. 224), *ibid.*, pp 224-225).

Notes:

1. This is a personal translation. In the original version the use of punctuation is restricted and consequently the content of the book arrives as a flowing river with the purpose of creating strong emotions. In this former part of the text as well as in the latter one I preferred to insert the punctuation to make the reading easier.
2. José de Sousa Saramago (1922-2010, writer, journalist, drama writer and poet, awarded the Nobel Prize in 1998.  
As underground member of the Portuguese Communist Party, he devoted himself to anarchism claiming to be a communist libertarian. In 1991 his book was published but censored and he was convicted for blasphemy; after that he left Portugal and moved to the Canary Islands.  
Actually "The Gospel according to Jesus Christ" has its roots into the Apocryphal Gospels (the only ones valid for the writes) excluding the Synoptic ones.  
Infact Saramago takes advantage of some historical proofs rejected by the Christian doctrine. Among the various topics, he states that Jesus was the eldest of eight other brothers: James, Lysias, Joseph, Judas, Simon, Lydia, Justus and Samuel
3. Interview with Giorgio Gaber (Italian singer and song-writer) in 1985
4. During his 8-year stay in Brazil, to develop his research on death rituals, in collaboration with the anthropologist Villas Boas, Armando B. Ferrari had lived for three years with various indigenous tribes of the Alto Xingu, in the Amazon.

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