

Alec, the Dao and the Bamboo

By Alec Jones

In the garden at Poulstone Court, my teacher, Richard, asked us to make a connection or resonance with something in nature – a plant, tree, the view... and to ask a question of the chosen object “How is it that you know how to be a rose and not a daffodil, or a bush and not a blade of grass?” To complete the exercise we were then to find a space to take the experience into some Taiji movement.

I was drawn to the bamboo which stands about 10feet high in the south east corner of the lawn. I felt a resonance with it from quite a distance (about 20ft). As I slowly moved closer I felt its size begin to over shadow me but as I came deeper into the centre of myself and my connection with it, my energy field grew to become equal in size to this large plant. There was a strong feeling of blending with it but still remaining complete in myself.

I asked the question. An answer came as though my question had been turned back on me, “How is it that you know how to be Alec and not someone else?” I was flooded with a feeling of realisation and rising joy that brought tears to my eyes as I felt the response, “Because Alec is the only thing I can fully be. He is my inner nature, I am ‘Alec-ness’”.

I let this realisation sink in for a moment or two, then turned to find a space in which to complete the exercise by playing some Taiji. I found myself moving away from the bamboo with no loss of connection, the sensation of being joined remaining unaffected by distance. I moved further away, still no change in sensation. Further still, no change. I reached to opposite corner of the lawn and began to feel my inner aliveness was in direct relationship to the Dao in which I was immersed. I had simply focused on the bamboo but its energy was part of the lawn, the border plants, the sequoia, the apple trees, the earth and air... I was drawn to return to the spot directly in front of the bamboo to play some Form.

Standing quietly I felt as though I was bamboo. The wind moved the leaves, I began to move. As I was about to step to my right into Ward Off Right, my feet seemed to invent a new step and I found I was still facing the bamboo. This continued with each posture – Single Whip usually turns 180 degrees, but at the end of it I was still facing straight into the bamboo. I reached Cross Hands and repeated the Form from the beginning. Once again the movement of my feet kept me facing towards the bamboo only this time I was slightly closer to one of the overhanging stems. I was sure I would make contact with its leaves, but each time my arm extended, the wind gently moved the stem aside so that the leaves and my hand engaged in a delicate dance around each other... White Crane, Play Guitar, and Punch all weaved this delightful dance of aliveness. There was no need to make contact as we were already joined. Was the wind moving the stem? Was the wind moving me? Was I the bamboo, the wind, or myself? It didn't matter. Each was fully in its own nature and expressing the inter-connectedness of life.

The bamboo is still there, present. The air is still there, moving. Only I come and go. Only I (my mind) separate myself from the continual flow of the Dao that is always present waiting for me to remember, to become conscious, to come back into it through engaging my natural aliveness.