

Note: This is a longer 35-page pre-pub draft of a more condensed book chapter in *Internal Alchemy: Self, Society, and the Quest for Immortality*, ed. Livia Kohn & Robin Wang, Three Pines Press (2008). It mixes personal experience with historical and theoretical overview. Useful for adepts, scholars, and general readers.

Daoist Internal Alchemy in the West

by Michael Winn

The Dao is very great, for it offers human beings 3,600 pathways. Each pathway has 10,000 methods to help us become who we truly are. -Daoist proverb

In 1980 I was introduced to Mantak Chia in his tiny office in New York's Chinatown. A friend had alerted me his energy was "off the charts", and that he was looking for a writer. A 36 year old Thai Chinese Daoist, Chia made his living doing energetic healing. Dr. Young, a Chinese MD with an office next door, sent Chia patients with difficult diseases Western medicine could not cure. Many recovered their health. (Young, 1984).

I had never met a Daoist. "What do you teach?" I asked Mantak Chia. "Immortality", he replied without hesitation. I looked at him skeptically. I was into kundalini yoga, at the time still an underground culture. My yoga friends and the popular Indian gurus of the day only talked about enlightenment. "In China we have records of many hundreds of immortals. In the West, they only talk about one - Jesus", Chia added, as if his cultural boast would allay my skepticism.

I took the bait, and signed up for his first class ever offered to Western students, on the Microcosmic Orbit (*xiao zhontian*). Chia warned me it was only "kindergarten" in the One Cloud system of Daoist internal alchemy. I realized after the training that the orbit was the piece missing from Indian kundalini yoga practice, which directs all qi up the chakras located in the fire channel of the spine, then out the crown. The Daoist approach re-circulates the heaven qi from the crown back down the water channel in the chest to the navel, connecting it to earth qi at the perineum (hui yin), and then spirals it back up the spine again.

The orbit turns the human body into a refinery of whirling qi that mixes the fire and water qi. In One Cloud's second formula, Lesser Water and Fire (*xiao kan li*), the qi moves into a third neutral channel (*zhongmai*) in the very center of the body. The fire and water couples and an alchemical elixir forms, which created a wonderfully warm glowing feeling in my body.

Thus began a lifelong journey in which I became an adept, teacher, scholar and witness to the unfolding of a neidan culture in the West. In addition to documenting One Cloud's *Seven Alchemy Formulas for Immortality* spread widely in the West by Chia's Healing Tao organization, and other streams of Daoist alchemy in the English-speaking West, I will address two other issues. One, how is Daoist inner alchemy tied to Chinese culture and

language? Has the appropriation of neidan resulted in different insights or experiences by Western adepts, who may cultivate energy bodies differently from Chinese adepts? Two, are immortals real, or merely a Chinese cultural projection of a deep human desire to survive death? If immortals are real, are Western adepts in contact with them?

Steady Growth of Neidan in America

In 2008, twenty-eight years after my meeting Mantak Chia, yoga and its notion of enlightenment had surfaced into mainstream American culture, with 12 million yoga practitioners and numerous glossy magazines. Numerous Hindu and Buddhist-inspired centers of meditation had flourished, died and been replaced by new ones. Daoist internal alchemy had emerged from its “doesn’t exist” status, but was barely visible on the cultural horizon. Its biggest presence was the thousand instructors Mantak Chia had certified globally in at least the first formula of One Cloud’s neidan system. In 1980 Chia planned to write a single book. I ended up editing or co-writing seven books with Chia, and by 2008 he had published a total of thirty-three books, along with dozens of videos.

Daoist alchemy has ridden the coattails of surging interest in what might be viewed as *waidan gong*, or external alchemy: Chinese medicine, martial arts, taiji & qigong as health arts. *Qi Journal* and *Empty Vessel: Journal of Contemporary Daoism*, the only magazines to carry occasional articles on neidan, had by 2008 a combined circulation of about 35,000. The internet had created numerous on-line Daoist communities; my website forum, the largest with focus on inner alchemy, HealingDao.com, had 5 million hits in the last 3 years. A Hong Kong website with an English encyclopedia covering esoteric Daoism got over a million hits in 2007.

Oriental healing schools have proliferated. Many are aware Daoist *neidan gong*, or “skill with inner elixir”, is considered the pinnacle of self-realization and healing in China. Why don’t they teach neidan? Neidan training is not well understood, and its complexity and long progressive training make it difficult to commercialize it within the alternative healing market. There’s an acupuncture textbook *Nourishing Destiny: The Inner Tradition of Chinese Medicine*, inspired by Zhang Boduan’s Southern School alchemy text, *Four Hundred Words on the Gold Elixir* (Jarrett, 1999). It highlights neidan, also translated as “internal medicine”, as the highest distillation of the principles behind Chinese medicine.

Jeffrey Yuen, a Daoist priest, opened an accredited school in New York that offers “Classical Chinese Medicine” training based on alchemical principles, and has garnered attention amongst acupuncturists seeking to re-spiritualize “Traditional Chinese Medicine” after the communists sanitized it in the 1950’s. These kinds of publications, internet sites, and schools suggests the Western appropriation of Daoist internal alchemy, while slow compared to yoga and other simpler forms of Eastern meditation, is steadily growing.

Daoist internal alchemy is one of the most difficult aspects of Daoism for Westerners to penetrate. This is partly because very few Chinese themselves can grasp its essence. If it is difficult for Chinese to find a good neidan teacher, it is one hundred times harder for a

Western seeker due to the mistrust of foreigners endemic in Chinese culture, compounded by language barriers and secrecy within the neidan tradition.(Winn, 2008)

The Chinese alchemical literature is fascinating but maddeningly obscure. It wears two masks simultaneously, one promising mystical illumination and immortality, the other promising a grounded spiritual science. It offers a systematic approach to bridging the dark gulf between a fragile human mind in a mortal body and the vast eternal life of the cosmos. The “spiritual science” aspect implies a practicality that is especially attractive to Westerners. Scientific materialism has become a defacto standard of truth that is often pitted against religious faith. Neidan offers a bridge between the two.

Personal Worldly Destiny vs. Impersonal Spiritual Forces

Daoist alchemy seeks to reconcile the creative tension between impersonal Nature and the personal Human. It simultaneously embraces the mystical Oneness/Primal Chaos of the Dao, expressed by an all-penetrating primordial qi field, and the Many-ness of individual bodies, each with a unique destiny, arising within that field. Outer alchemy (waidan), which includes most qigong and traditional Chinese medicine, can help heal individual human bodies, but cannot deliver the experience of Oneness/Chaos. Death and disease could be seen in this context as unconscious ways to return to Oneness/Chaos. Neidan seeks to achieve this return consciously, by embracing the Life Force at its deepest level of ever-changing process. Western science and medicine could be considered a form of external alchemy, as they are ingenious at transforming outer matter/body and producing a surplus of magical technological goods – but are unable to fill empty human hearts.

Neidan is intended to speed the completion of both personal worldly destiny (ming) and the realization of one’s spiritual essence (xing) arising from the impersonal Origin. What distinguishes Daoist internal alchemy from other forms of meditation is that it traditionally involves the creation of a vessel or “dan”. This vessel is variously described as an elixir, pearl, or egg in which the adept’s worldly and spiritual destiny are integrated. This vessel is what survives death, and allows for spiritual immortality. The elixir is progressively “cooked” or refined internally with different methods and goes through different stages.

In One Cloud’s Seven Alchemy formulas, the first widely popular neidan system in the West, the primal Water and Fire elements are caused to merge with each other in an explicitly sexual internal coupling. This union of yin & yang is an alchemical marriage of inner male and inner female. The adept gets “spiritually pregnant”, and forms an immortal embryo in the belly center (xiao *dantian*). This births an immortal child in the adept’s core channel (*zhong mai*), which gradually matures over many years into a sage (*zhenren*) or immortal (*xian*) at the solar plexus in the “golden palace”, heart (*zhongdantian*), third eye (*mingtang*) and crown (*bai hui*).

Birthing and Nurturing One’s Inner Sage

The inner sage may achieve different levels of immortality – human, earthly, heavenly, full celestial immortal, or complete merging with Dao. Different yin-yang forces are

coupled at each level; sexual coupling evolves to a more pure level, i.e. becomes sun-moon coupling, and continues at higher levels of the human collective. These levels may be understood as metaphors for the evolution of human consciousness beyond its mortal limitations. After physical death, spiritual immortals are merged into the vast ocean of cosmic consciousness, but continue evolving and creating within the greater process of the Dao. Physical immortality is not the goal; that would be too fixed and thus not aligned with an ever-changing Dao. Soul immortality would be a mid-level achievement that results in conscious re-incarnation on earth, such as is used by Tibetans to preserve their spiritual culture.

The Daoist alchemical rebirth is not to be confused with the modern Christian "born again" experience arising from sudden acceptance of a new religious belief or deity/Jesus. It may be a dramatic shift in emotional or mental functions of the convert, but is dependent for its nourishment on the religious group or faith in Jesus rather than a crystallization of the internal *qi* field of the adept. By contrast, in One Cloud's alchemy formulas, redemption is achieved by gradually *growing* one's soul, not by suddenly *saving* one's soul.

The Daoist rebirth is a long, gradual process, in which the alchemy adept moves gradually *inward*, refining the polarized and corrupted *qi* of Later Heaven (physical plane) into the balanced and purified *qi* of Early Heaven, a middle plane that holds all possible forms waiting to birth. The adept finally penetrates to the pure field of the original trinity (*yuan jing/qi/shen*) of Primordial Origin/Chaos (*hundun*). This is full "return" to the source of all beings, the cosmic egg before it cracked open. But in some cosmologies, beyond the *hundun* lies the Daoist notion of Supreme Mystery or Unknowable Ultimate (*wuji*), the source from which the primal *qi* field itself arises. This might be compared to a Christian attaining the godhead, and finding that no deity/god resides there, only the primal energy from which God/gods are created.

Is Chinese Language Essential to Learning Alchemy?

One of the most bewildering aspects facing Western seekers is that in China there are thousands of qigong movement forms, meditation (*neigong*) and alchemy (*neidan gong*) systems of internal body-mind training. It's a labyrinth that has grown over the millennia into many paths – medical, martial, spiritual, further subdivided into Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian. It takes years of training to see the myriad methods as expression of a single common deep energetic language. The life force, *qi*, may be guided using external body or breath movement, or shaped by the intention or imagination of a particular aspect of mind/spirit (*shen*) in an internal alchemical operation. Even when the mind surrenders or empties itself to allow the spontaneous movement of the *qi* field – it is still a process that can be viewed as using the same language of *qi*.

One can produce many different word combinations in English or Chinese, all comprehensible because of a common grammar and vocabulary. Likewise, one can create many qigong forms and *neidan* methods, each pattern having a unique effect on the body-mind's *qi* field. Even the feeling of dissolving into what appears to be ultimate emptiness is

just another way to describe the human experience of original breath, or yuan qi, where all the contents of manifest experience are removed or transformed into their original nature.

This view defines qigong ("skill with subtle breath") as a natural body language arising to the "surface" from neidan gong's deeper grammar of qi patterns. (6) Practicing qigong (which include taiji, bagua, and xingyi internal arts) or ritual alchemy forms is like learning the strokes of the qi alphabet. By calming the mind, regulating the breath, and moving one's body in particular patterns, the qi field governing the meridians and energetic centers of the physical body is activated and "speaks back" to one initially as different feelings of energy. Qigong and neidan are not physical or energetic exercises that one "does" in the ordinary sense of action. Rather they are methods of shaping how one communicates. The shape of the inner qi patterns being communicated then shapes the response of one's outer reality.

Written Chinese pictographs are visually richer in association than Western alphabets and thus facilitate grasping the multiple meanings of obscure Daoist terms that describe the subtle movement of qi. However, these pictographs are still intermediary written images, interpreted by the mind's visual functions, and do not by themselves open communication with the deep language patterns underlying them. If speaking or reading Chinese automatically accessed these deep patterns of qi, it would suggest that everyone in China is enlightened, which is doubtful.

Internal alchemy also uses intermediary symbols, but they are neither spoken nor written. This language consists of *qi* channels in the human body as resonating spheres of sensation, feeling, and perceived spiritual qualities. Alchemy requires close observation of these natural body processes, and sometimes employs natural images of the seasons or directions as its language symbols.

The assumption of Daoists is that Nature can talk back to you. When alchemical symbols and feelings are evoked, they shape silent language patterns of response within an omnipresent *qi* field. The written symbols of the Book of Changes (*Yijing*), a foundational classic for all Daoists, uses broken *yin* or solid *yang* lines. These are used by many neidan adepts as a concise shorthand for describing or invoking alchemical processes. Spoken sounds are sometimes used to evoke directional energies, but the response from Nature is silently heard by the adept.

In Daoist alchemy the silent language of qi is an embodied experience that directly touches three levels of a human being. Alchemy transforms the adept's intelligence/spirit (*shen*), subtle breath (*qi*), and body/sexual essence (*jing*) into a created reality. These "three treasures" of the alchemist are a continuum. It's possible to view the deep language speaker and its values as *shen*, the language/words being silently spoken as patterns of *qi*, and the manifest shape of the speech/created reality as *jing*. Beyond these three is the total field of possible expression, the unknown (*wu*). All process happens within the energy body of the alchemist. The internal conversation within the adept is communicated by resonance to the macrocosm of Nature, which mirrors the adepts' *jing-qi-shen-wu* patterns as harmonics in other dimensions.

Biology is also a factor in language, both spoken and deep. A fascinating study showed that Japanese speakers processed vowel sounds and intuitive feelings in their left brain, the opposite of Westerners. Westerners raised from an early age with Japanese language also shifted to left brain intuition.⁹ *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict between Word and Image* posits that Daoist culture, with its right-brained emphasis on femininity, synthesis, holism, simultaneity, and concreteness is an expression of pictographic language (Shlain, 1998). This raises the question whether adepts who speak and write Chinese resonate with nature more easily than Westerners because their brain hemispheric patterns are different. Daoism is described as the "watercourse way", and appears more intuitive than Western culture. This may be an example of how a surface language like Chinese biologically "wires" one into a deeper energetic language, thus facilitating ability to introspect and sense inner body space.

Celestial Masters and its Culture of Daoism

This issue of "qi as a language" raises a question critical to the spread of neidan in the West: in what ways is internal alchemy bound to its Chinese roots? The pictographic written language used by Chinese Daoists is highly technical with very specific meanings for alchemical processes, for which there are no ready equivalent in alphabetic-conceptual English. It's the belief of many Chinese, and even some Westerners who have been initiated into neidan lineages, that Daoist neidan cannot be truly experienced outside the context of Chinese language and culture:

Westerners who seek to learn neidan cannot escape the Christian notions of God and heroic individual salvation enmeshed in their culture and language. Neidan in Chinese is deeply embedded in the hive or group mind of the Chinese culture. The Chinese adept who cultivates immortality is effectively considered to be crazy for being so individualistic in their aspiration. Adepts like Chang San Feng who refuse to serve the Chinese Emperor and live for hundreds of years are showing that their power as an individual immortal is greater than the Son of Heaven who is emperor over all of China. But Chang San Feng's achievement of immortality is not seen as an individual accomplishment. The attainment of supernatural power or great longevity using neidan is instead seen as a validation of the entire Chinese culture, and redeems its collective spiritual endeavor. Western neidan practitioners are not embedded in China's hive culture, and so cannot really participate in this group process. They are striving for themselves only. (Goris, 2009)

Rene Goris has schools in Wuhan, China and Amsterdam that integrate the Zhengyi view of neidan with Chinese medicine. His viewpoint quoted above, that "neidan is Chinese only", is found especially strongly in the Zhengyi or Celestial Master sect, the earliest form of temple Daoism that dates back to 2nd century c.e. Goris dismisses the blossoming of the many 11th century Song dynasty schools of internal alchemy – typified by One Cloud's *Seven Formulas* - as "misguided and bypassing the natural simplicity of wu wei".

Zhengyi is one of two major Daoists sects still functioning in modern China. Zhengyi is famous for creating a complex "celestial bureaucracy" peopled with deities that parallels China's earthly Imperial bureaucracy. One of the earliest books in English on neidan was

The Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang (Saso, 1969?), followed by *The Taoist Body* (Schipper, 1993 UCP). Both described in detail the Celestial Masters alchemical rites, which focused almost exclusively on renewing the community's relation to the cosmos, with scant attention paid to the personal neidan practice of the adept for their own salvation. The Zhengyi tradition was the first time neidan was so explicitly linked to the spiritual mandate of the Emperor to rule China, and thus indeed was deeply embedded in Chinese culture and its authority structure.

The sole attempt to introduce a uniformed Zhengyi lineage in the West with formal ordination was the Orthodox Daoism in America movement spearheaded by Charles Belyea in California in the 1990's. Belyea similarly attacked other Western Daoists on the grounds they were all fundamentally still Christian in outlook and thus not authentically Daoist. The group disbanded after nine years when questions were raised about the authenticity of Belyea's claimed lineage (Phillips, 2008).

Other Westerners have recently taken ordination in *Zhengyi* temples in China and are promoting its deity-calling magical practices (Johnson, 2007-8, EV). This focus on *Zhengyi* magic may be a more successful strategy for attracting Western adherents than trying to adapt its complex alchemical *chiao* rituals of renewal to American culture. But it raises questions as to whether magical practices by themselves are part of neidan. The "great work" of all alchemy, east and west, traditionally focuses on harmonizing and balancing humanity's relation to the cosmic field. Daoist magic, although using similar yin-yang and five phase theory, is a different kind of cultivation that emphasizes personal needs and manifestation skills rather than merging with Dao.

Complete Perfection Daoists in the West

Efforts to transplant the other major uniformed Daoist sect, the Complete Perfection (*Quanzhen*) order, to the West are still in a seminal stage. This sect mixed Daoist neidan with Buddhist notions of hell, Buddhist standards of vegetarianism, asceticism, and monastic celibacy when it was founded in the 12th century. The Quanzhen monk's black top shirt with white leggings, and hair tied in a top knot, is the uniform most widely recognized in China today as "Daoist". Its neidan integrates Daoist alchemical operations with Chan Buddhist methods of passively "facing the wall for 9 years".

Yun Xiang Tseng, a Daoist priest in Ft. Collins, CO, occasionally offers one week neidan retreat intensives. Like many Quanzhen monks who leave mainland China, he married, has three children, and runs a business. This would not be tolerated in mainland Quanzhen monasteries, but is tacitly accepted for priests abroad, and may foreshadow changes in the way internal practices and other Quanzhen beliefs are taught in the West. In 2006 Tseng brought the first large contingent of thirty Complete Perfection monks and nuns from Wudang Mountain to tour in Denver and Austin. They performed Daoist rituals and martial arts displays (cf. wudangtao.com or EV article). Chen hopes to build a Quanzhen temple in the Rocky Mountains. When I asked him how many of his Western students were likely to wear the dress uniform of quanzhen monks, his reply was "none".

China's Daoism Association is headquartered in the White Cloud monastery in Beijing, originally a Buddhist temple given to the Quanzhen order by Genghis Khan. The current president, a Quanzhen monk named Renfarong, made a discreet trip to California in 2007 to investigate sites for building a Quanzhen temple as a bridge to the West. No land was purchased.

Ironically, it is only because of an imperial edict by the barbarian invader Genghis Khan that the Complete Perfection order of monastic Daoism came into the state-approved power status that it still enjoys today. Food stipends and exemption from taxes in a war-torn China quickly swelled the Quanzhen ranks in the 12th century. But it's Quanzhen's broad cultural mandate that is responsible for its longevity. Its founder Wang Chongyang intended it to be a vessel for integrating Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, a popular theme among many Chinese neidan schools. Since integrating these three Chinese religions is not a cultural mandate in America or Europe, it remains to be seen whether Complete Perfection culture will be widely appropriated. A more likely prospect is that aspects of Quanzhen neidan practice and the beliefs that suit them will be extracted by Western adepts.

Evidence of changing attitude by Quanzhen Daoists towards foreigners is also manifested by an increasing number of them being initiated as priests. Alan Redman and two English friends were initiated in China and founded the British Taoist Society (Towler, 2007). Michael Rinaldini from California recently underwent the Quanzhen initiation ceremony and was later empowered to set up ordination in America. Like Redman, the main practices he was taught were chanting Daoist liturgy and zuowang, a meditation on "sitting and forgetting the self". (Rinaldini, 2008). Louis Komjathy, an American scholar of Daoism, was also initiated into Quanzhen, and has translated the entire corpus of fifteen Quanzhen sacred texts. His PhD thesis on Quanzhen details the extensive alchemical operational methods originally taught in the 12th century, but its not clear how many of those are actively being taught today (Komjathy, ___)

Other Chinese Alchemists in the West

The Zhengyi and Quanzhen streams of "temple Daoism", each with their unique form of neidan, are relatively late arrivals in gaining Western adherents. They were preceded by other influences in the West that pre-disposed many Westerners to believe that Daoism was a practical spiritual philosophy rather than an organized religion. Alan Watts, an English ex-Episcopalian priest, first popularized the notion of Tao in America with his books in the 1950's and 60's. Ironically Watts was mainly a Chan/Zen practitioner and Daoist philosopher intellectually in love with the Buddhist notion that emptiness has inherent or absolute existence that allows one to transcend the wheel of life. Watts disliked the internal meditative operations of Daoist alchemy, which are based on the early Daoist premise that emptiness is not absolute, but just an emptying phase within the Dao's process. Emptiness is relative in this view; its function is to the open space at the center of a wheel, from which Dao manifests. (Moeller, 2004, 151).

The Secret of the Golden Flower (Wilhelm,1962), first published in German in 1932, was probably the first book in the West on Daoist alchemical circulation of qi as golden light flowing inside the human body, later known as the microcosmic orbit. Carl G. Jung wrote an introduction, but misunderstood Daoist terminology and unsuccessfully imposed his Western psychological structures of anima-animus on top of the Daoist yin-yang energy channels.

Jung spent the last 15 years of his life *trying* to decode Western alchemical texts as metaphors for psychological processes. Other famous Western thinkers shared his interest in alchemy. Isaac Newton's scientific discoveries were the result of his fascination with alchemy as the mysterious subtle force behind physical gravity. Newton's writings on alchemy far outnumber his treatises that became the backbone of physics. Sir Robert Boyle, father of modern chemistry, was led to his discoveries as a lifelong alchemist. The modern scientific focus on the transmutation of elemental forces is what defines Western science as a laboratory branch of *waidan*, or external alchemy, in the West known as *spagyric arts*.

Daoist inner alchemy thus did not arrive into a vacuum in the West. *The Forge and the Crucible* documents that myths of alchemy exist in all cultures of the planet and precede the development of religion (Eliade, 1962). The most enduring Western influences originate in Egypt. Most famous is the Emerald Tablet, an alchemical treatise whose principles any Daoist *neidan* adept could readily accept (Hauck, 1999). The Egyptian schools of alchemy gave rise to Freemason, Rosicrucian, Theosophical, Gurdjieff, and eventually New Age movements that popularized esotericism in the West.

Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy spread many alchemical methods which esoterically were identified with Atlantis. These Western schools, with the exception of Gurdjieff's Sufi-like dances, generally lacked a body-centered method of meditation. The primary focus was on invoking spiritual forces external to the body. What was missing in the West was a powerful, body-centered, internal energetic science that went beyond intention, invocation, or prayer as ways to systematically focus invisible spiritual powers. Daoist *qigong* and internal alchemy are having a significant influence in filling that gap.

Taoist Yoga: Alchemy & Immortality (Luk,1970) was the first translation of a Daoist alchemy manual to give a detailed sequence of internal operations that were designed to couple prenatal and postnatal qi. Charles Luk coined the term "microcosmic orbit" as a translation for the more literal "small heavenly round", a key meditation practice in many Daoist internal alchemy schools. Without a teacher or sufficient foundation training in Daoist meditation, Luk's complex text was nearly impossible for Western readers to implement. But publication of the text undoubtedly signaled to Mantak Chia, newly arrived in New York in 1976, that there was Western interest in *neidan*. Chia tried to practice from Luk's text but found it too convoluted and abstract. It was similar to many Daoist texts he had read in Chinese that were alchemically encoded to protect non-initiates from gaining access to the Mysteries. This is why it is a given in Chinese circles that you need a teacher and a live transmission to begin *neidan* practice.

Ni Hua Ching was raised as a Tientai Daoist in China, but migrated to Taiwan. In 1976 he was invited by Westerners to found his Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao In Los Angeles. (Johnson, 2009) But publication of *Internal Alchemy: The Natural Way to Immortality* (Ni, 1992) like his other 40 books on Daoism, failed to give concrete neidan techniques that were easily useable by Westerners. Ni belongs to the neidan School of Seclusion that believes alchemy's secret methods should be transmitted only to one or two select disciples (Winn, 2008).

I arranged a meeting between Ni Hua Ching and Mantak Chia in 1987. Ni politely declined to reveal any of his neidan methods despite Chia's insistent probing. Ni invited myself and Mantak Chia to become "Junior Masters of the Tao" under his aegis, which was politely declined. Despite this failed merger of the two most prolific writers on esoteric Daoism in English, Ni's philosophical books prepared the ground for acceptance of Mantak Chia's more practical "how to" neidan teachings.

The translation of texts such as *Understanding Reality, The Book of Balance and Harmony, Opening the Dragon Gate* (Cleary 1987, 1989, 1996), *The Taoist Experience* (Kohn 1993), and China's oldest alchemical classic, the 2nd c.e. *Cantongqi as The Secret of Everlasting Life* (Bertschinger, 1994) further fueled an appetite for Western teachers of internal alchemy. *Taoist Meditation* and *Taoism: Growth of a Religion* (Robinet, 1993, 1997) offered fascinating details of Daoist visioning and a definitive historical perspective on *neidan* relative to other Daoist religious practices. Robinet, one of Europe's great Daoist scholars, notes amongst the many Daoist traditions in the last two millennia, only the schools of inner alchemy offered immortality and the ecstatic experience of a light body for the living practitioner. The rest focus on healing, meeting personal or ancestral needs, invoking deities or worshipping heaven and earth.

These texts in English were immensely helpful to Western seekers hoping to penetrate the secrecy of Daoist esotericism. Students of One Cloud found them helpful in *verifying* the process and cosmology of the alchemical path they had embarked upon, since the spiritual culture of the West offered little support. Translations of *neidan* texts by Eva Wong such as *Cultivating Stillness* and *Tao of Health, Longevity, and Immortality* (1992, 1998) gave Westerners a good understanding of *neidan* principles. Her *Harmonizing Yin and Yang: the Dragon-Tiger Classic* (1997) offered deep operational insights into the alchemical coupling of pre-natal and post-natal forces, but again was useful only for trained adepts who could make those distinctions. Eva Wong later began teaching *neidan* workshops as a lineage holder in the Primordial Limitless Gate School, which traces itself back to Chen Tuan, tenth century hermit of Huashan. (Wong 2008).

One Cloud's Alchemy Takes Root in the West

Mantak Chia was the first Chinese teacher with enough esoteric knowledge and drive to make the Western public widely aware of Daoist neidan as a personal pathway to physical longevity and spiritual immortality. Chia made inner alchemy practical and accessible, no longer a myth in a kung-fu novel or beguiling allusions in mystical poetry about Dao. For the first time, the "hard science" – the operative alchemical secrets of a Chinese school -

was being taught openly, in Western style workshops and retreats, without any secrecy. If you paid, you got the teachings. Chia was bitterly criticized by some Chinese for commercializing neidan, yet most eventually followed his suit.

The Seven Formulas were transmitted to Mantak Chia by One Cloud, a Daoist hermit who searched with limited success in various Quanzhen monasteries for thirty years for the secrets of internal alchemy. His abbot finally told him to "go into the mountains to find a true teacher". On Long White Mountain in northern China near Manchuria, One Cloud found a Daoist who also left his monastery, and *had* found a true teacher of internal alchemy. He transmitted to One Cloud *Seven Formulas for Attaining Immortality*. One Cloud practiced these methods with him and entered into the breatharian state (bigu) for some years, meaning he fed his body on qi alone. (2)

During the mid-1930's, after the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, One Cloud left his mountain abode, and hiked across China on foot and settled in the mountains a few miles behind Hong Kong's Daoist Yuen-Yuen temple. He built a small hut with a dark room for meditation, and healed local people for a living. Mantak Chia was attending high school nearby, and was introduced to One Cloud by a classmate. One Cloud was a simply dressed man who constantly smiled. His only complaint was that eating some bad food after he came down the mountain would cause his early death. He died in 1977 at age 96.

One Cloud's seven formulas resonate with writings attributed to Lu Dongbin, one of the semi-legendary Eight Immortals, around which the "Zhong-Lu" neidan tradition first flourished in the 10 and 11th centuries. Some of One Cloud's practices resemble the operational alchemy teachings preserved by the Complete Perfection tradition, but the higher formulas I have not found any writings about or teachings in China. When I shared these formulas with the Quanzhen vice abbot of Huashan, he gasped and exclaimed, "These are very secret teachings. Very few in China know of them." He had difficulty grasping that they are being openly taught in the West.

The Secret of Mantak Chia's Success in Appropriating Neidan

Mantak Chia was the first Chinese inner alchemy teacher to overcome linguistic and cultural hurdles to build a large Western school of neidan. He was a cross-cultural ice breaker, explosively opening a gap that other Chinese schools of neidan would later use to enter Western culture. I posit five major reasons why Chia's Healing Tao organization succeeded in transplanting neidan to the West.

1. Sexual energy was identified up front as the key alchemical agent of spiritual transformation. Chia's emphasis on cultivating sexual energy – solo or with a partner - clearly distanced him from monastic religious orders in China. Sexuality acted like a "cultural pheromone", and attracted large numbers of seekers dissatisfied with the sexual repression in other paths/religions. Those hoping for quick sexual thrills soon learned they had years of hard cultivation work to do in integrating their inner male and inner female, the primary "fire" and "water" of the early stage of neidan practice. Many dropped out, but the hope for sexual liberation

drew a large starting base of students. As if to punctuate the point of his teachings on sexual vitality, in 2007, at age 64, Mantak Chia fathered his fourth child with a Thai woman 40 years younger than him.

2. The results from inner alchemy were practical, and had the

dependability of a science. Chia's mantra, "You do it, you get it" helped Westerners gain the confidence to engage in the lengthy progressive training that evolved from physical body, to energy body, to spirit body. He augmented this with step-by-step descriptions of neidan methods and printed study materials. He often used language taken from quantum physics or computing metaphors to illustrate his energetic teachings, which made (the male) students more comfortable. The presence of a developmental structure – One Cloud's seven formulas – was also important to the science-based minds of Westerners. They needed to know where and why they are going before they committed to a path.

3. Chinese cultural taboos on secrecy, traditionally honored in neidan

Lineages, were broken. Chia's publications released a flood of esoteric Daoist information at the same time it was happening in esoteric Tibetan, Hindu, Qabalistic, and Christian traditions. Chia transmitted a hermit or "mountain" lineage, and thus was not subject to the many Chinese cultural restrictions found in the monastic tradition of Quanzhen or the celestial bureaucracy of Zhengyi. Decisions were made in America, not China. Chia himself was well suited to cross-religious communication. Raised in a Buddhist country by a mother who was a Christian chaplain, Chia adopted Daoism in high school after he met One Cloud. He often joked that you needed spiritual allies from all traditions when the moment of death came.

In Healing Tao, it was the responsibility of each adept to unfold their own inner truth and destiny. No allegiance to a lineage or prostration before a teacher was demanded, only respect for one's teacher. This was very popular with Westerners. This reflected the early Daoist tradition in which Laozi and Zhuangzi were not "priests" mediating on behalf of "followers", but individual cultivators in direct relationship with the Dao.

4. The Healing Tao organization created in 1983 was shaped by a strong team of Westerners guiding Mantak Chia. Chia was assisted by myself as editor /writer of Healing Tao Books. Chia taught me neidan methods, and after testing them, I found ways to express the highly technical Daoist terms that made them understandable. I kept in Chinese key alchemical terms like jing, qi, and shen - to keep their nuance, rather than watering them down into vague sounding terms like "essence, vitality, and spirit". Most importantly, I presented Chia speaking in my literary voice of a Westerner. The books were translated into dozens of languages. (Chia,1983-89) Juan Li heavily illustrated the books, giving them a spiritual feeling that was essential to Chia's publishing success. The abstractions of neidan needed images to simplify and ground them.

Other Western students showed Chia how to dress, how to organize, and gave him feedback on what was culturally acceptable and useful in a workshop, and what was

not. Chia was a quick learner, but he could not have done it without a support team strongly motivated to integrate Daoist qigong and internal alchemy into their Western minds and lifestyle. In a way, the growth of Healing Tao was very Chinese: the Western students subdued their egos to strengthen their collective “face”, the spread of the alchemical process.

5. Ultimately, it was Mantak Chia’s tireless effort that proved him to be the lead pioneer in bringing neidan to the West. In 2008, after three decades, Chia still had a grueling teaching schedule for 200 days of the year, on four different continents. He does not need the money. What is driving his extraordinary effort? It appears to be his personal sense of destiny, fueled by simple desire to help others spiritually. “I am happy if twenty percent of my students can catch and hold my frequency”, he recently told me. “It takes years of practice, a loving heart, and a lot of work to cultivate immortality”, he added.

Daoism is not a missionary religion. China’s only indigenous religion, it assumes that Chinese culture is the center of human development, and that foreign barbarians will ultimately recognize China’s superior level of refinement. Neidan, the inner sanctum of Daoism, relies on transmission, not on numerical conversion of souls. The assumption is that worthy souls will be attracted to the Daoist teachings; those who don’t seek it do not deserve the Dao.

Many Chinese practitioners of internal alchemy are too introverted to bother transmitting the kind of yang energy that Mantak Chia had naturally. Most Chinese adepts don’t care if they reach large numbers of people - it simply is not their personal destiny. The only imperative within most neidan lineages is to teach one truly worthy soul. This custom, combined with strict secrecy, may ultimately threaten neidan within China with extinction. When I tell Daoists in China that more Westerners are studying neidan than Chinese, they simply shrug. The weight of Chinese culture and its long history is too heavy for them to change the way neidan is taught in China. America offers a spiritual culture of openness in which Daoist experimentation can more easily occur.

It is curious to note that of Chia’s thirty-three books, only one small booklet covers One Cloud’s Second Formula, and nothing has been published on the other five alchemy formulas. This lopsided coverage of One Cloud’s Seven Formulas is not due to secrecy on the part of Mantak Chia. Rather it reflects two factors. One, it is impossible to teach higher alchemy from a book. Students do best with an oral transmission, even if recorded digitally. It allows them to focus internally while listening to guidance. Reading stimulates the eyes and brain, but doesn’t penetrate to the kidney/jing level of psychic substance that is controlled by the function of hearing. This is why as a neidan teacher of the higher formulas I have focused on audio courses rather than written books. (Winn, 2003-8)

Two, the subjects Chia published books on are the ones that Western culture is ready to absorb at this point. Westerners mostly need the First Formula, which covers the fundamental principles of Chinese health. It is focused on harmonizing post-natal health and cycles of qi flow, and becoming grounded in the body. Without a strong body and

integrated psyche, one cannot do the deeper work of the higher alchemical formulas. Before examining more deeply these formulas, let us first address the issue of immortality, and its function.

Are Immortals Real

Can Westerners connect to Chinese immortals? This topic is best approached by subjective testimony. As a teacher who has taught over seventy five week-long Daoist neidan retreats, I can report that there have been numerous instances where meditators felt they had interactions with divine beings who assumed human form, many explicitly Chinese in appearance. One woman reported an internal experience of a Chinese man repeatedly pressing her to marry/merge with him, claiming he was an immortal. When she finally surrendered, she underwent a powerful spiritual awakening. Another man, long suffering from a negative side effect of the wrong neidan practice, reported a Chinese-looking immortal visited him and began healing his condition. But perhaps the most dramatic encounter is my own, which explains my subsequent dedication to neidan:

In March 1981, a few months after meeting Mantak Chia, I had just begun to practice neidan. I was a journalist, staying in the Addis Ababa Hilton in Ethiopia, finishing a story on Black Jews. My next job was to spend a night inside the Great Pyramid. Before I flew to Egypt, I suddenly became nauseous, with regular bouts of diahorrea. This went on for 3 days and nights, preventing me from eating any food. My body got so hot I often had to jump into a cold shower.

Strangely, I did not feel sick – only that my body was going through the motions of illness. I went to a hospital for blood tests, and they could find nothing wrong. I lay in my bed on the third afternoon, exhausted, but fully awake. Then my hotel room suddenly began to slowly spin. The furniture and walls began to soften and flow in a large vortex around me. An ancient looking Chinese man in a long robe appeared from nowhere, floating above me as if riding on a cloud. He had a long wispy white beard, and eyes that strangely seemed to be looking inward at himself. His skin was so wrinkled I remember thinking, this guy looks like he's 2000 years old!

Speechless, I watched as a laser beam of a dense white light shot out of his navel and into mine. The light felt highly charged and totally solid upon contact. My body immediately exploded. Energy shot up my core and out my crown like the mushroom cloud above an atom bomb. I felt myself raining back down in tiny droplets that formed themselves into a body on the bed. The Chinese man disappeared into nowhere. I lay on the bed, feeling intense bliss, floating in a pool of divine love for hours. All symptoms of my illness permanently disappeared.

Years later I investigated my amazing experience via a friend who was a full-trance channel for an Atlantean immortal, who allegedly lived for 2300 years before ascending. He told me I had been purified by my guardian, a blind Daoist immortal named Ching Ming Tzu, as a kind of “medical checkup” before being allowed to spend a night inside the Great Pyramid. At the time of my experience, I had absolutely no belief in immortals. I had never

read about nor seen any image of one. It was impossible for me to project the experience out of previous mental impressions. This channeled explanation felt correct. I have absolutely no doubt that immortals are real. Later, I would have many communications with beings I felt were immortals, but never again did they appear in human form. (Winn, 2009)

The point of sharing this story is not to convince anyone that my personal experience is an objective or verifiable truth. It's to demonstrate that the field of archetypal forms in the collective Chinese psyche is fully available to Westerners. It affirms my conclusion, that as far as neidan is concerned, any cultural or linguistic boundary is easily transcended when one's energetic reality is shifted.

More important, it took me another twenty years of neidan practice to realize that I had been given a transmission of the essential purpose of neidan. The beam of literally "solid" light that was emitted from the lower dantian of the Dao immortal was made of Original Essence (yuan jing). This is primal matter or space itself as the aspect of consciousness that creates form. It is part of the original trinity, but has a different function than Original Breath (yuan qi) or Original Spirit (yuan shen). The immortal was showing me that when humans merge with Dao, they are entrusted with the free will to shape Original Essence. In this case it was used to purify me and speed up both my worldly and spiritual destiny. I was able to enter the Great Pyramid without harm, and propelled on my neidan path.

Western Evolution of One Cloud's Seven Alchemy Formulas

When qi returns, the Elixir spontaneously crystallizes

In the cauldron pairing water and fire. Yin and yang arise,

Alternating endlessly, the sound of thunder everywhere.

White clouds gather on the summit, sweet dew bathes the polar mountain.

Having drunk the wine of long life, you wander freely. Who can know you?

You sit and listen to the stringless tune, you clearly grasp the mechanism of creation.

- Hundred Character Tablet of Ancestor Lu Dongbin (Cleary,1991,185).

Each human has a unique nature. This explains why different forms of alchemy practice arise. In China, neidan is often taught differently on every mountain. I noticed my own practice of these seven alchemy formulas unfolded quite differently from Mantak Chia. Undoubtedly, my background in kundalini and kriya yoga, Dzogzhen, Celtic-Christian

mysticism and trainings in Western alchemy have all been absorbed into my core practice of Daoist neidan. It is impossible to shut out one's diverse influences; they must be integrated.

I have observed the same process of individuation around the world where I've taught alchemy. Each culture responds differently to the alchemical process. Westerners are absorbing the deep language of alchemy and growing an entirely new spiritual culture that is not purely Chinese Daoist nor Christian-Scientific Materialism. Alchemists cook whatever is in the human cauldron around them, until it becomes spiritually refined within their own cauldron. That is the micro/macroc cosmic dynamic of Daoist cultivation.

Chia originally insisted the formulas be learned slowly, with a minimum one year practice to stabilize any energetic shifts before "eating" the *qi* of the next formula. Students who attempt to rush through them, stuffing their heads with information, invariably cannot hold onto anything and drop practice completely. This emphasis on gradual progress through different levels of enlightenment and immortality is a hallmark of Daoist training, and distinguishes it in China from Buddhist teachings that promise sudden enlightenment.

What follows is a brief discussion of the major alchemical practices circulating in the Healing Tao, and how they have been creatively evolved by Westerners needing to accommodate their energy bodies, which are very different from Chinese energy bodies. The energy body I define as the sum total of one's biological, psychological, and spiritual patterns expressed as one's worldly destiny.

Foundation Practice: Inner Smile

One Cloud's internal alchemy begins and ends with a *wuwei* or spontaneous practice, the Inner Smile. The ordinary "outer" smile is normally reactive to or manipulative of other people. The Inner Smile is a method of effortlessly opening the inner heart (*lingshen*), which could also be translated in the West as "soul". The practice is to allow a feeling of deep acceptance from the heart to first penetrate a gentle radiance into one's biology (its underlying *jing*). This radiance is then spread to one's vital organ spirits that control one's psychology, then outwardly to one's community and natural world that offer a context for one's destiny.

The Inner Smile is the simplest and most basic practice, yet is found at the closing to each level of alchemy. At the end of all the formulas, it becomes the most advanced practice — the adept merges into the mind of the Dao, effortlessly smiling "from everywhere" into all dimensions of Nature and humanity. This merger of the adept smiling with the mind of the Dao implies that Humanity (as one of the Three Treasures, along with Heaven and Earth) can elevate the Dao with its purity of heart and ability to feel personal love.

The Inner Smile practice is an evolution of *zuowang*, "sitting in forgetfulness". *Zuowang* is traditionally the Daoist preparation of emptying the heart-mind (*xin*) that precedes operational alchemy, which then shapes the *qi* field. You empty the conditional mind so it

doesn't interfere with the soul (lingshen) expressing its will to complete its destiny. Inner Smile is essentially zuowang while staying heart-centered.

Inner heart smiling is the simplest and most practical method of cultivating Daoist "tong", defined as state of unconditional openness and all-pervading spirit. By accepting every aspect of self unconditionally, all polarized perceptions of self are dissolved. A sense of peace and unity spontaneously arises, which opens perception of the deeper soul consciousness underlying all yin-yang divisions and apparent distinctions that lead to struggle.

Inner Smile begins with heart-centered unconditional acceptance of all aspects of the heart-mind (xin), including all physical tissues, the 5 vital organ shen/12 officials, the three dantian, and all qi channels. It then embraces everything outside the body, layer by layer: one's aura, the room, village, country, planet, sun, moon, stars & beyond. The adept then reverses the direction of the flow of acceptance, smiling through layers of outer world back into the physical body until that is dissolved into pre-natal formless.

For Westerners, this heart-centeredness and unconditional openness offers a bridge between Daoism and Christ's teaching of unconditional love. The original zuowang practice helps the adept to surrender to the impersonal qi field of heaven and earth, but doesn't necessarily integrate human heartedness. Zuowang is what inspired Buddhist Chan/Zen sitting in emptiness, which can feel too cold or impersonal for Westerners. The Inner Smile is often interpreted as unconditional love grounded first within one's own body, and then radiated out to others. At higher levels, Inner Smile is used to integrate personal and impersonal forces within the collective human heart.

Formula 1: Open the Orbit, Harmonize Five Organ Spirits

and Eight Extraordinary Vessels.

These methods allow one to communicate with the major pathways of *qi* flow inside the human body. These practices encapsulate the entirety of classical Chinese medicine and are used for self-healing. Students often spend several years learning the formula, as it has many parts. The Six Healing Sounds clear the stuck vital organ *qi* cycling through the Five Phases and three burners (head/upper chest, solar plexus, belly). The Microcosmic Orbit balances *yin-yang* flow of the spine and front chest and mixes the adept's *qi* and blood. Western adepts discovered and added many forms of qigong and internal methods to circulate the orbit that were not originally taught, but which work better.

Fusion of the Five Elements (Phases) I, II, and III is emotional and psychic alchemy. It helps one to absorb innate virtue from Early Heaven and dissolve negative emotional *qi*, which is then crystallized into a pearl made of post natal *yuanqi* (sometimes called source *qi* in Chinese medicine or True Yang *qi* in some neidan texts). The pearl is circulated in the creation (sheng) and control (ke) cycles within the body to regulate emotion and attain tranquility (qing). This is another way to describe one's original unconditioned or true feelings, arising out of neutral *yuan qi*.

The Macrocosmic Orbit circulates the clarity of this fusion pearl in the Eight Extraordinary Vessels, which opens communication between the trunk (spine, waist and core channel) to the four limbs/directions. Adepts learn basic sexual practices at this stage. They recycle the *jing qi* within their semen, and females learn to reduce or end the loss of blood/*jing* of their menstrual cycle. Testicle Breathing, Ovarian Breathing and breast massage are combined with the microcosmic orbit to recirculate sexual energy. If one has a partner, dual cultivation methods for the bedroom are studied.

Westerners had to make major shifts in the Fusion of the Five Elements practices to adapt it to their emotional body and need for sexual expression, which is often far more extroverted and individuated than it is for Chinese. The original teaching involved manipulating bodily flow of *qi* in yin-yang and 5 phase cycles to “control” the emotions. Colored pearls were created as a vessel of emotional expression or the virtues (*de*) of each organ spirit. But the “head” was bypassed as a hidden reservoir of ego that tended to sabotage the process.

This became an opportunity to integrate Daoist five shen/organ theory and Western depth psychology with its notion of shadow, inner parts/family therapy and Jungian ideas of individuation. The result was a new experience of a body-centered self in which all aspects of the subconscious are illuminated and empowered. The adept experienced his mind as a processual, collective team of body-spirits consciously utilizing deep *qi* channels to respond virtuously to the world, instead of unconsciously reacting to events. This revised Fusion practice thus became a form of shengong rather than qigong. The attainment of tranquility (*qing*) now came from the shen collective consciously and virtuously shaping the emotional and sexual *qi* flow.

Formulas 2, 3, and 4: Lesser, Greater, and Greatest

Enlightenment of Water and Fire

The popular names given to these three “kan & li” formulas are “Inner Sexual Alchemy”, “Sun-Moon Alchemy”, and “Planetary & Soul Alchemy”. The division of enlightenment into three levels is traditional, although the three levels here are unique.¹⁶ These are three levels of water and fire in *ni* (reversal) phase. Reversal means the adept's desires to pursue outer physical life in Later Heaven is reversed as all his *qi* begin dissolving and flowing back into Early Heaven and the Origin.

The adept begins the internal sexual coupling of fire (*yang* body spirits) with water (*yin* body spirits). He then progresses to internally coupling sun with moon, and finally to a fusion of planetary spirits and the coupling of inner earth with inner sun (*yang* within the *yin* and *yin* within the *yang*). The Lesser formula harmonizes and completes the sexual aspects of the Five Phases of human *qi* (vital organ spirits), the Greater completes the Five Phases of earth *qi* (geomantic and bloodline ancestral forces), and the Greatest completes the Five Phases of planetary *qi* (astrological and collective “karmic” forces that shape human destiny).

The alchemy meditations activate progressively more subtle energetic fields that allow the adept to communicate instantly across vast distances. For example, the Five Phase vital organ intelligences within the human body can be trained to resonate with the five great spirits (North, South, East, West, and Center) within the Earth. These in turn can talk to the vast intelligences of the Five Phases within Heaven - sun, moon, five planet and five star quadrants. All three levels of intelligence — human, earth, and heaven — have “a single ancestor”, meaning they are born and function in the same universal *qi* field of the Dao.

Once you learn to listen to one pattern within the body, it is only a matter of training to "listen" to the same pattern in other parts of the *qi* field, even if it is physically far away. *Qi* patterns are not limited by physical time/space. These impulses travel at the “speed of consciousness”, which is much faster than the speed of light. This is because the *qi* patterns do not need to travel across space, the living *qi* field *is* the matrix of space/time/intelligence.¹¹

These formulas have multi-level sexual coupling of polar forces. This reflects Nature’s need to restore the Original Energy lost in the splitting of the androgynous, Early Heaven human into physical male and female bodies. The net effect of completing all three levels is to fulfill one's soul purpose, which dissolves fear of death and the soul fragments’ unconscious need to incarnate. This enlightenment of completing the *qi* of the individual's post-natal self is thus the prerequisite to attaining immortality in the following three formulas.

This water and fire "coupling" or "cooking" process reunites post natal *jing-qi-shen* and allows the adept's Later Heaven self to open a portal for communication with his/her Early Heaven self. These three formulas focus on opening an inner space where the adept can talk to core body intelligences (*jingshen*), the intelligences within the Earth, and the Sun/planetary intelligences. This allows the adept to absorb progressively greater powers of *yin* and *yang qi*. The second formula, involving self-intercourse within the adept of *yin* (inner female) and *yang* (inner male) body spirits, is essentially an advanced practice of the Microcosmic Orbit. Variants of this lesser water and fire coupling are described in a number of alchemy texts translated into English, but no texts are similar to One Cloud’s higher levels of planetary coupling. (Wong, 1997, 2000)

Formula 5: Sealing of the Senses, Star Alchemy

This practice seals the Later Heaven senses and mind of the adept inside the upper *dantian*. The intent is to open up and refine communication between the adept's personal soul (*ling*) and the Great Spirit (*dashen*) of the star intelligences. Thus it is also called Star alchemy; its focus is to complete one’s spiritual destiny, or *xing*. This engages the collective stellar level of nature's intelligence, defined by the Big Dipper and Polestar, and opens the portal of the *chongqi* (central axis) of Later Heaven into Early Heaven. Feeling the power of this channel open was one of the most overwhelming and terrifying experiences of my life.

Formula 6: Congress of Heaven and Earth

It couples, as an act of cosmic sexual self-intercourse, the adept's Later Heaven soul essence with his formless androgynous Early Heaven essence. This requires sending out all the body spirits and communing with the Three Pure Ones, which are essentially the ruling intelligence of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. The coupling of Heaven and Earth is what births Humanity and its redemptive possibilities of personal love and immortality. The coupling also opens communications with the chaos/original unity of Primordial Heaven. The circulation of *qi* between the three heavens is the True Macrocosmic Orbit.

Formula 7: the Union of Man and Dao, has not yet unfolded. One Cloud did not claim to master it or teach it. He described it as the cosmic human's *jing-qi-shen* merging spontaneously into the *Wuji*, the Supreme Unknown, portal to the unknowable Dao.

Daoist Cosmology as Nature's Deep Grammar

Dao gives birth to unity,

Unity gives birth to polarity,

Polarity gives birth to trinity.

Trinity gives birth to the myriad creatures.

- *Daodejing*, verse 42

One of the major challenges facing Western adepts of neidan is getting a clear Daoist cosmology that matches the sequence of their training. Chinese texts and teachers offer conflicting versions that lack important details. If alchemy meditation is the actual practice of speaking a deep cosmic language, Daoist cosmology should clearly reveal the foundational grammar of that language.

All religions have a deep language structure buried within their cosmologies, but the priesthood may keep it secret, and teach only the surface language to the religious followers as beliefs, sacred images and statues, or holy writings of some deity. This surface language can be acquired by anyone, that is a Jew can convert to Catholicism and immerse themselves in Catholic religious language, imagery, and belief. This surface religious language may spontaneously trigger a "mystical" communication from Nature arising from a deep language structure. The experience is likely to be shaped by the surface language of the believer as that religion has patterned it (a Christian will see Jesus, a Buddhist will receive proof of Buddhist doctrine, etc.).

Daoist alchemy teachings typically have no dogma or theology. Merging with the cosmological cycles of Nature and their Origin is its salvation process. In One Cloud's alchemy formulas, there are no deities named or images to worship. Instead, you are given a map of personal "deity hood" (immortality) and energetic language skills. This allows one to converse intelligently with all deities and all entities, whether invisible spirits or in bodily form such as rocks, humans, planets, and stars.

The alchemy adept is not asked to believe anything other than to accept the possibility of regrowing their Original Self in the physical plane by deep communication with the Dao. The assumption is that all deities must communicate through the same *qi* field of Nature. If you merge with that *qi* field, you know what all deities know. What follows is an interpretation of Daoist cosmology, shaped by study with many teachers and texts, but mostly clarified by practice of One Cloud's Alchemy Formulas.

The Dao is the undefinable, unknowable organic wholeness of everything. It embraces non-being and all dimensions of space, time, and intelligence. From its womb, the Supreme Unknown (*Wuji*), the three heavens are birthed. The first to birth is chaos (*hundun*), the Heaven of Primordial Origin. There is no need for communication in the dark ocean inside this cosmic egg, as there are no separate aspects to communicate with each other. The cosmic egg is also depicted in Daoist art and myth as a gourd filled with a *yin-yang* elixir.¹² The cosmic egg hatches, a kind of spiritual big bang marked by thunder, and the wheels of creation begin turning. As order crystallizes out of the unbounded chaos of oneness, the Dao communicates with itself through a field of Original Energy/Breath (*yuanqi*). This infinite ocean of life force holds three potential charges: negative, positive, and neutral *qi* (*yin*, *yang*, and *yuan*). This triune stream is the core grammar of the deep language of Nature.

In the unborn primordial ocean of *qi*, the triune stream of the Dao is shaped and evolved by the three-fold intelligence latent within it. As Original Spirit (*yuanshen*) shapes Original Energy (*yuanqi*), the patterns formed are encoded in a matrix of Original Essence (*yuanjing*). The continuum of this original inseparable trinity -- *yuanjing*, *yuanqi* and *yuanshen* -- is the cosmic seed or potential state of all form, all energy, and all imagination-will-virtue. In Primordial Heaven, these three — form, energy, and imagination — remain as one.

With the hatching of the cosmic egg/gourd, the unified ocean of awareness holding this trinity increasingly polarizes itself into *yin-yang* forces as it steps its universal qualities down into the second heaven, an intermediate dimension called Early Heaven (*xiantian*). This act of original trinity-in-one dividing itself while maintaining unity requires a deep level of self-communication.

In Early Heaven vectors of *yin-yang* polarity exist, but they communicate a pattern of perfect harmony and balance by virtue of the Original Energy in the center of its spherical container. Original Energy is invisible, thus is not symbolized in the *Yijing*'s eight trigrams of Early Heaven. It sits silently in the middle of the *bagua* and in the space between the *yin-yang* pulses of the eight polar forces. Original Energy holds the presence of the Origin as the ninth and central mediating force within creation.

Early Heaven acts as a cosmic pre-natal womb, where the seed virtues/creative powers of Original Spirit are gestated before being shaped in the human realm into more defined spiritual qualities such as kindness, trust, and love. Since Original Energy is the "unconditioned energy" of the universe, all "unconditional virtues" of the Original Spirit such as unconditional love, unconditional truth, and unconditional acceptance are

communicated through Original Energy. Early Heaven steps down the triune unity of Original Energy into the Five Phases of cosmic time. This Five Phase intelligence shapes the matrix of cosmic space as it unfolds rhythmically on its web of eight *yin-yang* forces.

These sacred directions and time cycles, imbued with *de* (inner powers or spiritual qualities) are symbolically mapped on the ancient *hetu* (Ho Tu) and *luoshu* (Lo Shu) diagrams, the precursors to the *Yijing* and cornerstones of Chinese spiritual culture. However, even the numeric relationships of the *hetu* and *luoshu* can be seen as deep language communications from the *qi* field, as symbolic expression of the eight channels, Five Phase cycles and three forces through which Nature communicates with itself.¹³

Original Qi and the Communication Problem with Later Heaven

The process of Early Heaven *qi* stepping itself down into the third heaven, Later Heaven (*houtian*), Lao Tzu calls the birthing of "the ten thousand things." Later Heaven is another name for the earth on which humans live. This stepping down is where communication problems within the Dao seems to first arise. The *qi* field of the physical realm has evolved to embody great extremes of polarity. Hatred, suffering, disease, and death co-exist with love, pleasure, health, and creative life. In humans the Original Jing as cosmic generative force declines into the reproductive power of the sperm/ovum, the Original Qi is stepped down into mere physical breath, and the vast knowing of Original Shen degenerates into ordinary mind/imagination.¹⁴

Humans struggle with life and feel separated from their Early Heaven aspect because they lack enough *yuanqi* to communicate effortlessly with it. This makes it difficult to harmonize the *yin-yang* polarities facing them, so these get shaped into rigid emotional and mental dualities, as conditioned patterns of belief and behavior in worldly life. This energetic rigidity is the underlying cause of most physical death. Without clear communication with the Original Qi, the cellular, sexual, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of a human being cannot easily rejuvenate or rebirth themselves.

To get a clear picture of humanity's spiritual crisis relative to Original Qi (Breath), I shall assign numbers. Primordial Heaven is 100% Original Qi, a clear light and silence so pure that they disappear as if into a void or invisible space. Early Heaven is 50% Original Qi, making the *yin* and *yang qi* luminous in their harmony. Later Heaven has 10% Original Qi, thus its physical plane is very dense with a 90% *yin-yang* polarized *qi* field.

Humans, who in Early Heaven are androgynous or internally bi-sexed etheric beings, at physical birth are split into male and female sexes, causing them an unforeseen and severe loss of Original Qi. Mythically, this is a "fall" into physicality. Humans have further exhausted their parentally inherited Original Essence (*yuanjing* that becomes sexual power) over eons of procreation and division into six billion people. Humans today might be born with only 1% *yuanqi*, and 99% *yin-yang qi*. This dwindling middle ground accounts for the battle of the sexes. Lack of Original Qi may explain why so many humans feel cut off from "God", the *jing-qi-shen* trinity of their own original nature. They feel alienated from Nature and each other, and easily believe their limited, dense (from lack of

yuanqi) physical body is all that exists of their self. Lack of Original Qi is experienced as “my life is a struggle.”

The Challenge of Technology for Modern Daoists

This weakness of pre-natal Original Qi in humans is further compounded by social conditions. The acceleration of technology has created physical and psychic pollution in the planet's *qi* field far more severe than existed at the time ancient or medieval Daoists taught and wrote. Global wars and mass killings with hi-tech weaponry have multiplied the field of hungry ghosts many fold. These fragmented spirits cannot escape Later Heaven, even by death, and driven by fear of slow dissolution they band together to form large powerful half-entities. Lacking any Original Energy with its regenerative powers, these "demons" survive as low astral plane parasites, stuck between heaven and earth.

Functionally, these clustered hungry ghosts become negative thought forms that encircle the planet like a dark cloud, sustaining their existence by feeding on human fear, ignorance, greed, and violence which they incite or encourage through their ability to resonate with the fragmented ego-mind of humans. Invisible, they infiltrate humanity by resonating with unconscious or confused human minds, manifesting in business as greed, sexually and emotionally as violence, in government as the hunger for power and war, in religion as guilt and fear of death, in science as an excessive need to control through external technology. In general these negative thought forms foster paradigms that separate matter from spirit and deny the aliveness of Nature.

Human addiction to technology has grown so powerfully that "Technos" has begun to function globally as a kind of semi-conscious deity, feeding on the desire for external control. The question is -- what is that deity's intent? Is it communicating with the organic wholeness of the Dao? An excessive reliance on technology seems to have had the unfortunate effect of separating humans from the core rhythms of natural life: artificial weather in homes, processed food with no *qi* in it, overuse of cars weakening our legs, genetic engineering disturbing the personal essence (*jing*) in our DNA, and splitting of atoms ripping the matrix of cosmic *jing* and leaving toxic radiation.

The most damaging influence of Technos is electronic pollution. Currents of AC electricity wrap the globe with a polarized electrical field. AC electricity has an artificial positive-negative flow with no neutral ground, disturbing and weakening the natural DC current flowing through the liquid crystalline cells and tissues of humans.¹⁵ This electronic pollution is amplified by television, radio and other microwaves that constantly bombard living creatures and further polarize the planetary *qi* field, disturbing human ability to communicate with the universal *qi* field.

This lack of coherence in both the human and planetary *qi* field makes communication between the Origin and Later Heaven (the earth) even more difficult, igniting a spiritual crisis for humanity. Fortunately, the original *qi* field of Nature is a unified continuum and so by definition never loses its overall balance. The very severity of false *yin-yang qi* imbalance on earth is triggering a spontaneous awakening to counterbalance it, both within

humans and within the collective planetary consciousness of the earth's spirit (*Pangu* in Chinese mythology).

This may trigger severe climate changes as the earth purges itself of the psychic and physical pollutants choking it. The need to maintain harmony between humanity and the earth's *qi* field, was emphasized in the oldest Daoist alchemy text, the second century *Cantongqi* (Triplex Unity). It warned that lack of human virtue may cause disturbances: heat in winter and cold in summer, sheep running madly about, followed by floods, droughts, and earthquakes. (Bertschinger 1994, pg. 38)

Coming from one of the world's oldest traditions that advocates a deep earth ecology, modern Daoists face a daunting challenge to integrate the global addiction to technology into the harmonious flow of life. Does internal alchemy, as a deep language for communicating with Nature, have a role to play in this?

Alchemy Formulas as Stages of Cultivating Original Energy

Concepts like *yuanjing*, *yuanqi*, and *yuanshen* and most of the poetic and arcane alchemy terms found in the Daoist canon are virtually impossible to understand from merely reading books. Reading about alchemy formulas may be intellectually stimulating and allow a grasp of its principles, but this in itself does not help one to speak in alchemy's deep language. Intellectuals will find it very challenging to shift from their skill in manipulating concepts and words about alchemy to direct, full-body (physical and subtle body) experience of the silent language of the *qi* field.

A structured framework of embodied experience is required. Because most Westerners are left-brain dominant, this experience of *qi* can arise most easily from *Qigong* movement, breathing, and posture, later refined to a deeper level by sitting *neidangong* meditation. In this sitting phase the body is still but the *qi* field moves.

One Cloud's seven alchemy formulas are a practical, gradual, step-by-step method of returning to the natural spiritual center of gravity held by one's Original Self, the trinity of original *jing-qi-shen*. If an adept receives transmission of at least the first two formulas, the other five formulas may spontaneously reveal themselves in meditation. Many students have had this experience. The formulas act as a catalyst for speaking a deep language of nature that unfolds spontaneously as one matures spiritually.

How exactly does the alchemy adept communicate with heaven and earth? It depends on the skill level or formula they have achieved in resonating with the *qi* field. The many different methods may be categorized as *yang* practice, *yin* practice, or *wuwei* practice. All three train the adept to interiorize the outer universe within the adept's body. In *yang* practice the adept uses his mind intent or "creative imagination," (*yi*) to communicate with the *qi* field. This effectively involves the use of projection, shaping the surrounding *qi* field according to the adept's inner will.

The *yang* methods work by cultivating an ability to move *qi* in the Eight Extraordinary Vessels or by opening a relationship between the *yi* and the other internal body spirits (*jingshen*) through the Five Phases of the *sheng* (creation) or *ke* (control) cycles in the body. The guidance of *qi* should not be confused with Western concepts of mental visualization, although there is overlap. In shaping the *qi* field the adept may employ the five colors, five tones, five tastes, five climatic qualities, five directions, five virtues, internalized *bagua* shapes, energy eggs, spheres, and pearls or spinning vortices.

These shapes are activated within the adept's personal *qi* field, or "energy body". The term "actualization" is more accurate than "visualization". Without the adept first actualizing the movement of *qi* in her *qi* channels or *dantian* (elixir field), the alchemy operation will not produce the desired results. Mental visualization alone will produce an empty picture in the practitioner's head, without developing the *qi* of the entire body-mind.

In *yin* practice the adept "listens" to the *qi* field, and concentrates on receiving energy patterns or absorbing spiritual qualities from the *qi* field. This is akin to one's ego-will surrendering to one's higher will or a more collective level of the self. In this case the five body spirits or Eight Extraordinary Vessels act as internal antennae for the adept to decode the *qi* wave patterns being communicated from the outer *qi* field.

Any given alchemy operation may involve both *yin* and *yang* meditative practices, the choice depending on the season, time of day, the desired effect, and the elemental constitution of the individual adept. The choice of any alchemical practice may also reflect the cycle of events in the life of the greater cosmos, its geomantic and astrological forces.

Wuwei: Practice of Living Spontaneously in the Dao

The *wuwei* practice requires the adept shift from outer will to inner will, from the struggle amongst the desires of various body spirits to the unity of the Original Spirit. This distinguishes alchemy from more ego-centric manipulative magical practices and sorcery. The alchemist is not seeking power for his ego-self, but to accelerate a natural unfoldment of harmony and balance.

This is what ultimately frees the adept from struggle. *Wuwei* is translated variously as "spontaneous action" or "effortless non-action". The practical accomplishment of *wuwei* requires the cultivation of Original Energy, which is the super conductive non-resistant energy of Primordial Heaven.

Essentially *wuwei* is the fruit of mastering *yin* and *yang* practices. The adept evolves to a level of conscious and simultaneous sending and receiving *qi*, a two-way communication between the adept and the mind of Nature. *Wuwei* requires a state of total trust between the adept and the Dao. As the adept develops trust in the *qi* field and his or her ability to manage it, his or her *yi* (mind intent) is gradually attuned to the *yi* of the Dao as expressed through Original Spirit. The adept grows to receive the full power of the Dao needed in any given moment, and the Dao trusts the adept to create or express a reality in harmony with the life force.

This cooperation is possible because the communication network of *qi* channels and spirit relations inside a human being are essentially the same patterns as those inside a planetary being or stellar being, the main difference being in scale and specific qualities embodied. This ancient Daoist idea is expressed in modern theory by fractals repeating themselves on vastly different scales: star patterns are reflected in the shape of mountains which are reflected in our body's internal landscape.

The adept is not giving up all individual will to an outside agent or deity that is more spiritually powerful. Rather, the adept learns from the macrocosm of Nature how the life force behaves, and internalizes that within his or her personal process. Likewise, human babies learn from their parents how to navigate this reality, but then ideally use that learning to create a life according to their own nature.

All communications between *shen*, *qi*, and *jing* are ultimately dissolved into the adept's interior cauldron of pre-natal emptiness. Thus the details of the often elaborate alchemy meditations are frequently abbreviated to simply "*jing-qi-shen-wu*." The more one practices alchemy, the greater one's facility with the *qi* field becomes, and the more the *qi* field of Nature recognizes one as a sensitive and available location within the physical plane for expressing itself.

The ultimate act of communication with the mind of the Dao is to crystallize the Original Essence into conscious form on earth, known as the Immortal body. The creation of spiritual substance from the ineffable Dao is what distinguishes *neidangong* from other forms of meditation (*neigong*).

Cauldron as Portal for Communicating with Original Energy

The central purpose of alchemy is to regrow the spark of Original Energy that is buried deep within each human being. If this tiny but powerful spark of *yuanqi* can be birthed into consciousness on earth, it will gradually dissolve one's suffering and struggle, and restore life to its innate state of grace and effortless communication (*wuwei*) between heaven, earth, and beings. Cultivating Original Energy is growing heaven on earth. The type of immortality sought in alchemy is not eternal physical life in Later Heaven, but rather a spiritual immortality initially achieved by completing one's destiny in Later Heaven.

In One Cloud's formulas, Original Spirit can be cultivated in its post-natal form by fusing the ordinarily polarized and divided bodily spirits that comprise the human mind into a singular pure awareness. In Daoist depth psychology, the most important ego fragments are the vital organ spirits (*jingshen*) linked with heart, kidneys, liver, spleen, lungs. These five *yin* spirits can communicate with the inner realms of Early Heaven; the six "yang" body spirits are linked with the bowels (gall bladder, small and large intestine, stomach, gall bladder, pericardium) and communicate with the outside physical world.

When the unified awareness of the *jingshen* is impregnated into post-natal body essence (*jing*), the pre-natal (Early Heaven) field of *jing* opens and an "immortal embryo" (*shengtai*) is formed. This embryo, a seed of pre-natal *jing* that becomes conscious in Later

Heaven, will raise the vibrational rate of the adept and enliven his or her physical body. It may be perceived by the adept as a kind of body-centered, continuous spiritual orgasm, a feeling of spiritual pregnancy that may last for months. It is slowly nurtured to maturity, fed an "immortal baby food diet" of unconditional qualities (*de*) absorbed by the *jingshen* from Early Heaven. It is protected and nourished by the worldly post-natal body spirits if they have awakened to their spiritual destiny.

If these spirits get corrupted or excessively distracted by worldly affairs they may resist this profound inner birthing process and abort the embryo. The embryo, if properly cultivated into the Greater Elixir, births (in One Cloud's third formula) an Immortal Child that is fed higher level Original Energy. This *yuanti* is refined from alchemical meditations that "cook" increasingly powerful *yin-yang* forces absorbed from Nature (male-female, sun-moon, star-earth). As this Immortal Child grows in purity and substance, the adept's ordinary heart-mind (*xin*) is elevated and his inner heart-soul (*ling*) matures to complete itself.

These higher heavens spatially are not above the adept's head, as in a pyramidal type of spiritual hierarchy. These heavens are hidden within the adept, in layered concentric fields, within the center of an interiorized cosmic egg, whose outer boundary is defined energetically by the Microcosmic Orbit (first formula). Each succeeding formula gradually awakens and enlivens the egg's deeper dimensions.

The adept's power of communication with deep levels of the *qi* field eventually signals the latent Original Self, experienced as a pearl-like embryo inside the energy egg, to birth its immortal body of light, which then flies freely between all heavens. There can be no rigid hierarchy in this cosmic process of regeneration, as every level of consciousness needs the other "inner family spirits" to complete the process. A grandparent may be wiser than its grandchild, but it needs the child's vigor as a receptacle for its wisdom.

The doorways to these inner heavens are found inside the adept's body, in the center of a shifting cauldron or tripod ("ding"). The image of this three-legged cauldron symbolizes the three currents of the *qi* field (*yin*, *yang*, *yuanti*) being cooked into their primordial unity. Its metal nature hints at the key alchemical function of the *po* spirit, the "white tiger" *shen* that rules metal *qi* and lungs, to transform itself from impure lead into gold with each formula. The *po*, the most selfish and earth-bound of the five *jingshen*, gradually becomes the container or golden cauldron of universal consciousness. This transformation ("hua") is accomplished within the cauldron's inner space (*dantian*), where an elixir is created by the cooking or coupling of *yin-yang* forces.

Vesica Piscis: the Portal of the Mysterious Female

The *dantian* is an inter-dimensional portal into an inner space where all *qi* completes itself by returning to its original state of primordial unity. The *dantian* has no physical location within the body, although it has nexus points in the belly, heart, and head connecting it to personal physical, mental, and spiritual functions. The shape of this cauldron is a cube within a sphere. The eight corners of this cube touch the sphere at eight

points, suggesting the eight forces of the *qi* field of heaven and earth (symbolized by eight *Yijing* trigrams) finding a common meeting place. The dimensional doorway into the pre-natal space of the *dantian* is known by various alchemical code names, such as the Mysterious Female (*xuanpin*) or Mysterious Pass (*xuanguan*). In One Cloud's formulas, this opening is geometrically symbolized by a vesica pisis of two intersecting spheres of fire and water *qi*.¹⁷

This vesica holds open a portal into Early Heaven (alchemy code: "True Earth") between the Water and Fire spheres that control Later Heaven. From this portal within the cauldron arise neutral clouds of "steam," *yuanqi* birthing within the body. The internally generated vapors of *yuanqi* are circulated in various energy channels and in the three *dantian* of the adept's body, dissolving any patterns of false *yin* or false *yang* within the adept and replacing them with the harmony of True *Yang* and True *Yin qi*. The patterns dissolved could take the form of physical, sexual, emotional, mental or spiritual imbalances in the adept, which have been acquired this life or inherited from ancestors.

The vesica acts as a doorway of communication between the five post natal spirits (*jingshen*) and the single prenatal Original Spirit (*yuanshen*). Multiple refining of the post natal *yin-yang qi* can cause the *yuanjing* to crystallize into an elixir or pearl of golden radiant light within the refining vessel of the adept's cauldron. This pearl stabilizes the vibrational communication between one's physical self and the deep intelligence of Nature, and may be experienced as calmness, a sublime peace, or an unconditionally accepting presence. This pearl has the potential for maturing into a golden light body of the Immortal Self. The benefit of alchemy is not only for personal evolution. When the adept shapeshifts their *qi* field through deep communication with the mind of the Dao, by resonance it shifts the entire *qi* field of heaven, earth, and human society.

When the portal of the Mysterious Female is opened in the *dantian*, hungry ghosts trapped in the low astral plane of Later Heaven may pass to freedom, and other ancestral spirits may speed their return to the Origin.¹⁸ The very presence of the alchemy adept as a living, deeply integrated body-spirit shifts the *qi* field of the family and community. Internal harmony within the individual precedes external harmony in society (Schipper, 1993, 195). On a simpler level, Daoist internal alchemy opens up an internal space in the meditator that is so deeply embodied that its process continues undisturbed even when one returns to worldly activities.

Where does this alchemical process take the adept? If all seven formulas are mastered, the adept will embody the entire deep grammar of Daoist cosmology and achieve clear and effortless communication with the many levels of Nature's collective intelligence. Having lived virtuously and completed one's highest destiny by transforming one's personal essences into original essence, the adept re-enters primordial chaos-unity in order to merge with the profound and paradoxically unknowable Dao as oneself.

This is not the end, but rather marks a new beginning of conscious creation in service to the Dao. The adept may now function simultaneously within all three heavens, his free will able to manifest in many dimensions simultaneously without being ensnared in the illusions of

Later Heaven. The adept is immortal; all dimensions of creation, both form and formless, are merged into a single eternal present moment.

Original Breath as the Mysterious Language of Alchemy

What exactly is Original Breath? *Yuanqi*, also called Original Qi or Energy, is paradoxical, the very definition of undefinable energy. In learning to speak the deep language of *qi*, the ordinary mind can easily grasp the notion of *yin-yang* through its many tangible polarities—light-dark, hot-cold, male-female. Spoken language uses words to habitually fix these polarities into rigid dualistic concepts of black and white, right and wrong, self and other.

The deep grammar of alchemy reverses this process. Beyond the tangible bi-poles of *yin-yang*, in alchemy practice the third force of *yuanqi* is *always* present as an invisible monopole dissolving any fixity. As a simple metaphor for the mind to grasp, yang *qi* is white light (photons that refract into seven prismatic rays), *yin qi* is dark light (attractive forces like gravity or magnetism approximate this), and *yuanqi* is clear light that can be polarized into both white and dark light without losing its innate neutral property.

Between the *yin-yang* (north-south) poles of our planet is a monopole of Original Energy in the heart of the earth. In humans, the heart center functions as a monopole balancing messages from the head (heaven) and belly (earth) poles. In the emotional field between two lovers, there is a neutral pole that holds a single essence in their two hearts beyond the time and space fluctuations of their emotional relationship.

Even if a couple divorces, the neutral *qi* field created by their earlier love cannot be destroyed by any subsequent hatred for each other. Their collective field of Original Energy, produced in the loving phase of their relationship, simply ceases to be active as their personal field of communication. This is why the innate virtue of love (as neutral acceptance or unity) ultimately triumphs over the learned force of hate (as separating impulse). Forced separation does not build any Original Energy, thus weakening itself over time, while unification of opposites grows Original Energy forever.

Original Energy is the invisible monopole around which DNA spirals, in serpent-like coils of *yin-yang* pairs (like the Microcosmic Orbit, the ends of DNA strands are joined at the ends, like a snake swallowing its tail). DNA is the modern equivalent of *jing*, the essence that holds our shape. As *qi* converts into *jing*, the latent (ignorantly called “junk DNA”) patterns are activated. Thus the original trinity of *jing-qi-shen* is able to communicate with its human form and shape it moment to moment.

The subtle *qi* field of a human being controls the timing of the unfoldment of these genetic patterns, whose encoding at the *jing* level form an unimaginably complex text three billion characters long. Some microbiologists admit that the gene code is best described as the "language text" of nature, even though their scientific paradigm prevents them from admitting that Nature is intelligent and thus able to "speak", much less write a text in any language (Narby, 1998, p.144).

In Primordial Heaven *yuanqi* is the cosmic parent that births *yin-yang qi*, but paradoxically in Later Heaven *yuanqi* is the offspring of *yin-yang qi*. In the physical plane Original Energy is re-birthed only when *yin-yang* come into sustained balance. This is the key principle of Daoist internal alchemy. A neutral monopole is what allows communication and harmonious *qi* flow between any two poles or dimensions. A neutral axis of original *qi* is what allows *yin* and *yang* to rhythmically flip their positions after reaching their extremes of expansion or contraction.

To first experience, and later to shape the polarities of one's *qi* field from this neutral point of eternally balanced *qi* is to speak the deep language of Nature's intelligence. If you can find and stay centered in the awareness of this neutral balance point at every moment of your life, you have stabilized the effortless state of *wuwei* and the door is open to realize your immortality. If you can create a vessel — an energy body — to hold the Original Energy in later heaven, you have produced the elixir.

This seems simple, and yet is unimaginably difficult because of polarized language patterns of perception programmed into our mind and senses by generations of everyday life. The missing link is understanding that our Original Spirit (*yuanshen*) is Nature's inner voice. Whenever the door between dimensions is opened, especially at moments of human birth, death and sexual copulation, our Original Spirit is actively present to assist us in communicating our inner will.

These moments of grace allow our Early Heaven self to express its unconditional nature within the physical plane as unconditional love, acceptance, or trust of the *qi* field. The adept internalizes these processes of birth, death, and sexual self-intercourse in the inner cauldron to keep open the Mysterious Pass. Each alchemy meditation is an opportunity to practice internal self-intercourse, ego-death of the separated body spirits, and rebirth of the Original Spirit.

Material Science Tries to Measure Spiritual Science

Interesting objective confirmation of alchemy as a deep language spoken by one's whole being came from recent tests on Mantak Chia by an Austrian scientist using modern equipment to measure brainwave patterns and hemispheric balance.¹⁹ This scientist had for years been testing monks and meditators from different traditions to try to map their bodily response to meditation. He was very surprised to find that alchemy meditation was totally unique.

Chia produced on demand (by practice of the first formula Inner Smile and sexual recycling of *jing* in the Microcosmic Orbit) a *simultaneous* rise in alpha, beta, and theta brain waves. This meant that as his mind slowed and relaxed more deeply, his body's physical energy field grew more active. Also unique was that the measured rise was equal in both brain hemispheres and lasted for a much longer duration — three days — versus several hours for other types of meditation.

The applications of alchemy to healing are vast, and beyond the scope of this paper. The healing essentially is a natural by-product of the deep language process. My experience suggests it can shift the genetic level of disease. I started going blind with a rare condition inherited from my mother known as birdshot choroiditis, with initial symptoms of my not being able to read for six months. After a week's intense practice of Greater Water & Fire formula and absorbing inner solar essence, the condition abruptly reversed itself.

At deep levels the *qi* language is sung as the inner music of the spheres, what Immortal Lu Dongbin called "listening to the stringless tune". At this stage one is beyond the images of the physical or astral planes of Later Heaven, and merged in Early Heaven, which is vibrating too quickly for the human mind to shape its *qi* field into recognizable physical images. It is experienced as pure sound, light, and vibration -- the building blocks of Early Heaven before they are assembled into physical form. This inner sound meditation cuts through and vertically links all time-space zones and the empty spaces within them: the eternal present moment of the Origin, the cyclical time spirals of Early Heaven, and the linear time of Later Heaven.

Humans can practice internal alchemy only because Nature is an alchemist. Alchemical formulas could not express Nature's deep intelligence unless Nature itself embodied an alchemical process. Nature divides itself into three levels, Original, Early and Later Heavens. Like an ever repeating fractal, the third heaven holds within its microcosm the three treasures of heaven, earth, and humanity, and humanity holds within itself the three treasures of *jing*, *qi*, and *shen*.

These dimensional divisions in nature reflect the universal process of alchemy: separate into three, refine, then reunite into one purified whole. Why does the Dao speak with itself in this alchemical process? One can only speculate: alchemy allows Nature to grasp and refine its own essence, to transform itself endlessly as it shapes and re-shapes the original *qi* field of the Dao.

Conclusion

The appropriation of Daoist inner alchemy by Westerners is proceeding slowly but steadily. Its use as a direct path of spiritual practice has had an elevating influence on external alchemical arts such as taiji and Chinese medicine. *Neidan* methods allow adepts to communicate with their internal body spirits and to shape the flow of *qi* within the body of Nature at a deep level. It's the most direct path of refining human ability to explore deeply the relationship between matter and spirit, and to heal the split between male and female.

Neidan opens the doors to understanding exactly how the human soul, like the brain, is binary in nature. We are divided into *yin-yang* aspects at many different levels of body-psyche, polarities which are often in conflict. The purpose of inner alchemy is to speed up the integration of the warring halves of our soul as humanity's process of evolution. When *neidan* practice is successful, physical rejuvenation, the emergence of an authentic self, and some level of immortality may be achieved.

Inner alchemy is China's highest path of self-realization, defined as the process of giving greater reality to a multi-dimensional Self. Alchemy speaks the language of *qi* radiating from the primordial ground of unity-chaos that births all *yin-yang* and five phase patterns in the "formless forms" of Early Heaven and in Later Heaven or physical Earth. Western adepts have used the operative principles of Daoist *neidan* to explore the spiritual nature of space, time, gravity, and consciousness as it relates to Western paradigms of science and Christian notions of unconditional love. Chinese *neidan*, being body-centered and thus accessible, may help rejuvenate the field of Western internal alchemy, whose external laboratory paradigm historically had great influence on Western culture. As Westerners absorb the deep language of *neidan*, they are growing an entirely new spiritual sub-culture that is neither purely Daoist nor Christian-Scientific.

Daoist alchemy views both personal life and the life of the cosmos as processual, an ultimately unknowable Way, but one in which humans can intervene. This view of Dao does not seek or worship a higher absolute order typical of Buddhism, Hinduism, or Platonic Christianity (Ames, 1998). The *neidan* adept's awareness of the impersonal or non-being aspect of Nature does not imply passive surrender to it. Rather it serves to stimulate human creativity in alchemically shaping the Life Force. Walking the razor's edge between the personal and cosmic is ultimately the job of an immortal— to crystallize the elixir hidden within the heart-mind, and use it to create ever greater balance and harmony within the flowing ocean of the Dao.

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