

# european school of t'ai chi

## NEWSLETTER JUNE 2025

### Tao Te Ching No 32

The way goes on forever nameless.  
 Uncut wood, nothing important,  
 yet nobody under heaven  
 dare try to carve it.  
 If rulers and leaders could use it,  
 the ten thousand things  
 would gather in homage,  
 heaven and earth would drop sweet  
 dew,  
 and people, without being ordered,  
 would be fair to one another.

To order, to govern,  
 is to begin naming;  
 when names proliferate  
 it's time to stop.  
 If you know when to stop  
 you're in no danger.

The Way in the world  
 is as a stream to a valley,  
 a river to the sea.

translation by Ursula le Guin



### Welcome

We are all still relishing a sun-filled retreat with Tew on the theme of facing our ageing. It proved profound as we touched on many sensitive issues, with much compassion as well as humour. Much of this newsletter is reprising some of what we covered then.

And we can now look forward to our next weekend at Springhead, with Kristina, in October - when we will be exploring the theme of 'Receiving and being received'.

The annual 'Earth and Being' retreat meets again in August - focussing on 'Touching the Dao' through t'ai chi and brushwork in the elemental environment of Roselidden.

The Wednesday Zoom sessions continue, in six-weekly blocks through the year, providing a much valued resource, especially for those who cannot join a regular class where they live.

As there is only room in these pages for some edited highlights of our school's activities do turn to our website for more articles and sharing of what we do.

[www.metta-taichi.org.uk](http://www.metta-taichi.org.uk)

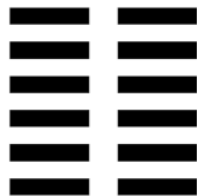
Jos Hadfield

## The Mudras and the I Ching

After the meeting in Springhead, which was radiant with sunlight and colour and friendship, I did another course the following weekend in a place called Rupit in the mountainous Garrotxa area of north Catalunya – another spectacularly beautiful place. There I fell to a mixture of exhaustion and inflammation in one of my spinal vertebrae. My sleep was very disturbed as a result. A curious thing then happened on the second restless night.

In one of the periods when I managed to doze off, I had a lucid dream in which I saw the mudras that we practiced in Springhead to deal with our fears, each accompanied by a hexagram from the I Ching. (I often see trigrams or hexagrams floating in my dream space, particularly at times when I have been asked to do an I Ching consultation for someone). On waking up I had a feeling of being gifted and made a note of these particular ones that had manifested in the night, and spent the hours till dawn contemplating them. I would like to share them with the group who were there in Springhead and those in the school who might be interested.

They all contained the earth trigram above.



### The mudra Bhumi Parsa, Touching the Earth

In the Tai Chi this is the beginning of the form. The soles of the feet are rooted, while the energy of the fingertips touches the earth at the end of the movement.

#### Hexagram no. 2 *Kun* the Receptive

Earth above, Earth below

It is earth above and earth below, the power of the receptive, all Yin, Earthing, Grounding. In the context of working with Fear this means allowing Fear to be there, accepting it, engaging with it with openness and permission instead of using our strategies to suppress it. Not being frightened of being afraid.

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### The two handed Aphaya mudra, No-Fear,

In the form it is when we gather up our arms as in Embracing the Tiger.

#### Hexagram no. 24 *Fu*, Returning.

Earth above, Thunder below

The light is coming back.

This is the Yang line moving up from the base.

Instead of keeping our fears hidden in the shadows of our bodies, hearts and mind we bring them up into the light so that we can finally recognise them and allow them to breathe and return to their Emptiness.



### The mudra Aphaya (No-Fear) and Varadha bestowing the blessing of compassion in the lower hand.

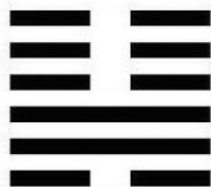
The movement 'calming the monkey' in the form

#### Hexagram no. 15 *Qian* Humility or Modesty

Earth above, Mountain below

The calm solidity of the mountain and the receptivity of the earth when interacting with someone who is in fear and fragmentation.

The one yang line is that active, tender caress of the front hand that calms the fear, while the open hand at the back is to transmit Compassion, Varadha, the highest blessing.



**Vajra Mushti, Thunderbolt or Diamond Fists.**  
The Mudra of Equanimity, Ubekkha.

Double elbow strike, or Grasping Tiger's ears in the form

We advance towards what creates fear in us. Earth above and Wind below. Grounded and gentle as we approach what we cannot avoid.

**Hexagram no. 46 Sheng Rising upwards.**

Earth above, Wind below

In order to confront we rise to the occasion, but without hatred or anger. There is no choice but great possibility of transformation in the process.



**The Vajra Pradama mudra of Unshakeable Trust.**

Two hands over the heart.

**Hexagram no. 11 Tai, Peace**

The balance of the heart. Hsin the small heart embracing, and connected within and without by Shen, Spirit. Fear dissolves when we feel accompanied, like a child, by this Loving Embrace.

Tew

**To put it simply?**

The I Ching is based on Yin and Yang

Yin is three broken lines

Yang is three unbroken lines

Yin is earth

Yang is heaven or sky

These two opposing pulses make up the rhythm of every living being.

There are degrees of Yin in Yang, degrees of Yang in Yin; and to further understand all the subtle permutations, the I Ching offers 64 possibilities of proportions and qualities of Yin and Yang.

These help us to try and understand the unfathomable. They give us some kind of map by which we can guide our stumbling steps.

The Mudra form is also based on Yin and Yang and our capacity to be held by the Earth, which is our witness and our support, and to open up to the ineffable possibility of the heavens, the Yang.

Within all that we must find our own path, allowing the somatic expression of our innermost fears and concerns - just as when consulting the I Ching, it opens up a possibility to see what perhaps we would prefer not to consider. It allows the intuition, the sensing of what should be done - rather than an intellectual, rational decision-making process which can lead us away from where our heart would take us.

The I Ching incorporates the Cardinals of heaven and earth, fire and water and then widens to encompass thunder, lake, mountain and wind.

To consider these more poetic expressions of the fundamental rhythms of our life, our connection with what is going on becomes more wholesome.

Consulting the I Ching is wide open to interpretation - our own and others'.

Similarly in the Mudra form, what we face, and how we face it, is completely open to our own interpretation of what we think we can do and of what we are fearful of doing.

Tools to help us on our way.

Jos

## ‘Facing our Ageing’ retreat at Springhead

“What a special, inspirational and informative weekend when we addressed issues surrounding ageing and inevitably death.

Tew Bunnag instructed and guided us throughout the weekend incorporating mudras, chants, silence and meditation, short and long form Tai Chi Chuan and movements to help with flexibility, connectiveness and ease of heart. It was delightful to be on the receiving side of Tew’s extensive experience and wisdom. There were many funny anecdotes, not only from Tew but from many within the group.

At the end of the retreat, Rodney sang Moon River and Running Bear. His magnificent voice filled the room with love as we finished the retreat.”

Tess

“I am always amazed how much I learn and am nourished by practice that is familiar. Work on healing sounds really stayed with me and has become part of my day. Also the conversations I had, given so generously, with those who shared their experiences of life, moving on and dealing with aging and dying.”

Kathy



Hervé

## Noticing

One of the beautiful aspects you start to notice from doing T'ai Chi and Qigong over the years is the interaction that takes place between oneself and other lifeforces. It's obvious that something changes, in the way other creatures start to interact with you. It occurred to me recently, when asked for contributions to the newsletter, that it would be lovely for people to share what interactions they have experienced. The longer you do these practices the more there are of experiences where grace comes down to touch us.

Anyway I will start with something that happened just a few years ago.

I was doing my Qigong practice in my garden, and there is a movement where I bend backwards and gaze upwards. I often feel blessed when this happens as so many interactions have taken place with this movement. Anyway, on this particular morning I looked up to see a red kite circling above me, eyeing me for breakfast, then circling above the red kite, was a crow. Directly above the crow was a buzzard ! A magical moment.



## DATES FOR YOU TO NOTE

‘Receiving and Being Received’  
retreat with Kristina Gjems  
Springhead 10 - 12 Oct 2025

Springhead with Tew May 15 -17th, 2026

