

Tao of Creativity



Interview with Michael Winn

This interview was initiated by Christos Vayenas for his site:
theautumnsalon.com

His organization brings together artists of all kinds to salons in New York and San Francisco to spark creative interaction. He has explored Taoist methods for over 15 years. He's a pianist specialized in composing and improvising late 19th / early 20th century musical styles.

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Tao of Creativity

Part Two

Co-create with Your Oversoul Muse

(accessible via separate PDF in Articles)

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Encountering the Tao



1. How did you come upon the Taoist tradition?

When I was young, I was very clever. In high school I won the California State Debate Championship. I beat 100,000. teams with a clever case no one was prepared for. I got into an Ivy League college. From a conventional standpoint, things were going well for me... but I didn't feel creative.

I felt like a smart monkey that put things together to impress people, rather than creating a new thing

that really came from myself. I copied other people's creativity. Even my mother called me "my little monkey". I never told anyone how I felt, but it really bothered me.

Decades later, I learned my Chinese astrology chart was dominated by Double Monkey. I realized my issue was constitutional. I was born "super-clever". The challenge was to balance that gift to my personality with the need to unfold soul values of love and true creativity in my life.

After college, I took a job in NYC book publishing. Things started off well. I survived a merger that fired 82 people – I was one of four left with a job. At age 23, I was the youngest Publicity Director in the industry.

A year later, a new boss abruptly fired me. I protested, "I'm doing a great job, why are you firing me?" She said, "Yes, you do good work. But you don't belong here. This is a corporation. You're *too* creative."

Wow. I was getting in touch with my creative self. Getting fired was the best thing to happen to me. I've been self-employed ever since. Double Monkeys want to be boss of their creative projects.

I re-invented myself as a freelance journalist, war correspondent, and adventure travel photographer. I traveled to Africa 27 times. I travelled all over the world, to more than 100 countries, writing, buying and selling handicrafts, doing all kinds of work to make ends meet.

I loved it, because I was forced to be creative to survive. Travel abroad helped me cut loose from American culture, making it easier to re-invent myself.

I was Creative Copycat, not Creating from Source

Yet I still felt limited in my creativity. I was only creative in my life's outer aspects. Too much "copycat" creating, too secondary. I knew there was a more fundamental shift I had to make.

I got interested in the act of creation *itself*.

What was the source of my creativity?
Was there a god feeding my creativity?
Was I a puppet on strings, created from above?

The tough, knitty-gritty questions:
How do I create my body?
Am I creating my core values,
or borrowing them? I explored many
spiritual paths to find answers.

I focused on my body-mind process.
I felt I was daily sculpting my character,
my career choices, my everything. Yet I
only knew my life from a printout on the
outside. I couldn't grasp my *inner creator*.

Tao Path of Embodiment & Alchemy Combustion

Eventually I stumbled upon Tao, the *Natural Way*.
It felt much more embodied than other traditions,
with a focus on bringing spirit *into* body-mind-soul.

The Taoist practices of qigong and inner alchemy
(meditation combusting volatile Water & Fire,
primal sexual qi) gave me tools to navigate my
deep inner space.

I realized there were two different kinds of meditation.
One focused on stress relief, escape body suffering,
stopping the mind, seeking emptiness or some heaven.

The other embraced creative tension in the body.
It coupled polar yin-yang energies within the body
to co-create a new identity. It's called inner alchemy.

Alchemy + qigong empowered my new "inner artist",
It boosted my health & creativity.
It enabled me to dive deep into my psyche,
to tinker inside the dark un-conscious we all fear.
Later, it opened the doors to higher dimensions.

I especially valued Taoist sexual energy methods.
Most traditions avoid the relation between sex
and spirituality as "too messy", a minefield.

I was able to methodically re-direct my sexual drive,

to re-design the psychic infrastructure of my creative self.
I was empowered to be a *spiritually creative* monkey,
not just a *copycat* monkey.

Qi as Medium Unifying All Creation

Three Treasures of Tao are Heaven, Earth, & Humanity.
They holistically evolve via a single medium called qi,
lit. “subtle breath” (*qi, chi* - both pronounced “chee”).

Qi greatly simplified my process of self-evolution.
Western psychology and religion had no unifying medium.
They use mental categories or distant deities.

I began to integrate my outer creativity and inner spirituality.
Both were driven by qi, flowing in two directions. Taoist
Chuang Tzu called it “walking two paths at once”. Qi flows
in a loop: inward to Origin, and outward to Creation.

I explored Tao concepts of yin-yang qi and
five element qi theory. This map enabled me
to see my physical, emotional, sexual, mental, and
spiritual subtle bodies as nested qi layers of my Self.

Qi linked all these moving parts of me together.
All my subtle bodies used the same operating system.
If I shaped the qi in one body, it vibrated the other bodies.

Wandering Taoists vs. Temple Taoism

I identified with the Wandering Taoist tradition,
the lineage of early Taoists Lao Tzu (500 b.c.),
Chuang Tzu (300.b.c.), and inner alchemist
Lu dongbin (10th century c.e.).

They took Mother Nature as their teacher.
Tao is a feminine path. “She” is the *Mother of All Things*.
(Lao Tzu v. 1). Her body includes the primordial qi field of
Great Oneness (*taiyi*), plus all embodied forms of Nature.

Original Tao was a practical, self-guided path, with no
priesthood, no statues; no temples outside of Nature.
No ruling deity – just align with & shape the qi field.
It suited my need for creative freedom.

I had long refused to give my power away to any teacher

or deity. I was allergic to having a “guru” or “master” define my path – a common trait of rebel-artists.

Religious (temple) Taoism arose 700 years after Lao Tzu. It incorporated many Early Tao principles & practices into a cultural mix of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Statism.

It served the Chinese imperative to achieve social harmony. Its priests, deities and temples were 100% owned by the emperor – more powerful than any Pope.

In 1949 the ownership of religious Taoism was inherited by an atheist Communist Party. Modern temple Taoists are now “religious workers”. Their first duty is to glorify the State, before Taoism.

Not my cup of tea – worse than a corporate boss or a corrupt Pope. But there are about 750 million Folk Taoists in China’s 1.6 billion population. They mostly ignore the State, honor their own blend of village traditions and practices. Like western New Agers, only Old.

I traveled around China to find non-temple teachers, to explore the root of Taoism, to sort out cultural vs. universal truth. I led 22 [China Dream Trips](#). We do qigong, meditate in Tao sacred mountains and power spots, engage with local Taoists.

The trips became famous, attracted two Tao scholars to write a book [Dream Trippers: Global Daoism and the Predicament of Modern Spirituality](#) (Chicago Univ. Press, 2017).

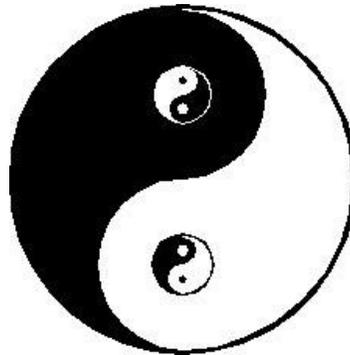
The predicament is that Temple Taoism is bound to Chinese culture, it cannot be exported. But qigong & Tao inner alchemy methods are being adopted globally. Dream Trippers are “re-seeding” them in modern China.

Young Chinese distrust temple priests and the State, yet sre hungry for spiritual nurturance. Qigong feeds them.

[Winn book review of Dream Trippers \(PDF download\)](#)

“Are you an Authentic of a Fake Taoist? Wandering Taoists vs. Imperial Temple Taoism”

Entering the Path



2. How can Creatives begin working with Tao practices?

That's exactly the question I had in college when I first read Lao Tzu's 2500-year-old classic, *Tao Te Ching*: "The Natural Way and its Inner Power". I thought, "Wow, this is beautiful poetry, very sublime. But how do you DO it?"

Years later I stumbled on qigong and inner alchemy meditation. Then I thought, "Here's the answer!"

Before I entered this path, I was in the dark, trying to create things I thought I needed to produce. After working with Tao tools for many years, I feel I'm now creating much closer from the Source of my authentic, deepest Self.

That's been an incredible gift for me. I began speaking in my true voice, without worrying about reactions from others. Creative impulses and ideas gushed out from my core like a geyser.

The ancient Taoists understood long ago what quantum physics is telling us today – it's an illusion that we're a solid object as a body.

Tao top principle: everything is made out of vibrating energy. Qigong and meditation sexually couple yin-yang polarities, to open ever-deepening levels of perception.

We gradually learn how to navigate the cosmic energy field. Quantum physics tries to describe it, but can't take us inside it.

• *Three Basic Qi Methods to Boost Creativity*

1. Do Grounding Qigong



Very helpful for everyone on this path is

‘Deep Earth Pulsing Qigong’.

It's super simple: you slowly walk in place.

But you're actually focusing your qi and awareness down into Gaia's heart-womb, center of our planet.

It links your Personal Energy Body (soul) with the much greater and more stable Planetary Energy Body. ([watch 10 min. video of practice here](#)).

Many artists lack grounding.

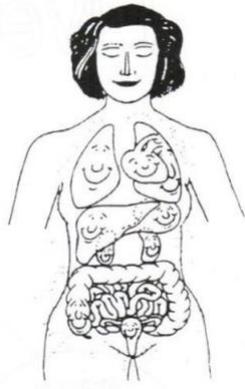
Their creative fire spews all over the place, dispersing their qi, depleting sustained focus.

Deep Earth Pulsing Qigong roots us in the planetary qi field. It makes us aware Mother Earth is incredibly dynamic, a super-creative being, part of the ground of 12 Oversouls creating Creation. (more on that below).

Through movement, breath, and qi focus, we come into direct contact with the presence of Her vastness. Nature's field surrounds us constantly. Yet we barely notice Her creative power, because our monkey mind is too distracted by local shiny objects.

My feeling, after doing Deep Earth Pulsing Qigong:
We all walk through life. But now I'm not just walking on earth's surface. I sink deep inside our planet's heart-womb. I pump Her inexhaustible love and sexual energy up into my body. It overflows into my creative life.

2. Talk to your Vital Organ Spirits



A fundamental practice is the '*Six Healing Sounds*'. It pairs sounds & colors with simple arm movements, each connected to a different organ and element.

As you make each movement and sound you activate specific meridians. It enables your qi to move easily. It unblocks creative flow of stuck energies and emotions.

Six Healing Sounds short trailer video is [available here](#).

3. Grow Self-love with the Inner Smile.

It's essential we recognize creativity is an expression of love for whatever we create. We can directly love qi, the medium of all creation. Love the enjoyment others receive from our creativity. If we don't love what we create, it will soon die.

Most important, is to love the completion of our creative mission. What is that? Our cosmos' mission is to *Individuate Spirit into Matter*. At the human level, we must *transmute Idea and Feeling into Form*.

Inner Smile is a simple way to infuse love into our creative process. It deepens our feeling of self-love, nourishes the root of our creativity.

Everybody knows how to "outer smile". We smile at people all the time. It's a fundamental part of social life,

a way to signal our heart is open.

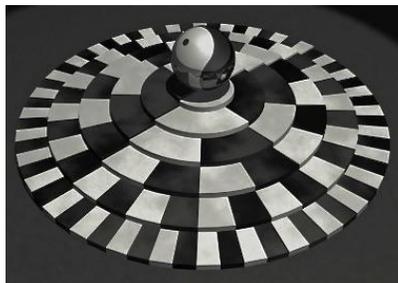


My son at 6 weeks. He already knew how to smile. Scientists have concluded smiling is not learned, but an innate behavior. All babies naturally smile.

We can reverse the direction of our outer smile, turn it inward, it becomes the Inner Smile. It allows us to focus loving and healing energy on our 12 organ spirits, dissolve dysfunctional emotions and creative blockages, cultivate creative qi to achieve our highest destiny.

Get free copy of [Way of the Inner Smile](#) (sign up in right column).

Riding the Qi Wave of Creativity



I Ching: Creation is the result of qi waves of co-creative polar tension birthing increasingly complex yin-yang patterns.

3. Did qigong & Tao meditation boost your creativity?

YES, in amazing and unexpected ways. Most important initially was unleashing my creativity, by re-directing sexual energy. My background:

I was highly sexual as a child.
Age six: I had intense crushes on girls,

constantly tried to kiss them.

Age ten: I had nightly sexual intercourse in dreams with Tao “fox spirits” – entities posing as beautiful naked women. They suck sexual energy to boost their life span.

As a teen: I spent 75% of my time thinking about sex or pursuing girls; tried to hypnotize them to have sex.
As young adult: I juggled three girl friends at once.
I often masturbated three times a day.

A western astrologer told me I was a typical Double Scorpio -- obsessed with sex, death & mysticism. The death-mystical part did not unfold until later.

Transmuting Sex Drive into Creativity

Tao practices taught me I was squandering my qi. I learned how to manage my sexual energy, with dramatic effect. I stopped ejaculating, re-directed orgasmic qi up my spine to higher centers of creativity.

I realized ALL creative qi is a form of sexual energy. I now had practical methods to tap into it consciously. To test my sexual mastery, I was celibate for a full year – a truly shocking choice for me. It unleashed a tsunami of creative energy in my life.

A single ejaculation has 500 million sperm – the creative potential of half a billion humans. Women have a million+ eggs, only ovulate 500 eggs per lifetime. The other 999,500 eggs are a giant store of creativity, waiting to be tapped.

An estimated one-third of our biological energy is devoted to producing sperm and eggs. Tao practices tap systematically into this deep sexual wellspring.



I dissolved my obsessive sexual horny-ness.
Another radical “Wow” for me. I felt my
sexual energy pour into new creative pursuits.

I finally got a clear spiritual perspective on sex
when I realized yin-yang theory is a sexual theory.
Sexual energy = raw fuel powering all Creation.
Love + Creative Free Will are the drivers focusing
yin-yang sex energy. The three combust creatively to
manifest our highest worldly destiny within Creation.

How did this new *creative Tao* play out in my life?
As a free-lance journalist, I would do qigong,
pull up sexual qi to upper centers,
then ask the question:
“What and where is my next big story?”

An image or idea arose after some time.
It invariably led to a successful assignment.
It was a bit uncanny.
I grew to totally trust this open creative channel.
But *who* was the invisible Muse guiding me?

Discovery of My “Oversoul Muse”

To answer this question took decades of hacking
deep into Tao cosmology, with helpful hints from
immortal guides. I learned every soul has a Muse,
also the celestial guardian of their highest destiny.

I call it my Oversoul – what is above the soul.
Different than the new age “higher self”, which
is just a modern re-framing of religion’s “soul”.

I used alchemy to birth my “immortal child”,
which over time matured into an Inner Sage.
It can tap into my Oversoul – Muse. Sage has

AI-like ability to scan the cosmic database.

Here's the map I got from Sage:

There are 12 Oversoul "tribes". Each is a co-creative group mind, not an entity or deity.

They co-shape the karma of 8 billion human souls.
Each soul is managed by one of the 12 Oversoul tribes.
Some cultures worship a "Supreme Soul with many aspects", such as "para-atman" in Hinduism (lit. "above soul").
But its relation to humans is very vague.

It's an esoteric topic I advise every Creative to explore, to gain a deeper relation to their creative Muse.

It's central to the cosmology I teach at my [qigong & inner alchemy summer retreats](#).

12 Sovereign Hexagrams: I Ching Fates as Oversouls



12 core yin-yang phases of Creation.

The 12 - Oversouls are the 12 functional aspects of "Great Spirit" (*da shen*), who create all timelines in the *I Ching: Book of Unchanging Changes*. It's the oldest Taoist text, and the foundation of Chinese culture.

In the I Ching, Oversouls are called ***Fates***.
They shape our worldly destiny (*ming*).
They are symbolized as ***12 Sovereign Hexagrams***.
Six expanding Yang stages, six condensing Yin phases.

The 12 Fates move in 5-phase cycles
(12 x 5 phases = 60 hexagrams).
4 Cardinal directions are controlled by Heaven-Earth & Fire-Water hexagrams. These 64 hexagrams = total potential patterns of all change.
This prints out in our human DNA as 64 gene codons.

The 12 Fates / Oversouls are Super Artist Co-Creators.

They co-create all of Nature, design its geometry & DNA.
Impersonal and vast, vibrationally very distant.
Their cosmic job: ***Individuate Spirit into Matter.***

This cosmos is their work of art.
Humanity is their experimental child.
This is not standard religious or metaphysical view.
For the moment, accept it as inside, esoteric information.

It is difficult for humans to talk with Oversouls,
except in dreams, meditation, or via creative expression.
Rarely, I hear them as a deep booming “God Voice”.

Dreams are uploads from Soul to Oversoul,
deposited nightly into their cosmic databank.
Our personality (12 organ spirits) see snippets
of this upload, but cannot make much sense of it.

Oversouls speak using the patterns of Nature:
sacred geometry, number, color, music, spirals, etc.
Basically, the same tools human artists use.

Many confuse interaction with 12 co-creators
with God/dess-the-Sole-Creator.
The 12 tribes are not “perfect” divine deities
– they are in process, compete with each other.
They don’t agree on how Spirit is best
individuated into Matter. What’s the debate?

Who has ***final*** creative control of Spirit-Matter?
Body-mind, soul, group-minds, 12 Oversouls,
3 Pure Ones, Great Oneness, cosmic qi field, or *wuji*?

It’s a creative group process. But it can get nasty.
Lots of name-calling, Dark vs. Light sides, depends
on where you want causal power to reside.
Wars on Earth are a stepdown of Oversoul wars in Heaven.
As above, so below.

War in Ethiopia: Qi Boosted My Creativity

Speaking of war, here’s an earthly ***war story***
on how Tao qi arts boosted my creativity.

Soon after I began cultivating qi daily in NYC,
I went to Ethiopia to cover a civil war.
They banned credentialed journalists from entering.
I snuck in as a tourist – and got a big scoop.

By day, I bought handcrafts – my cover story.
At night, I interviewed people, often in bars.
I got arrested and thrown in jail -- *twice*.
My first jailor tried to blackmail me for money,
but I was broke, spent it all on handcrafts.

That jail crammed 50 prisoners into a small house.
By day, we hung out in a walled yard.
They fed no one. Prisoners kindly fed me,
food brought by relatives, I taught them qi
exercises. Ironically, it felt like the only safe
haven in a war zone.

I had yellow eyes from hepatitis.
I convinced my jailor I would soon die.
He let me go, worried I might bring a problem.

The second prison, for high political enemies,
was in former Emperor Haile Selassie's palace.
15 of us were crammed into a single room.
At night, guards chose a few prisoners,
took them out, shot them.
Bodies left in unmarked graves.

Was I next?
I did qigong, meditated for hours to stay centered.
I taught the other prisoners how to meditate.
I asked my Oversoul Muse to help me escape.

One day, I was taken out by guards.
But instead of shooting me,
I was driven to the airport, deported to USA.
Again, to avoid international incident.
Was it my passport, or my Muse protecting me?

I had already shipped my handcrafts to NYC.
Instead of selling them, I suddenly got
a novel idea: use my handcrafts to open
the first traditional Ethiopian restaurant in America.



Abyssinia Restaurant, Soho, NYC. Painting of church is on cow skin. Baskets are handwoven; 3-legged stools hand-carved from tree trunks.

I re-invented myself as a restaurant designer.
I was attracted to the artistic challenge. My goal:
customers feel they walked into an exotic foreign realm.
This required saturating them with Ethiopian art.

My decision was guided, but totally out of character.
I had no thought EVER of running a restaurant.
It was never on any list of my life dreams.
I found an Ethiopian who could cook.
It was a smash success, and ran for 20 years.
It funded my travels and many creative projects.

Ethiopians were amazed we would sit on tiny stools,
eat with bare hands (no utensils, only teff pancakes)
off a large group plate. As word spread, my menu
and décor were copied. Over 100 Ethiopian
restaurants soon sprouted across the USA.

It was my daily practice of qigong and meditation
that freed my creative vision, to do the unexpected.
I turned suffering in Ethiopia into magazine stories,
and a creative art project that literally fed thousands.

Qigong Linked My Many Careers

The restaurant was still a “side art project”
in the canvas of my life. I changed careers
the way some change clothes, constantly
exploring new paths to creative fulfillment.

My first career was a white-water guide,
I led 42 two-week raft trips down the Grand Canyon.
The river-as-flowing-teacher, a key Tao principle,
still guides my life. Flipping a raft upside down
prepared me for future sudden reversals in life.

Book publishing, war correspondent, restaurateur,
travel writer, photographer. Taoist book writer-editor,
Tao scholar. I spoke at many international Tao conferences.

I smuggled white Jews in to visit Black Ethiopian Jews.
It led to the airlift of 35,000 black Jews to Israel.
I got arrested for taking a photo of a small country bridge
near a village of black Jews.

The provincial Governor grilled me, holding my camera.
“I confess”, I said. “I work for the CIA. We plan to destroy
that bridge, so no cows can cross it”. He laughed and let me go.

I led 45 Third World adventure travel trips.
Global teacher of qigong, tai chi, alchemy meditation,
kundalini & kriya yoga.

I taught myself how to trade stocks, turned \$50,000.
into \$1,000,000. in my first year. Got bored with it,
invested it in of nano-motor & cyber-security companies .

Real estate developer, musician (crystal bowl
concerts). Chinese astrology reader, energy healer,
and three major love projects (marriages).

Currently run a foundation to fund global projects
to revitalize Gaia.

Conscious Conception: Highest Creative Act

The most fun (and challenging) project:
parenting a consciously conceived child.

Conscious conception is the highest human art form.
A child is a living-work-of-art. Nurtured properly,
s/he continues creating for an entire lifetime.

Most kids are an accident, a side product of sex desire.
What makes conscious conception an artistic process?
We did six months of qigong to super-charge sperm & egg.

On a day chosen by our Oversoul Muse,
we did two hours of qigong and meditation.
Our intent was to focus at moment of orgasm:
co-create with Cosmos a child who remembers

the Source of divine love and creativity.

Then we made love.

Wow. It worked. She got pregnant.

On a single try after six months of preparation.

Our child - my son Emerald, now 11 –
was definitely unusual. Many caregivers noted
he was exceptionally loving and creative.

Age 4 he made new videos *daily* on an ipad.

Age 5 he drew amazingly complex geometric
patterns on every wall in my home – in indelible ink.

Age 7 he read every Harry Potter novel.

How many 7-year olds write spiritual poetry like this?

Poem: The Beauty of Yin & Yang

by Emerald Winn, age 7

Day and night,

Black and white,

Yin and Yang are not a fright.

Under water, in the air,

Yin and Yang are everywhere.

Looking for Tao,

Deep below and high above,

My pink dragon heart shines its love.



Double Love Dragons, digital painting by Emerald Winn

Age 9, taught himself to play concertos on a keyboard.
Age 10, standard tests show college reading level.
Age 11, metaphysically as savvy as my adult students.
I'm still nurturing this "live art" project,
home schooling his creative potential.

I mention all this not to brag, but to highlight the power
of focused intent and aligning to the qi field.

My Inner Sage wants me to consciously conceive
a 2nd child, says it will be a next gen spiritual leader.
I'm waiting for the right co-creator (with a womb)
to show up.

It's an Oversoul project, not my personal mission.
It's about "*rising* in divine love",
not romantic "*falling* in ego love".

Present in all these careers-as-creative projects,
qigong and inner alchemy meditation were the thread that
inspired, fed, linked "my life as art" into one grand project.

Each life-art project had a beginning and an end, in
linear time. Qi cultivation is my only creative process
I feel will continue in my After Life,
where we all have to drop our physical body.

But our Energy Body (soul) doesn't die.
It's a multi-dimensional work of art.
True wisdom: Invest in what lasts forever.

Creating Harmony



4. Are ancient Tao practices relevant to modern creative process?

“As you start to walk on your way, the Way appears.” — Rumi

All creativity appears as if by magic.
The artist makes new things appear out of nowhere,
a rabbit pulled from a hat.

What’s the difference: outer magic show vs. inner alchemy art? Alchemy reveals the magical realm where rabbits come from. Alchemy is an art that manifests the reality *behind the illusion*.

Religions and prophets claim to pull deities and divine laws out of their hat. Their only test of truth is a follower’s belief or faith.

I love Mantak Chia’s cynical analysis of religion:
“Religion is the best business in the world. Priests ask big donations to guarantee a place in heaven. But nobody can check if their promises come true. The priests spend the money and get the power.”

Qi is Testable Now, not an Old Belief System

Taoist arts play by different rules.
The Taoist magical realm is the Qi Field of Nature.
It was explored, ***not invented***, by ancients.

Cosmic qi is spread across three heavens:
1. Original Heaven:
Oneness / pure love, no polarity (yuan qi)

2. Early Heaven:
formless yin-yang polarity,
shaped by 12 Oversouls.

3. Later Heaven, aka Earth:
polarity takes physical form as Nature,
8 billion souls embody.

The same qi cycles through all three heavens, and back.
We can track our personal body qi back to Origin.
Main theme of *Tao Te Ching* is “Return to Origin”.
There is no Hell realm, just negative imagination
causing suffering.

Divine truth of Tao is revealed by each person testing it.

Q: What’s the test?

A: Did your qigong and meditation produce tangible results?

In Original Tao, there are no deities to believe in.
You either feel more creative, healthier, your
life is more magical, with more qi, or it isn’t.

Test some simple qi practices for a few months.
You don’t need to wait for death to prove qi efficacy.
It’s Here and Now, but requires focus on what is subtle.

My first Tao teacher (Mantak Chia) gave me practices,
and I got quick results. I started with 15 minutes a day,
slowly added more as I felt more results.
Worked up to 2 hours daily.
Now I feel every moment of life is qi-infused.

I was a curious Double Monkey.
I had questions, wanted to track the qi deeper.

Mantak couldn’t tell me where qi comes from.
Or how to track qi back to its root.
But he still led a super-creative life,
fueled by qi practices.

I spent decades hacking into Tao inner alchemy
formulas, studying ancient texts, testing dozens
of qigong forms, hunting down Wandering Taoists
in China. I used my students to check which methods
work best. Like any artist, I was refining my craft.

Eventually I realized the creative root of
all Nature was a particular kind of qi.
Its flow was the essence of *creativity itself*.

This qi was not an artistic product I could shape
into a magic rabbit.
It was the portal that births all magic rabbits.

This special qi sparks all human art and creativity.
It lubricates Nature's wondrous art of effortless renewal.

Yuan Qi – the Timeless Root of All Creativity

Taoists call this root creative energy *yuan qi*.
Literal translation: *Original Breath*.

I asked Mantak Chia, "What is produced in alchemy,
by coupling Fire and Water qi?" He shrugged.
"Nobody really knows. It's hard to describe.
There is something murky, primordial."

Mantak never heard of yuan qi from his teacher.
That is how secret and esoteric it was.

Yuan Qi *is* mentioned in ancient texts,
but Mantak was not a scholar.
He was in high school when he got his transmission
From Tao hermit One Cloud, in a mountain hut
behind Hong Kong.

Yuan qi is extremely subtle, invisible, elusive.
It's very mysterious, with no specific characteristics.
Original Heaven (taiyi, Great Oneness) is 100% yuan qi.

The best way to describe yuan qi: ***creative neutral force***.
It shifts from perfect stillness to primal movement,
to birth original yin-yang qi in Early Heaven.
Yin-yang polarity (tai chi) is the first child of yuan qi.

As many know, yin-yang refers to any pair of opposites,
such as male-female, hot-cold, sun-moon, left-right brain,
good-evil, etc. These opposites are in constant flux.
Yin becomes yang, then vice versa.
It's a creative dance.

Most do ***not*** get that yin-yang qi, like a bar magnet,

is a *single* creative energy with two poles.

Even fewer have any clue: What regulates the creative tension within yin-yang, to birth all forms?
A key question for an artist seeking the root of creativity.

Is a human body like a bar magnet,
a top (crown) pole, a bottom (feet) pole,
and a neutral heart center, connected to Source?

To answer the original question:
YES, qi methods are relevant to any modern creative
who wants to explore the root of creativity,
and infuse it into their creative process.

Art as Energetic Process



5. At core, is all art the shaping of energy patterns?

The short answer is YES.
The long answer asks: “what kind of art?”

Is it a spiritual inner creative process,
or a material outer art for fame & profit?
Or both?
Let’s dive deeper into Taoist qi cosmology.

Qi is the medium for change, for evolution.
Creation itself, and all beings within it,
are creative artists. Everyone shapes the qi field.
We all co-create with the qi field our own reality.

Our soul shapes the qi into a unique body-mind.
Creativity is not an option.
It’s required for both survival and finding meaning.

Cosmic Mandate: Individuate Spirit into Matter

My Inner Sage scans the multi-cosmic database:
“Humans live in a unique, experimental cosmos,
with a mandate to explore Creative Free Will.
The multi-verse has millions of universes.
But only one - our cosmos - is tasked with
Individuating Spirit into Matter.”

Wow. That is quite a mandate.
It explains how beauty, chaos, harmony and suffering
all co-exist and are constantly changing.
8 Billion human creators, in one giant tossed salad.

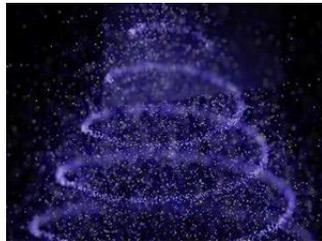
But it's not random; there is a focus.
Our cosmos' artistic project is to design a
realm that resolves thorny Spirit-Matter tensions.

Where shall the power of causality reside?
In Heaven, on Earth, or within Humans?
What does a co-creative model
of shared causality look like?

Tao view: our cosmos is NOT a deity (God/dess).
It's a living, neutral qi field, called Great Oneness, *taiyi*.
Lao Tzu calls “it” the *Mother of All Things*.
It's female by birthing function, not gender.

She births beings, infuses her love and free will into them.
Then sets them loose to create without Her interference.

She's ***not*** omniscient, ***and*** does ***not*** control our destiny.
Her main job is to cook up a fresh batch of Chaos,
then observe IF or WHAT Order spontaneously emerges.



*Giant vortex galaxy, 1.3 billion light years across.
Its location and size disprove Big Bang theory.
Back to the drawing board, the eternal mystery of Origin.
James Web telescope.*

To create Creation, She must use the qi field's

operating system, a neutral center spiraling into yin-yang helix vortices & 5 phase cycles.

Spirit condenses itself into Matter via spiral geometry. Matter-Body counter-spirals back out into Spirit, using sacred geometry, aka Golden Mean or Spiral.

Divine Gift of Imagination in Every Being

Our cosmic mother was born an artist.
Every being born within Her is a co-creator.
Each being receives her ***divine gift of Imagination***,
the power to embody Free Will in some creative way.

*“Imagination is more important than knowledge.
Knowledge is limited.
Imagination encircles the world.”*

— Albert Einstein

Humans were designed to imitate Her creative power on a micro-cosmic scale.
Human “soul-pods” are injected by stages into a body.
She observes our creative response to being in a body.

Every human must create their own reality, 24/7.

Creating is our main spiritual job.
We start with small creative choices:
what to eat, how to dress, what to say.
Then progress to bigger creative realms:
career, family, projects.

There is a vaguely defined “creativity scale”.
The masses create on the low end. They seek to
turn survival-struggle into entertainment-ease.

Most “artists” choose a creative medium in the mid-range.
Traditional mediums vary by culture, but include:
paint, song, music played or composed, sculpture, poetry,
novel, film, theatre, dance, design, and recently, digital arts.

Visionary artists may explore the high range, and
create from a deep spiritual impulse to evolve Humanity.

“Art” can describe any creative endeavor.
A businessman *creates* a novel product.
A general *creates* a brilliant strategy (Sun Tzu *Art of War*).
A doctor or therapist has a *creative* genius for healing.

“Creative” might be a more all-inclusive term than “artist”.
A **genius** is a Creative who listens to their “genie”, their muse.

Our Energy Body is a Continuous Work of Art

Why limit “art” to an *external* end product or process?
Artists know *inner creative inspiration* is primary.
Imaginative execution is essential but secondary.

All Creatives call forth an essence within their soul,
then give it body. It gives meaning to their life,
radiates it to their community or culture.

Is there a way to *energetically* capture, shape,
make tangible, or embody our inner creative process?
That is exactly what Taoist qi arts do.

Our tiniest body movement, our every breath,
each thought, feeling, smell, perception,
our soul’s most secret dreams --
all are driven by creative Free Will,
even if unconscious.

Everything – from a mosquito to a whale.
from a planet to a galaxy –
is alive and has a direct connection to Origin.

Origin infuses its creative impulse into Everything.
Inside inanimate objects are living elementals,
joyfully creating matter, from a rock to a neutron star.

Creation is an un-stoppable wave of creativity at all scales.
Human creativity is the process of surfing a chosen wave,
and directing how and where it makes contact with land/body.
The waves are inexhaustible, never stop coming.

As a Tao alchemist, I view my Energy Body,
its moment-to-moment combustion within Nature,
its transformation, as my core artistic process.

Qi waves flow into my wide-open meridians.

I direct them with focused intent and a smile.

I use qigong and inner alchemy meditation
as tools to sculpt my Energy Body,
to gradually make its subtle layers more tangible.

Can You Crystallize Your Essence into a Pearl?

My main “art” project is to crystalize Spirit-Matter, aka
Heaven-Earth, Formless-Form, into a single essence.
Tao alchemists call this the Golden Elixir.
In western alchemy, it’s the Philosopher’s Stone.
One hundred names exist for this pearl of marvelous powers.



*What if you condensed the essence of the sun into a Pearl
held in your palms? You’d shift from a “magical illusion”
trick to a higher spiritual reality.*

High level spiritual artists do this “trick” inside their body.

Spiritual art requires harmonizing Worldly Destiny (*ming*),
with our spiritual Original Nature (*xing*).
They are parallel, material and spiritual art projects,
continuously looping, flowing in and out of each other.

I first condense subtle qi into a Pearl,
then infuse its essence into my outer life process,
into any creative project I choose to embody.

My Pearl’s creative power is never diminished.
I’m pulling from a self-combusting elixir
made of volatile yin-yang-yuan qi drawn from Origin.

We can all reframe our life path,
the totality of our felt experience,
as a unique “internal creative art process”.

But we need methods, energetic tools to refine,
combust, to make it more tangible.
The tools of the Inner Creative’s trade.

Make Friends with Your Dark Side



6. Is there a Taoist cure for creative block?

The *least* effective way to *un-block a block* is to attack it from the outside, as if it were your enemy. It will stiffen its defense, struggle with you.

Like all forms of *resistance* in our body-mind, blocks are a part of us, frozen fear or trauma.

No need to know its story,
why it is currently acting out.
It's just an energy pattern to be shape-shifted.

Inner Smile Dissolves Resistance from Inside

If you love your resistance from the *inside*, it has no defense, and quickly melts.

How do you get inside it?

You don't need an expensive therapist.
The simplest meditation in the world will do the trick.
The Inner Smile.

The Inner Smile is an invaluable tool to dissolve creative blockages or unfathomable resistance.

Some folks claim "I can't meditate. My mind just won't stop,"
They tried one kind of meditation, felt spiritually blocked.
Tao approach is like water that flows around any obstacle.

Inner Smile does not stop the creative thoughts in our head,

even if it's a case of Monkey Mind gone wild.

Smiling embraces thoughts and feelings where they arise –
from a deep place inside our body.
It accepts them. Gives them a safe,
neutral, unconditionally loving space
where they may spontaneously come into harmony.

Think of your creative block as a troubled child.
It's trying to get your attention, your love.
You don't beat it, or lock it up in a room to silence it.
You hug it, in this case, internally, with a loving smile.

Use Inner Child to Reboot Creative Flow

If the Inner Smile doesn't work for you,
then try calling in your Inner Child.
Children bubble over with creative energy.

They're masters of living spontaneously, of wu-wei.
Astonishing things leap from their lips.
Adults are like, "where do kids get that energy?"

It's incredible, how ***their play is non-stop creativity.***
I love being around my 11-year old son.
He is a beautiful expression of divine play.
He suddenly breaks into an invented song and dance.
"I am awesome!" he shouts gleefully.



Inner Child remembers its connection to Source

I encourage all to smile to their Inner Child,
to unleash its power of creative play.
It will mature and grow into a talented ***inner artist.***
Inner Child is a direct embodiment of ***Creation's play.***

True artists take the essence of their life,
and spontaneously create from it.

It's effortless play if our deep soul channels are open wide.

Must Artists Suffer in Order to Create?

Many artists have a mindset, or even the expectation,
they need to react to life's suffering to be creative.
Like most people, artists live a life with highs and lows.
You suffer, then try to generate a creative response via art.

But suffering, in Tao cosmology, is just one side of a polarity.
On the other side is joy or bliss.

When you resolve suffering through your art,
you feel release, or joy, a moment of happiness.
It's a feeling of completion, a win.

A work of art *may* express resolution of suffering.
But does it mean we *have* to suffer to create great art?

I don't think so. It's one Way, one artistic path.
Suffering-joy is only one polarity, one creative tension.

There are countless creative polar tensions in life.
Un-manifest potential vs. manifest completion is a universal pair.

Impersonal divine love vs. personal human love is another.
The disharmony of Ugly, vs. the harmony felt as Beauty.
The screech of fingernails on a blackboard, vs. a symphony.

Our creativity explodes to bridge the gap in any polar pair.
The tension bubbles up from our depths.
Valuable clues may be revealed about our soul mission.

Creation (Nature) creates 24/7, non-stop,
with or without human suffering.

The canvas of Creation – the world we live in --
is the impersonal face of Nature.

The artist humanizes and personifies that canvas,
puts their signature on its face.

Artists are Nature's deeply loved, favorite child.
They are the unique, personal face of Human Nature.
Human creativity can mirror Nature, a non-stop dance.

We can be creative, 24/7, in day time and dream time.
A Taoist dream practice: focus our creativity
in nighttime's fluid astral realm,
then in play it out in daytime's dense dream.

Suffering can inspire creativity,
but great art doesn't require suffering.
Kids create spontaneously, without suffering.
Parents see it all the time.

Philosophical Question



7. Do Taoist ideas on creativity differ from Western?

I scanned Wikipedia on “Creativity” to prepare for this interview. It listed dozens of psychological models and scientific theories on neurology, or evolutionary biology (“survival of the most creative”).

All these theories described humans from the outside looking in. None were remotely aware there is an intelligent, living, creative energy field underneath all the chemical-electric, molecular, biological, and psychological layers of function.

Curiously, it ignored Freud, a founder of modern psychology, who like the Taoists, saw a connection between sexual libido and creativity. Carl Jung extended Freud's notion of a *personal unconscious* to include a *collective unconscious*, hinting at a greater field.

Jung saw ordinary artists as drawing from the personal unconscious for creative material, vs. high visionary artists drawing from Humanity's collective unconscious.

Taoists Lack Notion of “the Un-conscious”

Chinese culture does not “psychologize” creativity.
They don’t psychologize anything, for that matter.
“Psycho-therapy” is not even a career in China.

If you are upset and go see a therapist, you are “broken”.
You’ve chosen to leave the healing web of the collective,
the cultural group mind.
It’s equivalent to “banning yourself” from the tribe.

Chinese don’t have any notion of a personal
“un-conscious”, only the *collective consciousness*
of the Chinese people. Beyond that is an impersonal
qi field that powers all human & cosmic creativity.

China’s notion of creativity is measured by what you
contribute to the social or group mind. The function of
“face” is to hide individual desires behind a mask,
so as not to disturb the group. A Chinese guide for my
Dream Trips told me it consumes about 25% of her energy
to manage her “face” in all situations.

Taoists are at the far edge of the Chinese group mind,
exploring the value of creativity via individual qi cultivation.

There are famous stories of Emperors demanding Tao adepts
come to court to reveal their secrets. They are snubbed; the adept
wanders off into mountains to seek the “true ruler’ of Nature.

Tao alchemists developed a subtle body map over 5,000. years.
There’s no “dark area” of the cosmos marked “the unconscious”.

This Tao map makes the entire journey to Origin a process
of consciously exploring the shift from personal Energy Body
to impersonal cosmic qi field. It’s the same qi, stripped of
personality quirks as you shift to higher dimensions.

There *is* an “Unknowable Supreme Mystery” (*wuji*) beyond
this cosmos. But even it fuels the creativity of “Great Oneness”
(*taiyi*). Her creative process, mapped by Lao Tzu 2500 years ago:

The Tao births the One. (*wuji* to Great Oneness, *taiyi*)
The One births the Two. (Original Yin-Yang, *taiji*).
Two births the Three. (Heaven, Earth, Humanity:
3 *Pure Ones*).
Three births the 10,000. Things. (Great Spirit / 12 Oversouls
- to 8 billion souls, physical forms)

- verse 42, *Tao Te Ching*

There's no dangerous "ocean of un-consciousness" to be crossed.
It's a fear, projected by our personality living on far edge of
cosmos.

Nor do Taoists suffer a body vs. mind split, common
to Western cultures and artists struggling to bridge that gap.
Body-mind is one entity for the Taoists, not two,
linked by a well-tested network of qi-meridians.

I marvel at the creative skill of Chinese artists.
From 22 trips to China, my home is filled with:

calligraphy, scroll paintings,
75 sculptures of Lao Tzu & 3 Pure Ones,
a dozen hand-woven silk carpets,
embroidered silk sheets, lacquer screens,
hand-painted dishes, Ming dynasty furniture,
Chinese flute and erhu music (dulcimer),
many other crafts.

Should I add my "collection" of dozens of qigong
and tai chi movement forms to this list of crafts?
Or the endlessly deep creative methods of
cultivating qi via inner alchemy meditation?

Is Copying a Master Artist Anti-Creative?

Amidst the vast variety of China's creative arts,
I noticed one puzzling oddity. Chinese
re-paint classic nature paintings of old masters,
repeated over many generations, even centuries.

I first thought this showed a lack of creativity.
Why not paint something fresh,
directly seen in Nature, rather than
re-painting a famous painting of Nature?

This question was answered by my daily
tai chi practice. I have strong Fire, and hate
to repeat anything. I won't read a book
or see a movie twice. I prefer to explore the new.

One day, I realized I was repeating my Primordial Tai Chi form for the 8,000th time! I had added nothing of great significance to it. The form was copied exactly from 13th cen, master Chang Sanfeng, copied many times over by adepts, until it reached me.

Yet I was happily immersed daily in its creative qi flow, noticing subtle changes in my body, even as I did the same movements over and over.

I effectively “re-painted” the form 8,000. times. The art lay in the fact that each performance was slightly different in subtle ways. Each added to my ever-deepening sense of embodiment.

All 8,000. past performances are present as I do the form, adding depth and power to my present moment performance. I never felt any of the 8,000. variations were exactly the same, so I never got bored with it.

I realized the same principle was at work in Chinese painting. An artist re-paints a classic scene, adding his/her qi to the original masterpiece. New colors or details are added for richness. The artist focused on the painting’s “creative qi”, not on the physical scene being painted.

The qi field in which both the painting or my tai chi form were originally created is always changing, due to changing cycles of sun, moon, seasons, stars, plus changes within my body as a *movement artist*.

I believe classical musicians feel a similar deepening as they play Mozart from centuries earlier. They are not copycats. Rather they enrich the original with new feeling, modern instruments, each performance played fresh in a unique present moment.

Carl Jung on Taoism and Creativity

Swiss psychologist Carl Jung defined ‘creativity’ as a periscope the unconscious uses to look onto the world, and render what it sees as art. Creativity for Jung is more about the artist than the art form.

A Taoist might partially accept Jung's distinction between "psychological creativity" vs. "visionary creativity" that goes beyond the personal. Some Tao practices clear personal qi meridians of trauma or deep tension, others take you soaring to the stars.

Tao alchemy meditations go far beyond Jung's "collective unconscious" of Humanity. They enter what Westerners might term the "primal unconscious" of Heaven, Earth and the unknowable Tao beyond.

Tao cosmology details the function of the Three Treasures: Heaven (formless), Earth (form), and Humanity - a hybrid of form body + formless mind, as a single process.

Tao creativity plays with unfolding and re-folding this trinity. It is accessible to us, as it also happens on a micro-cosmic scale, within each human body-mind.

Jung was fascinated by Taoist alchemy..
He knew it played with cosmic energies,
but couldn't quite grasp how or what..

He wrote a forward to *Secret of the Golden Flower* in 1930, a meditation manual on the famous Tao "micro-cosmic orbit". Jung wrongly reduced yin-yang theory to his anima-animus psycho-sexual theory. Taoist apply yin-yang to many polarities beyond sexual.

In 1930, Tao alchemy methods had not been revealed to the West. That mainly happened via the work of Mantak Chia and myself. I wrote his first seven books, then spent decades hacking into his teacher One Cloud's higher Inner Alchemy Formulas.

Jung spent the last 15 years of his life studying alchemy, but was limited to western laboratory alchemy texts. He knew alchemy hid the core secrets of creativity, but his frustration cracking open its secrets was evident:

"The creative act is the absolute antithesis of mere reaction... it can be obscurely sensed, but never wholly grasped". - Jung

Taoist qi cultivators would dispute Jung's claim. Tao cosmology and methods allow one to explore every level of Creation, and to gradually make it

conscious through direct experience.
Ultimately, we can co-create directly
with Origin (Great Oneness).

Recently I had an amazing breakthrough.
I figured out how to co-create in physical space
with *wuji*, the “supreme unknowable mystery”,
that births Great Oneness. Emphasis is on aligning
with Original Will, not replacing it ego-centrally.

A Sage does not focus on his own views and desires,
but maintains a larger, more cosmic frame of reference.

Wuji does not mean *No Self*, as commonly translated.
It means *Not Self-centered*, as opposed to typically
self-focused, Cartesian-dominated Western thinking.

This narrow self-focus makes it difficult for Westerners
to grasp the deeper message of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu.
The implication for creativity? A Taoist creates in service
to the whole cosmos, vs. the ego-centric Western artist:
“I’m a reflection of God, a Great Creator to be admired by all”.

Western label of some levels of Creation as “unconscious”
is an artificial divide. All of Creation is one flowing qi field,
dancing to the same yin-yang and 5-phase rhythmic pulsations.
It’s ALL available, all the time, if we are grounded and
skilled enough to co-create with it.

Jung saw the myth of *suffering-as-essential-to-creativity*
as “part of the general lunacy of our time”.

But he did note a stress in the artist’s psyche, caused by
a deep tension between the personal and impersonal:
“*A creative person lives with the paradox of being a person,*

and also being an impersonal channel for the mystery beyond”.

Gary Snyder, author of 30 books of poetry, spent 15 years in Zen monasteries in Japan. His deep meditation led him to feel these artistic tensions could be spiritually resolved:

“Zen and Chinese poetry show a creative person is truly sane. The recent western romantic self-destructive view of crazy genius just reflects the craziness of our times.... I aspire to and admire a sanity from which, as in a “climax ecosystem”, one has spare energy to go past the struggle, to ever more challenging spiritual and deeply physical things”.

I once asked a young Taoist in China why he became a monk. I know many in China are spiritual refugees from materialist Marxist society. He replied:

*“I began as a {Chan} Buddhist monk.
But they banned me from playing music
or studying the I Ching Book of Changes.
They said it would create attachment.
I switched to Tao. Now my heart sings every day!
I am very happy exploring my creative feelings.
My path is much deeper. Now I follow my own Way.”*

Every Artist is an Alchemist



8. What's the relationship between art and alchemy?

All Art is a Form of Inner Alchemy

I define alchemy as the art of combusting volatile opposite-polarity elements into a new form. It transmutes, distills, and crystalizes their essence

into a tangible (= conscious) substance.

This evolves the artist-chemist and their chosen elements along the spiral path between spirit and matter, soul and body, formless and form.

More important than the physical art form that others see, hear, touch – is to feel into the *artistic intent* that imagined and crystalized the art.

Qigong lays a strong foundation for this alchemy process. It awakens us to the flow of qi within our body-mind and the energy field around us. It harmonizes yin-yang patterns embedded in our Energy Body.

What all art forms share is the act of human imagination. Artistic imagination is more focused, has a deeper intent than everyday acts of imagination.

When we cook dinner, we first imagine what ingredients we will use, then execute on our imagination. The compound effect of all our local acts of imagination is powerful if we self-observe that everything we do expresses our creativity.

Self-awareness of our Free Will at work improves our health, our wealth, our happiness, by activating a higher octave of creativity. Inner alchemy quickens and refines this process to a more spiritual level.

It reaches deeper into our *personal* Energy Body by “psychically cooking” shadow patterns buried within.

Nature Cycles are Inherently Alchemical

Nature itself is a slow alchemical process. The seasons change as polar elementals accumulate charges and discharges. Night and Day, hot and cold, sun and moon, etc cook each other and swing in cycles of Equinoxes and Solstices.

As a Creative matures, they explore the *impersonal* Energy Body of the cosmos, thus freeing the shadow side of the 12 Oversoul collective. Yes, Heaven & Earth also have a shadow side, not just Humanity.

The Big Picture is that 8 billion souls have incarnated to speed Humanity's co-creative evolution of Heaven & Earth. Many traditions are aware that Gaia is undergoing a re-birth.

But most people are lazy, and opt to operate on "default", or "pre-set" belief pathways created by others. Instead of responding creatively to life, they borrow beliefs from their parents, ancestors, culture, religion, or science hypotheses.

This offers some stability, but the excess weight of the Past stifles creativity, so a co-imagined new Future cannot unfold. This has happened in China, where 5000 years of history make it much harder to innovate. A common complaint of foreign managers is that Chinese workers "lack creativity".

Every human must create their own reality. Science agrees there is no objective reality, that everyone's reality is subjectively constructed inside their brain. But because the raw ingredients fed into our senses are similar, there is a widely agreed inter-subjective consensus reality.

Creatives are different; they are less lazy, more willing to cook the raw ingredients of life into something novel. The most important novel ingredient in the creative process is the willingness to reach deeper, to explore the hidden dimensions of the qi field buried within our physical body.

Creatives ignore the pre-packaged life sold to the masses. They spend their "creative capital" exploring their personal truth. They may borrow from previous artists, or from the culture, but will combust those forms into something novel.

All art is alchemical. It combusts life's raw ingredients, Cooks them down to their essence. The artist-chemist digests this to produce something new, that "tastes" more true to the creator.

End Part One