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**MORAL ASPECTS**  
**of**  
**“ ITF – Taekwon-DO “**  
**in our Western Society.**

**Thesis for IVth Degree**  
**by Eddy Van Damme**

## **Preface.**

A thesis or a book is never written by one person alone. A lot of people listen carefully or are irritated by the ideas, they criticize or suggest some things, or read the manuscript for grammaticism or content.

So I want to thank a lot of friends and colleagues, who did a great job. I want to express my sincere gratitude to my girl-friend Els, for being very patient again, because she had to live with a writing, absent partner.

Of course, I may not forget my master Mr. Vanberghen Frank, 6<sup>th</sup> Degree, founder of ITF-Taekwon-Do in Belgium, who was (and still is) my mentor for the last 13 years.

I express thanks to General Choi Hong Hi, who founded Taekwon-Do for the training of the people, both in a physical and mental way.

Taekwon-Do is showing the intelligence, valour and will power of the Korean people. Doing so, it is a military art, developed on scientific principles, and the glory of a nation (Korea) with a long tradition of martial arts.

It is regarded as an art of self-defence, powerful, and technically polished. It places stress on acquiring high techniques, as well as cultivating moral.

I try to make a link between Taekwon-Do as an Eastern martial art, and how it can be practised in our Western society, with its different norms and values, another way of life, and another cultural sphere.

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## **INTRODUCTION.**

"It's my sincere hope that through Taekwon-Do, anyone can garner enough strength to become a guardian of justice, to challenge social disunity and to cultivate the human spirit to the highest level attainable. The philosophy of Taekwon-Do is based on the ethical, moral and spiritual standards by which men can live together in harmony!" (General Choi Hong Hi, founder and father of Taekwon-Do)

### **A/ Purpose of my thesis.**

What is the cement that links the concepts 'morality', 'martial art' and 'Western society' together? It tells something about 'me', of course. I have always wondered about life, why it is so difficult, thinking about everything I was doing and why I was doing those things. I always thought there must be a way of living in which things weren't so complicated as they are. I did, and I still do, a lot of things in my working – and spare time to explore life: theatre, philosophy, psychiatry, travelling around the world, reading, cooking, studying languages, running, watching films and, of course practising Taekwon-Do. But life stays complicated, the world isn't as nice as we'd like it to be, and a lot of people live in miserable circumstances. My point is that we can only do our best to live as good as possible, to try to change what we can and want to change (to create a little bit a better world), and to accept what we can't change. But since I began with Taekwon-Do, 13 years ago, it has always been a thread, and it had a grip on my life, even in those difficult moments when nothing else mattered any longer. So if we talk about morality, norms and values in everyday life in our Western society, we talk about how to survive in a consumer society with post-modern values 'a la carte'. We try to teach young people around us, to deal with those values, without losing control about what's important in life. So we show our youngsters, that there are ecological alternatives, instead of destroying our globe by consuming our natural sources, because money is the only thing that counts. That there are more important things in live, than working day and night, forgetting our families and friends, because we have no time for anything else than gathering power, positions and money (even if we have enough of those to live reasonable) at all costs and at the expense of our own health and other people's lives! Through practising Taekwon-Do as a martial art and teaching it to other people, we learn automatically (by being ourselves) to our pupils the value of rowing against the current, showing and doing things they thought were vanished from our planet, but are still actual in the East as a way of life. Starting with a global model, by which we can look at the world with its many contradictions, I want to show an overview of the most important philosophical ideas from East and West. I try to build up a philosophical background, in which the martial arts were born. Then I try to link it to our Western society, because the underlying values of Taekwon-Do, can be also of great importance to our youngsters in the West. But we have to adjust them to our own Western culture-sphere, keeping lots of respect for other cultures. I think that it shouldn't be bad for us, to become a little bit more Buddhist and Taoist, even for our own health. And we can learn many things from our Indian brothers too, and of what remains of their rich cultural heritage. So I want to prove, that it is possible to practise a martial art in the West, dealing with our own problems, handling our own values, and still have respect for the global context of life and mankind. We have only one life, we have only one world, and nobody has the ownership of it. We all have the pleasure and suffering of being born on this planet, and the choice to make the best of it. So let's do it!

## **B/ Purposes of Taekwon-Do:**

- 1/ Fitness: physical health and development
- 2/ Self-defence: survival and defence against aggressors
- 3/ Moral culture and mental development: personality / philosophy / DO

## **C/ Basic ideas and assumptions for my thesis:**

TAE KWON (DO)	→	(ITF) TAEKWON-DO
Different laws (in letter)	→	How to live by the law (spirit)
Certain truths	→	"Universal" values (French revolution / Korean struggle for liberation and its history)
To keep appointments To stick to agreements	→	To develop an attitude (different skills)
To live by social norms	→	To develop a moral culture
Personal and individual needs	→	Social individual and collective needs <b>as</b> an individual in a global society
To accept our personality as it is	→	Mental development and control over the bad part(s) in ourselves
To overrule others	→	To overpass ourselves
The body	→	The human existence (including mind and heart)
A sport	→	A Martial Art (a way of life)

## 1/ Taekwon- Do ... a way of life ... in a complex world.

ITF-Taekwon-Do can help us to provide a comparative philosophical model, in which we can look at the world, which can guide us in an integrated way through life and its difficulties, in which our youth can find the post-modern values of Western society. Coming from an historical and ancient world in the Eastern part of our globe, in which it was, and still is, a true way of life, I believe it can have its impact on our modern up-growing youth, in both a physical and mental way. Its international character could provoke a better communication between different cultures, and more toleration for the differences in between them. It can also help to create a safer and healthier world, with lots of respect for nature and all of his living creatures.

### *A/ A comparative philosophical model of thinking.*

Professor Dr. Ulrich Libbrecht, who gives courses at the universities (UIA + UFSIA) of Antwerp (Belgium) with his "School for Comparative Philosophy", shows us a model by which we are able to look at the world from a comparative point of view.

With his model, it is possible to compare the different Eastern and Western philosophies, starting from a depth-structure, to look at the different surface-structures.

So it is possible, to incorporate the many contradictions of the different philosophies, in one model.

I want to start by giving a global model, a global structure in which the other parts of my thesis will fit in. And I think that this model will do perfectly, because it commits us to nothing at all. We can easily stay with our own points of view, whatever those may be, and how different they are.

The model exists of three sub-models or worldviews:

- NATURE (e.g. 'Taoism' / cyclical system of harmony / wu-wei (=doing nothing about the natural rhythms) / becoming / bound, immanent energy) ;
- **RATIONALISM** (e.g. 'modern science' / insight, understanding / controlling / being / 'Confucianism', I think, can be more or less situated over here);
- MYSTICISM (e.g. 'Buddhism' / enlightened / salvation / not-being (e.g. "the smell of the rose doesn't change by altering her name!"));

These models can be put into relationship with each other, in a diagram (see drawing).

We can see the difference between *immanent, bound energy* (the way nature is genetically constructed), and *free energy* (= to transcend our bare nature, through reason or spirituality) on the vertical 'energy-axis'.

And on the other hand, we can see the difference between *the rational, objective function* ((in which subject and object stand far from each other (see curves in the drawing:  $S \leftarrow \rightarrow O$ ): the subject is looking at nature as an object, to analyse, examine and submit it to scientific studies)); and *the mystical function* ((in which object and subject are falling together (see curves in the drawing:  $S=O$ ); there is an alter-intentional movement ( $S \rightarrow O$ ) from the subject (=S) towards the mystery of the cosmos (=O): striving through mystical activity or religion for nirvana)) on the horizontal 'information-axis'.

The (fylo)genetic structure of plants, and the stereotypical behaviour of animals, arise out of the structure of nature itself. A cow doesn't have to think about what she is going to eat today, for example. Or an oak doesn't worry about the astonishing beauty of the cosmos, or where to get its water tomorrow.

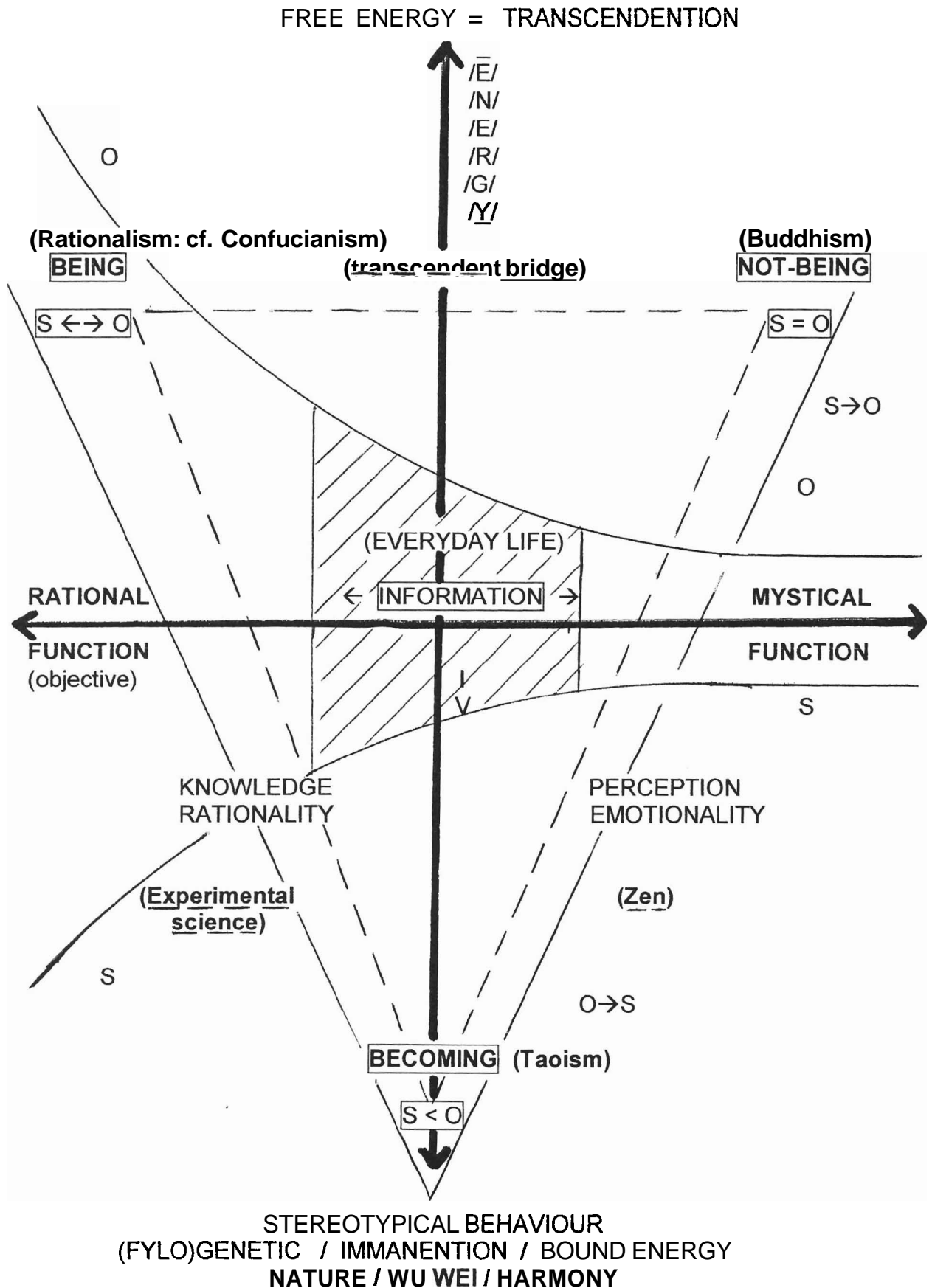
As human beings, we also have that structure and behaviour, otherwise it would be impossible to survive. But we have the possibility to think about things, to feel about things, to experience the world and the nature. Taoists don't need to transcend the level of nature itself, they believe that the natural flow of nature, leads spontaneously into the right direction, onto the right way to live. And that is the only way to live correct (by the TAO) and to be happy (( $S < O$ : we (=S) are (just) a (very small) part of the cosmos (=O)).

In order to transcend fylogenetic and stereotypical behaviour, we have to use free energy (= we have to do something more than just existing and surviving) to become "rational" (through knowledge of the cosmos) and/or "mystical" (through emotions and experience or perception of the cosmos) beings. So, the rationalism leads us to our Western way of thinking and living. While Buddhists will not analyse the world, but try to be one with the overwhelming beauty of the cosmos, through meditation (emptying their minds of troubles and small annoyances) and daily work.

We can see there are different ways to look at everyday life, at reality. It depends on the point of view, in which direction the information goes, and the level of free energy that goes with it.

There are some transit-models in between who fit perfectly into the diagram, such as **Zen-Buddhism** (from Japan and therefore Western, but originally from the Chinese Ch'an-Buddhism, that accepts that the authenticable experience of nature, leads spontaneously towards enlightening), **experimental science** (that is deducting things out of the phenomenology of nature, by means of modern science, through observation and rational experiments) and the '**transcendent bridge**' (e.g. theological thinking, intellectual mystic, 'Vernunftreligion') to prevent falling into a transcendent dualism or a one-sided rationalism or mysticism.

**Diagram:**





## **B/ About Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.**

It concerns the former three great religions of China. Taoism and Confucianism were native and had many fundamental persuasions in common, or seem to share them. Buddhism is not really a religion and was imported from India. All three of them had a major influence on all aspects of daily and social life. It's important for us to learn about the context and climate in which, both the internal and external martial arts, know their origin.

### Confucianism.

Confucians and Taoists had a shared believe in the existence of Ch'i. Within the field of heaven and earth there are the "jin-Ch'i" and the "jang-Ch'i", who are constantly fulfilling and occurring to the human being like water does in and around a fish. The difference between Ch'i and water is, that Ch'i is not visible and water is ... however it seems to be nothing, it is. Man is constantly saturated by this bipartite Ch'i-stream. For the Confucians, this was subordinate to a higher principle, named "li". Li stands for the different forms by which the Ch'i could manifest itself. It consisted of a conglomerate of rituals and symbols, respect for the parents (and therefore also subordination to authority) and properties, ceremonies, rules and a patriarchal social, political and ethical order with many decency norms. The human ideal was the Superior Human Being. Confucianism represented the jang-side of Chinese life: patriarchal, sober, ambitious (through exams by the state based on Confucian principles) and practical. Rationality and planning were very important. It was there way to live a good life and to follow their 'Tao'. Confucius himself was however a cheerful man and his way of life wasn't very different from that of the Taoist. In social live it was important to have a blameless behaviour and a courtesy to let other people always go first; in historical and political sense it referred to an ideal structure and a severe self-discipline.

"Basic philosophy"-model of a martial art, according to Confucius:

<b>TO DO DO</b>	= instructing, teaching to your pupils / students
	...
<b>TO DO</b>	= the art of Taekwon-Do
	...
<b>TO CONDUCT</b>	= honesty, behaviour in society, set an example to others
	...
<b>TO BE</b>	= the art to be, to know yourself, to respect nature

(Cf. Master Tran, VIII<sup>th</sup> Degree, International Instructors Course, Cologne)  
(Talking about 'What is the Do? + how to teach it?')

## Taoism.

It's quite the opposite of Confucianism, as it is a philosophical, mystical, light-hearted and artistic way of living. It represented the jin-aspect of Chinese society. In that way, both systems gave a solid fundament to the social life in China, and the debate between them could be considered as the interaction between the two Big Forces, jin and jang, always in a, by dynamic tense characterised, equilibrium.

Taoists handle the principle of "wu-wei", meaning 'doing nothing' about the natural flow of things, floating into the stream of live, with a lot of respect for the cosmic laws. They don't resist against the powerful forces of nature, realising that they are a small part of it ( $S < O$ ), and also subjected to its dynamic. They won't make a scientific analysis to gain supremacy over it afterwards, or doing technological experiments on our natural sources, in order to dominate our planet. Everything in nature is good the way it is; we don't have to change things in order to satisfy our own strange ideas. Neither will they attribute goddess powers towards nature (or parts of it).

Martial arts have risen from the logic of the human body to defend itself. By training, a skilful practitioner of Taekwon-Do reacts almost as if it concerns a law of nature.

The Taoist doctrine of movement strives to direct the individual Ch'i (=the power of nature within ourselves) of the human body in such a way, that there is a complete harmony with the cosmic laws, starting from the principle that the human body is a small universe on its own.

E.g. Chuang-tzu tells a story about an old man who is drawn into a whirlpool of a river, and arrives unharmed downstairs. He said he had adjusted himself to the water, instead of the other way around, and that this was the reason that he came out unharmed, like nothing happened.

The man moved conform the natural flow of things. All martial arts use this principle.

## Buddhism.

Buddhism has a mystical, spiritual function that gives the opportunity to humans to discover a 'subject-object-unity' ( $S=O$ ), resulting in a transcendent (extensional) experience.

E.g.: The phenomenal world exists of waves (belonging to an ocean): every thing, every plant, animal or human being, is a wave which we can see. They all exist in the same ocean, which is the mystery that lies underneath. Every wave is sea, water or ocean in its deepest existence. Sometimes you can feel that the ocean floats through you, that you are one with the sea underneath, and therefore with the cosmos. At that moment you have a mystical experience.

The enlightenment, which is an ego-extensional experience ( $S \rightarrow O$ ) of the real reality, results in salvation from the ties to our own existence. One of the ties is the ego-intentional nature ( $O \rightarrow S$ ) of the human being, especially in Western society, where we are always occupied with ourselves. Another tie is that of the rational insight: men try to penetrate the mysteries of reality and analyse them, by considering mysticism as a logic that isn't yet known.

Why do people suffer? What is the necessity of suffering in our life? Why do we exist, if we have to suffer so much? Buddhism is also the philosophy about the question of suffering in human existence, and how to deal with it. How to become free from your

ties within the materialistic existence of this consumption society? How to get back the lucidity you lost on the way towards worldly power, your greed for money, and your longings for fame?

But Buddhism is in the same way the philosophy of freedom, justice and peace. You can set yourself free from your own ties, to try to live in a peaceful way, if possible (you have to defend and protect yourself, your family, your friends, the weaker in society, your country, if it is really attacked by forces without noble intentions!), and to strive for justice in every situation in your life. And there are many situations that are not correct, which you have to deal with, everybody in his or her particular circumstances: in everyday life, on the street, on the job, in your studies, in your hobbies, in Taekwon-Do, within your own family or relationships, friends who are in trouble, when you suffer misfortune, when you encounter repeated setbacks, ...

Nothing is really bad 'an sich', it's very important how you look at things, the way you deal with them, will conduct towards either a problem or rather a solution.

The Japanese (and so the Western) Zen-Buddhism arose from the Chinese (and so the Eastern) Ch'an-Buddhism. This form of Buddhism was the result of the historical confrontation between Taoism and Buddhism in China. What is the role of "Tao" and "Ch'i" in all this? Spontaneously acting, is the ideal in both Taoism and Zen-Buddhism. In Zen, you can only reach it by undergoing a severe training. In the Western world, it seems to be in a cult-phase, however it isn't a rage. The problem with Western people is, that they want to believe in something, and at the same time, they want it to be easy to do. Zen means a life of self-discipline and study. That is indeed a faraway echo from the Taoist Wise Man, who wanders through life very easily. Buddhism gave to Taoism a psychological expression of the functioning of the mind. It was a path that lead to self-realisation, but it was no Taoist path: it lost its Ch'i, the knowledge of jin and jang, and its cyclical changes. Zen-Buddhism however, is a transit-model (cf. Libbrecht in his comparative philosophical model), that stands far away from any rational component, and originates from the sacral being of nature, that is our most intimate expression of the mystery. Zen believes that the authentic experience of nature lead spontaneously towards enlightening.

### **C/ Intercultural communication.**

Is there an evolution towards one, big, boring cultural uniformity? A sameness created by America? Not at all, says Belgian professor culture-sciences and theology, Rik Pinxten, because cultures are tougher than we think. A Chinese who is living in Europe or Africa, is still belonging in many ways to the culture-sphere of China, although he lives miles away from it. Pinxten and his wife worked for more than 15 years among the Navajo-Indians in the USA. His knowledge about the Navajo, Hopi or Yanomami, in comparison with our Western culture; and the differences between Eastern and Western medicine, are just a few examples that show us how bad we understand each other. But even the misunderstandings that arose on the eve of the (first) Gulf-war, are a poignant example, how bad two cultures can solve their problems, if there is a lack of respect for each others differences in 'cultural intuitions'.

Pinxten predicts "there will exist +/-12 'culture-spheres' in the future: Western-Europe, North-America, Russia (GOS), Central-Asia (with Turkey), China, Japan with South-East Asia, Islamite Asia (except Central-Asia: Indonesia, Pakistan...), India, Islamite Africa with Little-Asia, Oceania, Latin-America and Black-Africa. Each of those spheres will consist of a mosaic of regions, cultures and people, but will have enough unity to separate itself from another culture-sphere."

If that is the case, it has outrageous consequences for international politics. Great 'cultural' coalitions will be developed and a New World Order, according to an exclusive Western model, will no longer be possible. To solve the world problems, we shall have to study and compare each others values, norms and tastes, to come unto an honest intercultural form of negotiating, based on equality.

We need an identification and understanding of the concept "cultural intuition", before we can understand the differences in ethnocentrism (--> racism or aggression) and its consequences for diverse cultural spheres.

In Western society, ethnocentrism reveals especially in the interpersonal sphere, because it's connected with the fact that 'the person', 'the individual' or 'the civilian' is the most important sovereign unity of existence. The individual has rights and duties, feelings, preferences and drifts, and so the most important relationship to the surrounding world, is determined from individual to individual.

For the Navajo, the Navajo-people in their totality are the most important 'locus operandi', and inside their group, the constantly changing tradition is the most important point of recognition. Somebody is Navajo, if born so and raised in the Navajo-tradition. The levels of knowledge of his own culture, meet the criteria of being a Navajo or 'enemy'. This has nothing to do with a belief in certain principles or contents, but with practising habits and traditions that are seen like 'Navajo', by the Navajo-people at that moment. They constantly take over strange elements of other cultures and make their selves similar with it; after deliberating, negotiating and eventually certain process-procedures. So other traditions are 'inimical' and therefore threatening for their own tradition, although they constantly take over certain habits to make them 'typical Navajo'. Someone who is seen as 'an enemy', can easily live among the Navajo -even in their own house- and share love and pain with them, but he will never be accepted as one of them. Sometimes they have to do some ritual washing for purifying themselves from "inimical contamination".

In our Western context, we deal in a totally different way with, for example, our Islamite brothers. We have to stop with our 'mental colonialism' towards the rest of the world, and do an attempt to negotiate with a view of 'equal partnership' to other cultural-spheres. Also in our view on war and aggression, it is important to see the differences in looking to those phenomena. It is not fair, even rude, arrogant and very stupid to think that only our own values and norms (Western model, North-American model...) should be relevant in looking at a conflict. It's even dangerous, if we ignore the way others (including people from other culture-spheres) look at **conflicts**, with their own norms and values. And it is indispensable, if we want to solve the problems of the world, like: hunger, overpopulation, ecological pollution, exhaustion of natural sources, etc. We shall have to learn to live together with the 'other' in our midst, because cultures are very tough, and we could try to see it as a challenge to learn to know the 'other', if we want to survive in that world of the future!

Cultures form "cultural spheres", if they share enough 'cultural intuitions', concrete forms of action, and self-conscious feelings.

E.g.: the members of the European Community have many fundamental roots in common:

- The believe in the sovereignty of the individual;
- A political form of society with separation between state and church;
- A mechanical or Newtonian worldview;
- A (semi-) Christian view to life and world;
- A materialistic attitude concerning belongings;

The concrete phenomena as a result of common attitudes, thoughts and behaviour, as a result of above roots, are even more impressive:

- Schools as the most important institution to learn (also about culture);
- The need for explicit sense-giving;
- Superiority-feeling;
- Nationalistic feelings;
- A preference for certain technological products and cloths;
- Strong regional preferences and habits about food and food-habits;
- A much stronger engagement in intellectual and artistic activities;
- A comparable media-culture ... the list is endless ...

E.g.: among the cultural intuitions shared from Morocco to Iran and from Tunisia to Egypt, belongs:

- A mixed theocratic basic model for society: the authority of religion stands above that of the individual, and opinions of elder man above those of younger. Human decides not with (complete) sovereignty about the political organisation, but must obey to the will of Allah;
- Within the state, there is a mix between politics and religion; no sovereign decision for an individual in public affairs; self-determination is seen as Western and decadent;
- A static worldview, with rejection of evolution;
- An Islamic-Arabic world-consideration with obvious solidarity on "family-level" in wide sense and among all Islamite's;
- Values focused on the group with social control...

The above explanation may look very theoretical, and far away from the essence of this thesis, but nothing less is true. We do not live in safe cages, but in the real world, where we meet many different people, also through Taekwon-Do, throughout the whole world. We see many people in our schools, on championships and courses, in our daily life, while we work, while we do our hobbies. When we have a small knowledge of the impact we have on our students, and the way they look at us, we know that every technique we show to them, is far more than just a technique. Every word, every move, the way we behave, ... it all has its impact on our students when we try to explain something about the DO, about the moral culture of Taekwon-Do, being a Martial Art.

## **D/ Taekwon-Do as a Martial Art.**

### Philosophy.

In recent years, there has been an upsurge in violence and a loss of morality in all levels of society, especially among the young. There are of course a number of reasons for this. Many psychologists today feel that this problem stems from frustration. Analysts, on the other hand, point out that these misguided people are indeed a disillusioned segment of society searching for values and relevance, in what they consider deceitful, materialistic, and absurd world of wars and decadence.

Unfortunately, however, instead of constructively channelling their extraordinary energy and potential, far too many strike out in blind anger, destroying rather than building, or merely running away from it all by isolating themselves with drugs and their own world of fantasy. Presently, the tendency of "the stronger preying upon the weaker" appears to be at its peak. Frankly, the present world closely resembles a "corrupt age". It is obvious that this phenomenon of society is not merely because of the struggle for survival, but mainly because of an overdeveloped material and scientific civilization. The former misleads the young to the extreme materialism or egoism, while the latter seizes human beings with fear, though playing an essential role in public welfare. So, what would be the remedy? Needless to say it is the development of moral civilization – the proper mental states of a human being as the lord of creation, enough to prevail or at least keep abreast with the development of material and scientific civilization. The utmost purpose of Taekwon-Do is to eliminate fighting by discouraging the stronger's oppression of the weaker, with a power that must be based on humanity, justice, morality, wisdom and faith, therefore helping to build a better and more peaceful world. All men, regardless of age, have felt that death is a shame and lamented that they cannot live as long as the pine trees, or the turtles, who seem to live a thousand years. Righteous men, on the other hand, deplore the fact that justice does not always triumph over the tyranny of power. However, there are two ways to deal with these problems: the former, through mental discipline, the latter, through physical training.

The philosophy of Taekwon-Do is based on the ethical, moral, and spiritual standards to which man can live together in harmony, and the ideals and exploits of great men from Korean history, inspire its patterns. Korea's famous military and civil leaders, who in nearly five thousand years of Korean history, have never invaded their neighbour, yet who fought bravely and made great self-sacrifices to defend their homeland against invading enemies. Each Tul (pattern) of Taekwon-Do expresses the thoughts and the actions of these great men, so the students of Taekwon-Do must reflect the true intentions of those whose name each Tul bears.

Therefore, under no circumstances should an individual or group use Taekwon-Do for selfish, aggressive or violent purposes. Nor will Taekwon-Do be used for any commercial or political purpose whatsoever.

General Choi has set forth the following philosophy and guidelines, which will be the cornerstone of Taekwon-Do, and by which all serious students of this art are encouraged to live:

- 1/ Be willing to go where the going may be tough, and do the things that are worth doing, even though they are difficult;
- 2/ Be gentle to the weak and tough to the strong;
- 3/ Be content with what you have in money and position, but never in skills;
- 4/ Always finish what you begin, be it large or small;
- 5/ Be a willing teacher to anyone regardless of religion, race or ideology;
- 6/ Never yield to repression or threat in the pursuit of a noble cause;
- 7/ Teach attitude and skill with action rather than words;
- 8/ Always be yourself even though your circumstances may change;
- 9/ Be the eternal teacher who teaches with the body when young, with the word when old, and by moral precept even after death.

The mind and the body: imagination and visualisation, breath (-control), concentration, balance, relaxation, rhythm and flexibility.

The practitioner of Taekwon-Do must keep his mind concentrated on the flow of the Ch'i, something he can only do by means of the imagination of the mind, a sort of 'meditation-in-movement, what the base is of every martial art. Everything we do, is prepared in the mind in advance, we all create our lives by means of **imagination and visualisation**. We visualise our acts of everyday life, it is our natural capacity to imagine things, the fundamental creating force of energy of the universe, which we use constantly, whether we are aware of it or not. A practitioner of martial arts should be aware of that universal principle.

The body is following **the concentrated mind**, the movements of the body are appearing from, and are a part of, the meditation (-in-movement). Doing this, we can reach a mental silence that is very important, because the whole psychophysical organism is involved. The mind is calm and the body is quiet. "Wu-shen" (= no spirit) means that there is a state of mind in which an 'intuitive being-aware of things' is present, an alert and 'detached' mind at the same time. The practitioner of martial art becomes an active part of the universal flow of things. In complete awareness of the situation, he experiences 'being-one' with the opponent, and their contest can be compared with a dance (cf. 'T'ai ch'i chuan' means 'the dance of the warrior').

We **concentrate by means of our breath; breath-control** conducts our energy from our belly towards the rest of the body and further on to the opponent. Control of the physical breathing is important to control the spiritual breathing, so the importance goes far beyond the physical power of it. Even stronger, if you pay attention to the flow of your Ch'i (= breathing out of the "tan t'ien", a place about 5 cm under the navel) and not to your (physical) breathing, your attack will be very powerful. When someone hits you, he reaches out his Ch'i to you, and it begins to flow at the moment he considers to attack you – even before his body starts to move. His act is determined by his mind, so you don't have to be occupied with his body when you can conduct his mind and the flow of his Ch'i in another direction. A practitioner of Taekwon-Do is **relaxed** because his mind should be empty; there is no place for tenses, only for an enormous potential of energy, that floats smoothly through the body. He should handle his energy like a cat or a hawk: concentrated and immobile, but with a sudden and certain force to attack when necessary.

Also **balance** has something to do with saving your energy, knowing that everything follows a cyclic process of grow and evolution (jin and jang). Never exhaust your body and mind; retreat yourself after action to rest.

You should stand like 'a balance that is not in balance'; to be alert and prepared for what is coming.

**Rhythm** has something to do with balance, with cyclic processes. Processing natural rhythms are a characteristic of the universe. Such a rhythm reveals itself in the cosmos as well as on the microcosmic level of the body. Action and reaction, a backwards movement before an attack, both are characteristics of Taekwon-Do, and therefore not only because of their scientific importance.

**Flexibility** (= "souplesse") or the fluency of the body: it means that your body should move like pearls on a string, it should move like water, whatever the circumstances or the situation might be. Feet, hands, breath, eyes and brain should react in one coordinating action, so the movements are characterised by controlling time and space at that particular moment.

We try to unify the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energies and bring them onto one line again. Again, because we are all born with this, because we lost it throughout the years being too busy with our little occupations of human beings.

### What about learning other (martial) arts?

It is not because someone learns to paint, that he should not also learn to sculpture. Students should be encouraged to visit other gyms and learn other techniques, because of the possibility that they may observe a technique that is ideally suited for them, and have a chance to learn by comparing his techniques to others (and see the advantages of the scientifically developed movements of Taekwon-Do). If another art or gym offers something, which I do not have the time or facilities to teach for, or most of my students may not be interested in (such as weapons, or full contact sparring), then it is the students right also to learn these things. If we never have any experience with another martial art, how can we hope to appreciate its strengths and weaknesses, so that we may deal with them appropriately, should the need arise?

### Being loyal to more than one Master?

This may very well be no more difficult, than being loyal to two parents. While time spent training in other martial arts, will cost us time and energy available to learn Taekwon-Do, the same can be said for any other activity. Should we not hunt, fish, go to the cinema, having dinner with friends, paint, play a musical instrument, spend time with our families or work, because it distracts us from our Taekwon-Do training? World class competitors, may eliminate most activities --except training, when getting ready for a competition, but even these people only do this for limited periods, during what should be a lifelong calling in Taekwon-Do.

Should we not be well-rounded individuals?

"So it is said that if you know yourself and others, you will not be imperilled in a hundred battles; if you do not know yourself, you will be imperilled in every battle!

I believe that people, who go to seminars to see what other arts have to offer, and seek instruction on other arts, show desirable traits of initiative, and a desire to learn.

I hope that people whose views differ from mine (both seniors and juniors, higher or lower degrees), accept this as a respectful difference of opinion. I am aware of their different philosophy, and accept it as part of what they are, just as my philosophy is part of what I am. As someone once said, "If two people agree on everything, then one of them is unnecessary." (Mr. Earl Weiss, 6<sup>th</sup> Degree, in Human Weapon)



## **2/ What is the DO?**

### **A/ Meaning of DO.**

'TAO' (Chinese) = the way, the road to what we want to reach in live, to where we want to go, to achieve our goals, to reach our destination, to live healthy and safe with high moral standards and a lot of happiness.

"The life of every human being is a path for oneself – a try-out to it, a suggestion of a path. No men is ever completely himself, however everybody strives to be so, the stupid one, the intelligent one, everybody as good as it gets." (Hermann Hesse)

We try to follow a certain road, which is not always so straight and easy to walk on, and includes a lot of traps and sideways through dark forests and steep hills.

I also try to show with my thesis that Taekwon-Do is a Martial Art of Defending, and therefore far more than a combat sport.

It is also said in the Encyclopaedia of Taekwon-Do: 'The Korean Art of Self-Defence', means not merely that this martial art should be limited to Korea, it's origin is Korean, but his message serves a universal purpose, so it becomes a 'Universal Art of Self-Defence'. It's also an art, a sport, a philosophy and therefore a way (Tao) of living.

Even though, the physical techniques of Taekwon-Do are based on some external martial arts like Karate and Taekyon (improved after intense scientific studies), General Choi implemented the skills of the internal martial arts like Aikido and T'ai ch'i (chuan) to make it complete.

### **B/A little bit of history about martial arts and the importance for the DO.**

In earlier times, fighting was no sport, but a way of surviving through rough life. Primitive people had to fight for their lives, and the first techniques were to defend themselves and their families. Those techniques arose from the logic of the body itself, that's why 'vital spots' and 'jams' are found in all (old) martial arts, in despite of their cultural or geographic origin. In old times, people from either East or West brought their powers and skills in connection with the gods. But only in the East consisted the link between religion and martial art. That's why Taoist and Buddhist monks cultivated martial arts, to defend themselves against attacks, and trained to strengthen against physical deprivation. Visions out of meditation, observation of nature, wars and travelling monks spread out different techniques for fighting. Especially China, with its heavy military past and frequently ban of weapons, was the land where the development and refinement of martial arts took place. Their skills were taken over by friend and enemy, and adjusted to their own culture and martial art. That's why a lot of similar disciplines and 'new' martial arts originated, and that there are many styles and schools within the same discipline, as many as there are grandmasters. Martial arts lost their military value when wars were fought with fire guns. They became fighting sports with rules and regulations, which respected the traditional values of the (old) martial arts. In Western society, the last 20 years, a lot of interest has arisen in Eastern martial arts, both for internal (self-knowledge and self-realisation by DO or TAO) and external (physical improvement, skills and self-defence) forms of 'kungfu wushu' (=having expertise in martial arts).

ITF-Taekwon-Do tries to incorporate and develop both of them in one and the same Martial Art. Taekwon-Do has developed in the last 20 years a whole system of

regulations and rules for competition and championships, and a manual for referees, to keep Taekwon-Do the Martial Art it has always been. This process keeps going on because the evolution in society (and in the cosmos) never stops.

After the death of our beloved General Choi Hong Hi, I think it is important to keep organising International Instructor Courses, like there were in Cologne (Germany) and Livingston (Scotland) in February / March 2003, to make sure that we stay talking about the same Martial Art of ITF-Taekwon-Do, while practising it all over the world, and to improve our skills and those of our pupils.

## **C/ Content of "DO".**

### **1/ Tenets of Taekwon-Do.**

Needless to say, the success or failure of Taekwon-Do training depends largely on how one observes and implements the tenets (= aims to achieve) of Taekwon-Do which should serve as a guide for all serious students of the art.

## **COURTESY**

Taekwon-Do students should attempt to practise the following elements of courtesy to build up their noble character and to conduct the training in an orderly manner as well. It's about how to behave, not only in sports but also in live (outside the do jang).

- 1/ To promote the spirit of mutual concessions, to act with attention and love;
- 2/ To be ashamed of one's vices, to contempt those of others;
- 3/ To be polite, tolerant and generous to one another;
- 4/ To encourage the sense of justice and humanity, to judge with compassion;
- 5/ To distinguish instructor from student, senior from junior, and elder from younger;
- 6/ To behave oneself according to social etiquette (cf. a proper and correct salutation is a form of respect and courtesy in Western as well as Oriental societies); always thinking that you are the best, proves of a conceited mind; Oriental martial arts do not only strengthen your self-confidence, but can make you more tolerant, turn aggression into assertively behaviour and turn anxiety into an alert attitude; the energy who's coming free by doing so, is conducted in a more ecologic way!
- 7/ To respect each other and others' possessions (cf. bowing towards each other, is not only with your body, but with your heart and spirit; it is showing both your hands to let the other person know you have no weapons and nothing to hide ; it is a mutual respect and you 'support' your right arm with your left hand because of the 'weight' of so many respect);
- 8/ To handle matters with fairness and sincerity;
- 9/ To refrain from giving or accepting any gift when in doubt;

## **INTEGRITY**

In Taekwon-Do, the word integrity assumes a looser definition than the one usually presented in any dictionary. One must be able to define right and wrong and have the

conscience, if wrong, to feel guilt. It is very important to behave properly, to apply what you are telling, to set an example to other people. We cannot be perfect and we all make mistakes. But mostly we have the possibility to correct ourselves, to apologise, to try again, to give it a new chance, and to take the consequences of our mistakes of course. Sometimes we even have to make apologies for things we are not directly responsible for. Sometimes, we have to think more about the consequences of what we do, before acting or saying something.

Listed are some examples, where integrity is lacking.

- 1/ The instructor who misrepresents himself and his art, by presenting improper techniques to his students, because of a lack of knowledge or apathy;
- 2/ The student who misrepresents himself by "fixing" breaking materials before demonstrations;
- 3/ The instructor who camouflages bad techniques with luxurious training halls and false flattery to his students;
- 4/ The student who gains rank for ego purposes or the feeling of power;
- 6/ The instructor who teaches and promotes his art for materialistic gains;
- 7/ The student whose actions do not live up to his words;
- 8/ The student who feels ashamed to seek opinions from his juniors.

## **PERSEVERANCE**

There is an old Oriental saying, "Patience leads to virtue or merit", "One can make a peaceful home by being patient for 100 times". Certainly, happiness and prosperity are most likely brought to the patient person. To achieve something, whether it is a higher degree or the perfection of a technique, one must set his goal, then constantly persevere. It's also about courage, being strong facing the difficulties of life, and **don't** be too scared about everything, just continue and make the best of it.

E.g. Robert Bruce learned his lesson of perseverance from the persistent efforts of a lowly spider. It was this perseverance and tenacity that finally enabled him to free Scotland in the fourteenth century. (see: encyclopaedia of Taekwon-Do)

One of the most important secrets in becoming a leader of Taekwon-Do is to overcome every difficulty by perseverance. TKD is a martial art, not just a sport.

Confucius said: "One who is impatient in trivial matters can seldom achieve success in matters of great importance."

## **SELF- CONTROL**

This tenet is extremely important inside and outside the do jang (= training hall), whether conducting oneself in free sparring or in one's personal affairs. A loss of self-control in free sparring can prove disastrous to both student and opponent. An inability to live and work within one's capability or sphere is also a lack of self-control. According to Lao-Tzu "the term of stronger is the person who wins over oneself rather than someone else."

It has something to do with analysing things about yourself, about what's good and bad, why it is like that, and how to change it (if you want to change it).

It has also something to do with the protocol and how to handle by it, with hierarchy and not to misuse it.

"When you drink the water, **don't** forget the source!"

Follow your sabum or master when he / she is correct, (and he / she must be truthful, principally) and not when he / she is not right. Disagree in a accurate and polite way.

## **INDOMITABLE SPIRIT**

"Here lie 300, who did their duty", a simple epitaph for one of the greatest acts of courage known to mankind. Although facing the superior forces of Xerxes, Leonidas and his 300 Spartans at Thermopylae showed the world the meaning of indomitable spirit. It is shown when a courageous person and his principles are pitted against overwhelming odds. A serious student of Taekwon-Do will at all times be modest and honest. If confronted with injustice, he will deal with the belligerent without any fear or hesitation at all, with indomitable spirit, regardless of whosoever and however many the numbers may be. Confucius declared: "It is an act of cowardice to fail to speak up against injustice." As history has proven, those who have pursued their dreams, earnestly and strenuously with indomitable spirit, have never failed to achieve their goals.

### **21 The oath of Taekwon-Do.**

- I shall live by the tenets of Taekwon-Do;
- I shall respect my trainer and higher belts;
- I shall never misuse Taekwon-Do;
- I shall strive for freedom and justice;
- I shall work together for a more peaceful world.

### **3/ The moral culture of Taekwon-Do.**

The broad connotations and various possible interpretations of the moral culture are often very difficult for the western mind to grasp, because this is an aspect of Oriental Philosophy that pervades the lives of Oriental people. In a word, it is the endeavour and process of becoming an exemplary person such as Confucius (552-479 A.D.). To become such a person, he has to find oneself first, and acquire a moral character that is respected by all. This can only be achieved through constant practice of mental discipline. So, if the time calls for it, the mentally disciplined man can contribute to 'build an ideal society, through wise counsel to the government, and even after death, through his everlasting examples.

Confucius said, "to promote the sense of morality one must treat others with faithfulness and sincerity based on righteousness, and to eliminate completely vicious thinking."

Every one of us, as a social being, desires to live in a free and peaceful society. At the same time, it is our obligation to build such a society for the people. General Choi

has quoted various words of wisdom of ancient saints and philosophers for creating an ideal society in the hope that students of Taekwon-Do use them as a guide to cultivating their own moral culture.

An ideal society, according to Lao-Tzu, is one in which the ruler is of such high moral character that he can rule naturally, not by interference or fear but by appealing to the good nature of his people, who by merely doing their duty can live freely in peace without fear and anxiety.

Next, a moral society is one in which the people admire and praise their ruler in gratitude for his love and the benign disposition he bears toward the people.

Thirdly there is a legalistic society in which the ruler, because he lacks the moral authority, resorts to various laws to govern his people, who in return obey because they fear the retribution that the violation of these laws will bring. Under these circumstances, the ruler loses close touch with his people.

According to me, a 'realistic' society lies in between a moral and a legalistic society, in which people can decide things, by giving their opinions about everything that's concerning them, through a system of participate democracy. The ruler decides at the end, but his decisions are based on the opinion of the people.

Finally the worst kind of society is that in which the ruler, through deception and trickery, misuses his legal authority to further his personal ambitions and imposes his rule upon his people by force, as he deems necessary. In such a society, the ruler is despised and hated by his people and eventually invites not only his own downfall but with him the downfall of the people and the country.

In Taekwon-Do a heavy emphasis is placed on moral culture, for it not only promotes a healthy body and keen mind, but good sportsmanship and the perfection of moral behaviour. As ancient Greeks first espoused in their "sound mind, sound body, creative spirit"-concept, the more disciplined and cultivated the mind is, the more disciplined and cultivated will be the student's use of Taekwon-Do. No doubt the following lessons may be somewhat hard to fully understand. However, it would behove the serious student of Taekwon-Do to read, digest and attempt to grasp these very fundamental essences of moral culture.

### **Return to the basic nature.**

Mencius gave the following analogy when he reasoned that a man is basically good. Even a ruthless robber, coming upon an innocent child about to fall into a well, will try to save the child, forgetting for the moment, his intention to rob the house.

This good nature becomes obscured or completely lost by greed for money and power.

However, working in a psychiatric clinic, I know that there are people who have a lot of asocial and antisocial personality-characteristics, or disturbances in their behaviour, so that they are incapable of doing many good things.

I think that man has basically bad things and good things within himself. How his live is going to work out, depends on many things: the surroundings, the circle of acquaintances and friends, how he is dealing with his problems, in what sort of situations he's getting into ...

But my point is that you always have the choice to pull yourself together, to start over again, with falling down and getting back up again. You always have the choice, to

look at your life in a different way than you did until now. You always have the choice – if you really want to do it — to change your habits, and reorganise your life, even though this is very difficult. In that way, you can return to your own 'basic nature' by respecting your own feelings, and taking care of yourself and your surroundings (family, nature, friends, earth, ...).

### How can man discover his own human nature?

You could say there are two positions: you can live by the above virtues and follow your own principles, or you can rely on worldly positions (depending on money, certain titles or positions in your job, ...) given by other human beings. In keeping a proper balance between those two, the virtues of the former position provides guidance for the proper use of the latter.

He who is content with what he has, is the richest man in the world. Constant material dissatisfaction is considered to be the root for all misfortunes, according to an ancient adage.

To be humble is not to engage in petty squabbles, but to be like the enormous river in the low valley which irrigates the farm fields around it.

No one is wise from the moment of birth. As human beings we have many faults and are prone to make mistakes. However, once having acquired knowledge, we learn to correct these shortcomings. We'll never be perfect, but it is essential not to be idyllic towards learning and continue to be willing to criticize ourselves.

If one claims to be strong, he will soon meet someone who is stronger. A tree, such as sapling, can withstand a strong wind when it is soft and flexible, but may be toppled or broken after it becomes old and brittle. The same principle also applies to human beings.

A society and a nation could not avoid chaos without its culture and social order, being based on respect for the knowledge and the wisdom of its elders.

To help others develop and succeed in life, is a reward in itself and has a true value, only if nothing is expected in return. Therefore, you have to respect the rights of others. Persons in leadership in particular, must learn to be frugal and live moderately.

As the old adage goes "if the water is muddy upstream, so it will be downstream."

In every thing he does, a person must not be impulsive or reckless, but be patient and thoughtful. "He who acts without thinking at least three times, will later regret his action," says an old proverb. Accordingly, on a matter of an important appointment or punishment, one must not decide hastily, but must be discreet and deliberate carefully to reach a decision that is both fair and objective.

We can attain peace of mind through meditation, by emptying our minds of all petty thoughts, and returning to the natural state of man. Unlike in Buddhism or Zen, meditation in Taekwon-Do does not mean a total divorce from the world, like a dead body, but rather an active moment to reflect on our past mistakes in silence and in the privacy of our thoughts. Through penitence, we can continue our self-improvement toward becoming better men and women. This active thought process in silence is called "Jung-Joong-Dong".

As meditation is to the religious, concentration and devotion is to the artist, and perseverance is to the labourer, so is moral culture (plus all the formers) for the practitioner of the martial arts. In other words, a person's unflinching dedication to his own interest and duty, is the source of life and power. Cultivation of mind, therefore, is no monopoly of any particular person. In fact, the sincerity and effort definitely

produce the belief, and the belief makes one able to reach the final goal. Moral culture is considered to be a cultivating movement, to make someone to devote oneself to his work, whatever it might be, until his life and work become one.

### **Be virtuous.**

It is difficult to define what virtue is. However, these are five human qualities, which have been **recognized** as virtues since ancient times: humanity, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and trust. To be virtuous, one must constantly cultivate and practice these virtues. Confucius said: "Virtue is like the North Star. All the stars revolve around it in an orderly fashion." Therefore, people who surround the virtuous person naturally will act for the betterment of society.

Humanity: the ability to feel sorrow for the misfortunes of fellow men and love them all equally, as parents love their children equally. I think that's almost impossible to do so, because there are people who are really vicious. However, to implement humanity, you can devote yourself to assigned work, be it large or small; you can practice prudence, modesty and discretion in everyday life; and demonstrate sincerity with whole heartedness to (some) others most of the time. (Confucius)

Righteousness: the ability to feel ashamed of unjust acts and to do one's duty. For the virtuous person, to live and die for righteousness is more important than live or dead itself. (Mencius) But all things in this world are relative to one another. Misery can only come from having been happy once, and now sorrow from joy. The wealthy and the powerful are not necessarily happy. For every rich person, there are countless poor and for each tyrant, a nation of oppressed. A person of strong conviction is unsuspecting and unafraid. When proved wrong, he has the moral strength to admit his mistakes to even the most humble, and has the courage to stand up to the mighty if he believes himself or herself to be right.

Courtesy or propriety: it is needed for the proper development of personality, and whoever lacks sincerity in his words, cannot be considered a gentleman. Frankness without courtesy can be rather ruthless. Respectfulness without courtesy can make the recipient rather uncomfortable. Courageousness without courtesy can be rather violent. (Confucius)

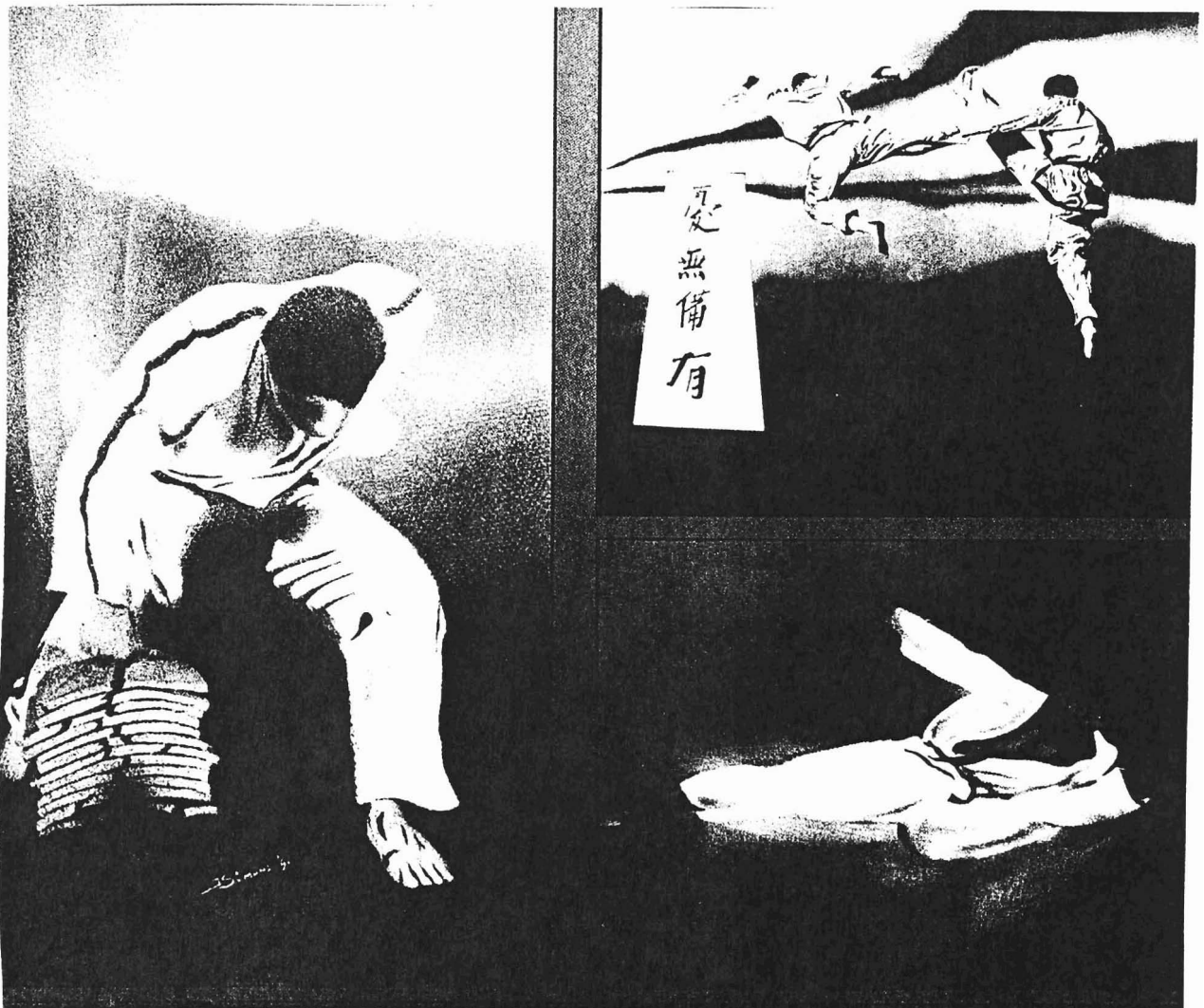
Wisdom: the ability to judge right from wrong, not especially in matters concerning the right and wrong of others, but in matters concerning oneself. No matter how small, you should not do what you think is wrong. On the other hand you must do what is right no matter how small it may seem. (Yu Bee)

To say only what is meaningful, is a sign of a cultivated person. People talk mostly to brag about themselves or to gain advantage over others. A man of virtue expresses himself more through deeds than words. Therefore, he influences others through living examples. In the old days, the truly effective way to teach, was believed to be by the actions, and not by the words of the teacher.

Trust: the ability to keep one's words and promises, not only to one's friends but to everyone in general. Without trust a person loses all principles and dignities and becomes a liar and a cheater.

In summary, we can enjoy a greater freedom of action by preserving our basic nature while making ourselves impervious to the temptation of power, money and sex. A person who has attained this stage of self-cultivation is sometimes called a "saint". It must indeed seem like an impossible undertaking to a mere mortal. A mountain crossing begins with a single bold step, and an ocean begins with each small stream. As ancient proverbs say: "Where there is a will, there is a way." "One should not look afar, when the way is right in front of you." "Even heaven can be moved if one devotes himself to his cause." With a strong will and firm determination, it is within the reach of anyone who is willing to make the effort.

This moral culture is uniquely tied in with Taekwon-Do, not only for the eventual attainment of the highest goals in Taekwon-Do and the promotion of power, technique and self-confidence, but also for the cultivation of character. Without this, the instructor would be guilty of imparting a devastating force, to those who could eventually become so enamoured of their newly found techniques, they might very easily become bullies, or use this knowledge as a way to achieve personal ambitions. Most Taekwon-Do masters and instructors are more apt, to put emphasis on this aspect of training, rather than some of the more sensational training aspects.





### **3/ Western Society.**

#### **A/ Understanding some things about life and society.**

To reach happiness in life, we need to understand some things about life and society. What do we really need in life? We need happiness. How can we reach that? What do we need to achieve happiness? We need food, a house, family, friends, a good health, enough money, a good job, peace in ourselves, a safe place to live. We don't need lots of money and power and standing (distinction) to reach happiness! This seems very simple (and sounds very eastern?!), but it are the above things that causes most of the troubles, in our personal life and in society.

Koen Raes, a Belgian ethicist, explained recently in Knack (a Belgian well-known high-standard magazine) that the big problem of this time is, that a lot of people have become moral indifferent: they don't realise any longer that there is a difference between values and preferences. Being a racist is something quite else then loving chocolate-ice. Moral duties cannot only grow out of the free will of people, that's the story of our western liberation. Children, death, and relationships: everything is put under the control of the free will. We have swept away our elderly and children out of our streets, and all of a sudden, the picture doesn't look so nice any longer. We can neglect our parents more easily, because we have beautiful public facilities and social services. The uncertainty of our situation as modern beings (=the way we feel about ourselves), is translated into unsafe situations, and further on into (street) criminality and xenophobia. So we get the illusion that we are all individuals against the rest of the world. It's a mental jump not many people are making nowadays. Solidarity is very important, I think. The ethical discussions in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the debate about values and norms, reflect the longing for more community, for a "we"-feeling. The looking for certainty is typical in turbulent times. The former pope said already in the seventies that the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be the century of ethics, while before 1970 you only heard priests talking about ethics. The Cultural Revolution in May '68 brought a lot of people on the streets to break down some bad prejudices, but the problem is that the free market commercialised a lot of 'values' where people had fought for.

Freedom, equality and brotherhood were the big values of the French revolution, and they still play some part in our everyday life, however politicians and economists misuse them to sell their programs and products. The Liberals still embrace the principle of 'freedom', while the Catholics carry the principle of 'brotherhood' and the Socialists that of 'equality' high in their banners. But they mostly sell "baked air" to the people, they have a big mouth, they don't tell us about the real values in life, about what really matters, about what's important, about how to reach happiness in life. On the contrary, they teach us how to kill each other, how to make war, how to gain lots of money and power and standing. The most shocking example today is the imperialism of Bush (\$-President of the US) against the rest of the world (e.g. situation about Iraq).

That's why I think we can offer a counterforce to regain those valuables, and reintroduce them into our ordinary lives, by teaching them through Taekwon-Do to our up-growing youth and spread the virus of respect, justice, humanity, courtesy, wisdom and trust.

"The heaven provides four seasons while the earth has the power to produce all living things. This privilege is not reserved for any specific person but for all human beings. Therefore, humanity lies in the idea of sharing the fruits of nature with all people." (Tae Kong Mang, 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C.)

**B/ The needs of Western society in relationship to what Taekwon-Do has to offer.**

(Cf. thesis Mr. Frank Vanberghen, 6<sup>th</sup> Degree, founder of ITF-Belgium, 'The Original ITF-Taekwon-Do of General Choi Hong Hi and its Development')

- A modern 'sport': the beginner asks all ingredients of a modern sport, such as fitness, condition, stretching, discipline, individual and collective aspects; and also different skills within the range of a martial art, all ingredients of a combat-sport, self-defence, finding new energy to compete the (modern) stress and mental exhaustion of daily life, ...
- No limits about age or handicap: possibilities to amelioration of flexibility, condition, fitness for ... seniors; everybody can perform the training in his own rhythm, take his time for certain exercises; even handicapped people can find their own place in training (e.g. some mental handicapped people can loose their aggression by frequently practising Taekwon-Do); it's a style that people can practise their entire life; there is no need for any physical condition to start; it has everything to do with technique, speed (both which are more difficult for the elder people) and spiritual persuasion (something that's more difficult for the younger people); of course, everybody has his own limits in physical and mental capacities, which he has to respect;
- An original sport: very demonstrative in comparison with other 'combat-sports'; it are mostly practitioners of Taekwon-Do, who win in open championships (where all techniques are allowed); the high kicking techniques and breaking tests are the far most spectacular; people entering a sport complex, can compare the original style with other combat-sports; ITF has its own identity and a uniformity in style and techniques, all over the world;
- A lot of skills and techniques: an all-round self-defence sport with 3200 techniques; there are many disciplines in Taekwon-Do: 'tul' or individual style; 'sambo', 'ibo', 'ilbo' or the 3,2,1-steps with a partner; semi-free fighting; 'matsogi' or sparring; 'hosinsul' or self-defence; 'kyopa' or breaking materials; 'ilon' or theory; umpiring or judging; coaching; financial and administrative skills to run a school, an organisation, a federation; special techniques (jumping, flying, turning kicks while breaking materials); power-breaking;
- Health / physical fitness: striving towards a homogeneous body, everybody on his own level and within his own rhythm;
- Economic: one of the most important questions of a beginner, it is a relatively cheap sport, in which you need a minimum of equipment to start with;

- Self defence against unsafe situations and criminality: something very important, an issue where people pay a lot of attention to nowadays; the techniques are **efficient** and not based on fictive or complicated techniques, so that they are not too **difficult** to do in practice; also defence against weapons and in different positions;
- To form character / to bring (self-) discipline, philosophy, morality: it's not a question of a beginning practitioner of Taekwon-Do, but it might become the part that will decide the most about anyone's future (in Taekwon-Do); the fact that people train for years with a certain regularity, forces them into a self-discipline that improves the character, and that makes them accept difficulties and the power to compete them;
- In evolution: without touching the basics of Taekwon-Do, it is important to improve techniques and make them more optimal, increasing speed and power, to study about better rules in umpiring and practical organisation of championships;
- Scientific: the exercises are based on scientific studies (e.g. the theory of power) and the sport is medical well-considered; in sparring, the semi-contact kick-boxing techniques, are no cause of many injuries, also because of the strict rules of umpiring, and the discipline of the high-skilled practitioners;
- International: the world, our globe, is becoming more and more international, and so, the moral aspects of Taekwon-Do can play their role in changing the world into a better place to live. Belgium is a small country, and since the start of Taekwon-Do, we have always been to international courses, championships and tournaments, to learn and compete with others, and to keep up with changes in a martial art that is in evolution all the time. It also stimulates tolerance towards other people in an international context.

### **C/ Modern physics.**

Over the last two hundred years, science has been remarkably successful in the way it has revealed order in the world. But the time has come for science, to move forward toward a new level of understanding. Its past history could be compared with that of an artist who prepares a sketch for a landscape. Out of a bewildering array of visual data, the artist selects certain shapes and forms. Lines and masses are emphasized and earlier guidelines erased. The result reflects a particular, graphic level of order in the scene. But the artist moves beyond this sketch, using it as a tool or guide to something that is more subtle and involves gradations of tone, rhythms of lines, and harmonies of colour. Similarly, science must move beyond its graphic but oversimplified conceptions, in order to explore the extremely subtle and inwardly connected aspects of nature. In the past, science discovered unity within nature by a process of generalization and by moving from the gross to the subtle.

In the eighteenth century, physics was concerned with the properties of matter and its motion and transformation.

In the nineteenth century, it became preoccupied with what causes these transformations and began to investigate energy. Gradually, the idea evolved that such different phenomena as heat, electricity, and mechanical work, could all be related through the more subtle concept of energy. Indeed, light itself was eventually seen as a form of energy, and the motion of an electromagnetic field was introduced.

In moving from matter to energy, physics was directing its attention from the gross to the more subtle. In each case, science is focusing on something very delicate and highly intelligent.

These ideas can be extended into the domain of our own lives, for the extremely subtle plays a crucial role in all aspects of nature, and it is important to look beyond the surface of things, to the very delicate. Synchronicities and moments of illumination, become natural unfolding of the underlying order of nature. Just as patterns of ripples unfold in the brain or on the surface of a lake, so, too, they can move thoughts, dreams, and external physical events. By dissolving our rigid patterns of thought and response, we allow something faster and more subtle to operate. Indeed, thought itself may be only a small, and relatively crude, portion of what the mind is capable of. The more we give room to the subtle, the more we come to touch the heart of the universe and drink of its creative waters.

We are called to take up these new maps and begin a journey. As with every journey, the most important thing we will ever do, is take the first step.

Maps and symbols are used all over the world to express the link between the inner and the outer, between the self and the world, the individual and the environment. Such maps enrich us and bind us together. They are synchronicities, patterns of meaning and connection between the mental, spiritual and material worlds. Scientific maps have reached a high degree of abstraction and sophistication, but on the way they have lost their deeper meaning and connection to the world.

Professor F. David Peat, physicist and philosopher, reveals an order to existence that is even deeper than we at first realized, a universal connectedness out of which mind and matter emerge. Most exciting of all, he suggests that the very atoms of our bodies are "conscious" of this order, giving us access to a limitless source of creativity and health. He explains the interrelated phenomena of serendipity and chaos science, the scientific correspondences of (old) Eastern philosophies and (modern) Western physics, ...

Recent scientific discoveries explain, that beneath the apparent chaos, there is a deep-seated order to the universe. That the map of the world has been freed from its old restrictions, and can be redrawn with freedom and creativity. That synchronicities (based upon Ch'i) are true patterns of the universe, connections that move beyond the distinction of matter and mind. They are echoes and reflections thrown out by the timeless play of the universe.

Taekwon-Do is also based on the principles of modern science, not only if we talk about the theory of power ( $E=1/2.m.c^2$ ), but also in the connections between matter and mind.

With the idea of synchronicity (cf. Jung and the collective unconscious), psychology joint itself with parapsychology and the theoretical physics, saying there is an underlying 'something' that resembles to what the mystic has always seen ...

## D/ Not talking about economy and politics?

There must be a connection between theory and practice; between thinking, feeling and doing, otherwise we get stuck in routine or fantasy. Our ideological, political and economic realities, are always based on an underlying (philosophical) way of thinking, whether we like it or not. By (not) doing and (not) saying things, we always express a certain ideology, a political and economical reality. So I think, it's better to be conscious of that reality. It is not different in my thesis. I think it is obvious that there are certain items or themes, in which I express myself in a political direction, in which I put some statements or thoughts that are very clear. I don't want to make a political thesis, but I can't hide myself by saying it is a-political, because that would be untrue. Because everything you do in life, has something to do with politics. Also in Taekwon-Do, we express something about ourselves in a political way, we express some ideological thoughts, and we have to deal with an economic (financial) reality. If we want to be correct to our pupils, we can't hide ourselves behind the techniques (which must be very good, of course) without talking about all the rest.



## Belgian Tournament

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ITF Belgium held an inter-club tournament November of last year in Ghent. 180 competitors, including 80 juniors under 16 years of age, took part.



Two schools from the Netherlands attended., as well as one on the **Belgian** border run by Mr. Stefan Schmitz which has German as well as Belgian students. The competition, run by Mr. Frank Vanbergen, President of ITF Belgium, was an all day event in the disciplines of Tul and Sparring, both individual and team, and was attended by interested WTF members from Belgium and Iran. With more and more students joining ITF Belgium from other federations, 1998 looks to be a year of considerable expansion for the country.



## **4/ What about me and my thesis?**

### **A/ Belgian situation.**

In our little country, my story of ITF-Taekwon-Do, begins around 1990 with Mr. Vanberghen, because General Choi Hong Hi had asked him to start a federation in Belgium. Now, about 13 years later, we can say, he has installed all the necessary "institutions" of a 'true' federation (insurances; statutes; sponsorship; accounting; building up a Belgian team with a technical director, an umpire committee, a disciplinary committee; a national coach; organising (inter)national (open) championships; being part of an international organisation; keeping up with changes by joining international seminars; an annual general meeting), and we have different schools all over the country. We have also experienced almost all the troubles (financial, political, internal conflicts, ...) of a big country (= with a great federation and many schools). The political situation in Belgium, with its different languages, communities and districts, is very complicated to explain (to a foreigner), and so are its institutions, ministries and administration. So I won't do it. My point is, that we already did a lot of work in Belgium, with not so many people.

I think, we reached a good level of Taekwon-Do, as a start for further grow and realisation, through international experience and hard training. I hope my thesis will be an impulse for further reflections, both in Belgium as international, about our beloved martial art.

### **B/ About Mr. Vanberghen: "I shall only serve one master", what is the meaning of it in our Western reality? And how do I deal with it?**

Mr. Vanberghen was my first teacher, and I always have been very loyal to him. I cannot imagine, that I should do things –which have something to do with Taekwon-Do, without consulting him. Besides that, he has always been a kind of mentor to me, even in difficult times. And the last ten years, I may say that he has become a good friend. So, I know him in very different circumstances. Nevertheless, he's able to surprise me again every time, concerning Taekwon-Do: the way he speaks about it, the way he practises Taekwon-Do, the way he teaches it. He will always be my master, and I will always look up to him, the way he stands there as a statue of Taekwon-Do in Belgium.

A few years ago, there was a conflict in our federation, and I had to make a choice between two stories of two different people. Which one was true? It was very simple for me to make a choice, because my master was one of them. How far would I go to follow my master? If I do not agree with him, I will always go to him to discuss the problem in private, because I don't want to embarrass him by discussing about certain things in group. And I'll always discuss with a lot of respect and correctness, although that doesn't mean we always have the same view about things.

## C/ Me, myself and I.

Finally, I want to say something about my own engagements in society and life. Because I think that those will tell you a little bit, how I try to put my values and norms into daily reality.

I work in a psychiatric hospital as a counsellor (psychiatric nurse), with people who suffer from personality-disorders **and/or** problems with their behaviour. People, who have been convicted of a crime, but couldn't be held responsible for their actions (unsound mind). So daily I am confronted with other norms and values.

At the end, we have to learn people to live appropriate by the social and human rules of society (behaviour), but who are still dealing with their own feelings, values and norms (mind and heart). It would not be realistic nor healthy, to try to persuade them to follow our beliefs. And it won't work anyhow.

Sometimes, we do have to correct some perceptual aberrations or cognitive distortions, through medication and therapy. But we can't really change somebody, if he is not prepared to do something about his life, his habits and his thoughts; and if he don't want to experience with other kinds of behaviour, to solve his problems.

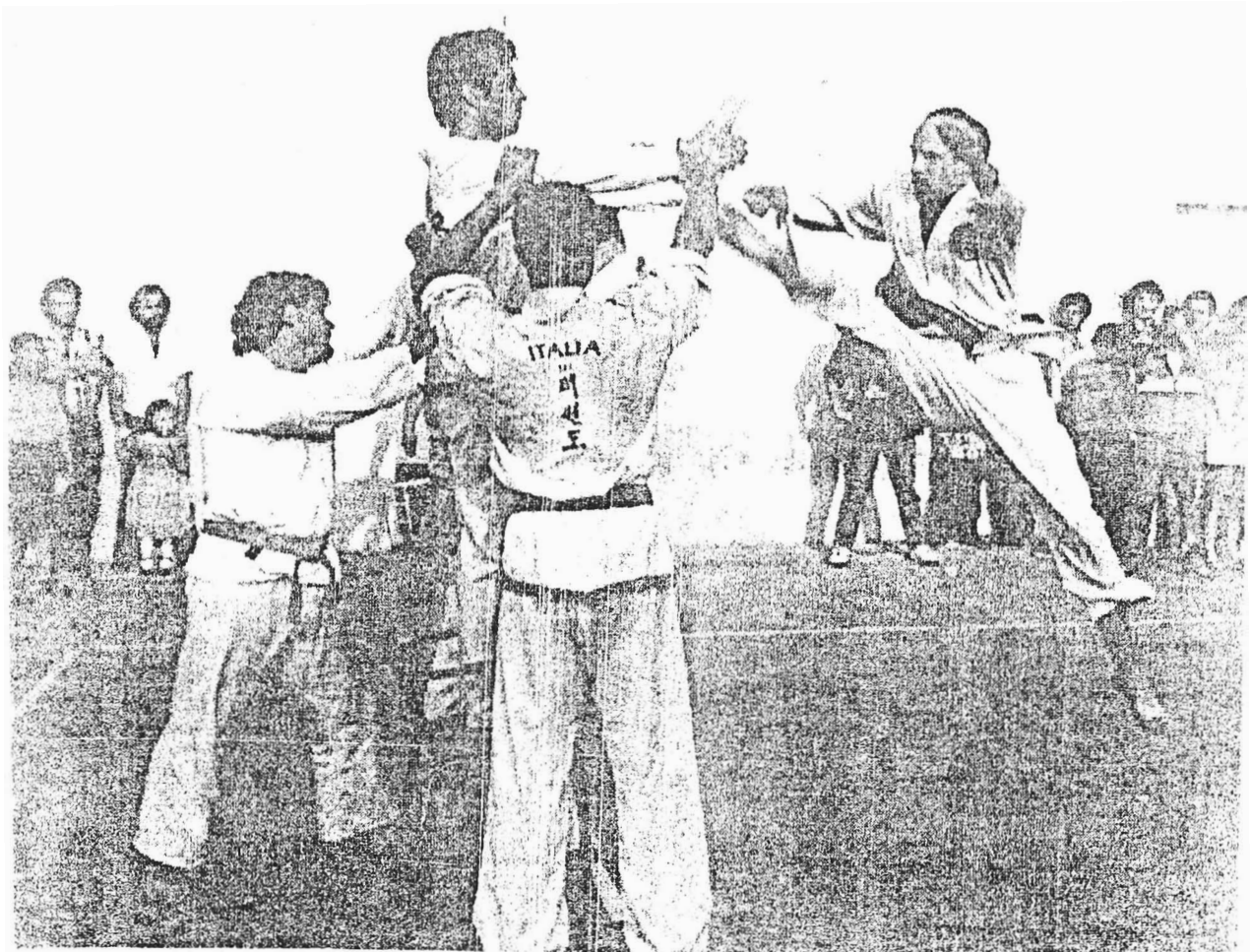
Therefore, it's important to deal with my own values and personal problems, to get a clear view on them, so that I can face those of others, with less preconditions to make a more objective judgement.

In human matters such as those in the social profit sector, it is important to make good and well balanced judgements, based on observations of different facts and phenomenological behaviour; and affirmed by scientific tests. Therefore, teamwork is very important, so that we can correct each other, to avoid as many mistakes as possible. My position in our team, has some aspects of my 'judging soul', by which I try to reach a consensus in difficult matters, rather than to make compromises between different points of view. That's why discussing about someone's future, must lead to 'quality decisions', instead of making myself or colleagues happy by pushing through one single opinion.

Another aspect of my engagement in society, is my syndicalism, in which I try to stand up for the rights of my fellow-workers and colleagues in the hospital. Constantly, you have to make choices in life, about which information you'll believe, about whose side you are on. So, I think it's better to do it very consciously and thoughtfully, than by thinking that you don't need to make choices. Because that is a rather irrational thought, that violates the truth. But I was saying something about my engagement, and why I am doing what I do. I believe in the power of unification, the power of the people, the collectivistic power, which can really change society and living (working) conditions. The power that can really influence the opinion of governments and countries (e.g. the strikes against the war in Iraq and Vietnam; the "antiglobalist"-movement all around the world; people who come up for their own fabric to keep their jobs, and succeed in their cause), is the power where I am prepared to fight for, if necessary, with my capacities and faults.

In Taekwon-Do, I am engaged in organizing everything that has something to do with refereeing in Belgium. I give referee-courses, I organize the internal referee-affairs of (open) championships or interclub in Belgium. I try to help pupils and teachers of different schools, to train Taekwon-Do as a martial art, the way I see it and with my abilities, within the reality of my time-schedule. Especially in the school "Gebaek" in the city of Lokeren (near Ghent), where I am practising Taekwon-Do myself, and help the school owner -Ms. Van Driessche- to train the pupils (e.g. the 'new seniors' above 30 years, who have just started to practise Taekwon-Do), I try to set an example for our pupils and their parents or families.

Years ago, I asked myself why I was so good in judging, and not a specialist in fighting, for example. It has a lot to do with who I am, the way I function in general, and in daily life. It has something to do with the way that my personality is structured, the way I deal with internal and external aggression. And I still have a long way to go, but I already know that my capacities as a referee, have a lot to do with the way I look at people. This thesis might be an example of that. And I also hope to make improvements in that matter in the years that lay ahead.





## **Final conclusions.**

I hope that this thesis can be used as an instrument, to help people think about what they are doing in Taekwon-Do (and in life, perhaps);  
about the different levels on which they can practise a martial art;  
about the differences between a (fighting) sport and a martial art.

For me, it was a very intense and interesting experience to make this thesis, the study was not so facile, because I had to deal with a lot of problems.

The English language, for example, but also the different philosophical ideologies and technological terms.

It took me a lot of preparation time, to read many books around the subject, and to make a distilled and coherent story about it.

Of course, it is by practising Taekwon-Do for many years, and its physical and mental effects, that I was able to see through the techniques, and to catch a glimpse of what Taekwon-Do as a martial art has to offer.

I realize more than ever, that the way to become a master is still far away!

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