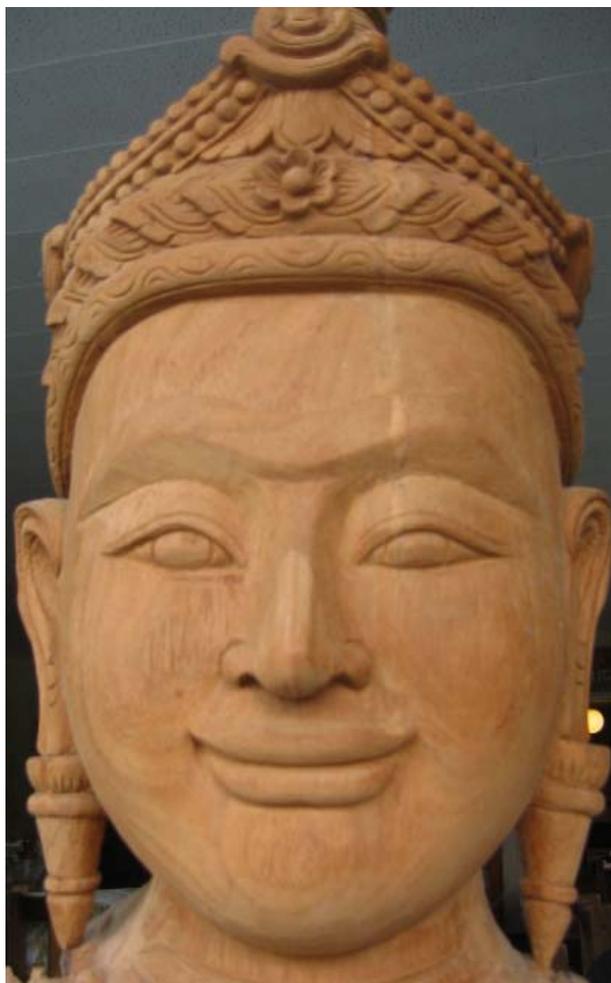


**Inner Alchemy Series**  
**Chi Kung Fundamentals 1**

**Way of the Inner Smile**  
**Self Acceptance – Tao Path to Inner Peace**

**By Michael Winn**



Cambodian Goddess with beatific Inner Smile  
*Contemporary teak, Dao Mountain Retreat Center*

Note: This short book is one segment of my Tao Home Study audio course ***Chi Kung Fundamentals #1***, but expanded. The rest of audio course #1 covers ***Tao Five Elements*** theory and practice: ***Five Animals Play*** China's oldest shamanic chi kung (qigong) form, as well as the ***Six Healing Sounds***.

Modern Chinese pinyin spelling is used (Daoism vs. Taoism), except for a few key words now part of English (Tao, Chi Kung instead of qigong, chi instead of qi. Tao is pronounced "dao". Chi is pronounced "chee").

## **Acknowledgements**

**Special deep gratitude to Mantak Chia, who inspired me to explore the path of Tao. I especially thank him for sharing a transmission of Daoist Hermit One Cloud's simple smiling presence. Thanks to many other spiritual teachers in this lifetime, especially my Mother and Father, whose inner smile at my moment of birth was so precious.**

**Thanks to my many other Tao masters, and the countless generations of Tao adepts before them. To the chi kung and inner alchemy masters going back thousands of years into pre-history, for sharing their smiling "aha" – their discovery on how to best cultivate chi while staying grounded in the body.**

**Eternal gratitude to my partner Joyce Gayheart for being such a beautiful heartfelt smiling presence in my life. Thanks to all my Healing Tao and Universal Tao colleagues and students who have devoted themselves to spreading their smiling presence in the human community.**

**Deep appreciation to the Tao Immortals, the Earth, Sun, Moon, Planet and Star beings for their gentle smiling guidance on my journey into the Great Within and the Great Beyond.**

**I offer Supreme Ultimate thanks to the Tao, for making the Inner Smile the true response to getting the Cosmic Joke.**

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## About the Author

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***Michael Winn in inner smiling state  
(Photo taken after deep meditation).***

**Michael Winn was born in San Francisco's *Presidio* in 1951, next to the towers of the Golden Gate Bridge. According to Tao master Ni Hua Ching's astrology reading, the Golden Gate, a symbolic bridge between Asia and America, shaped his destiny. Chinese astrology typically looks at earthly *feng shui* influences as well as planetary forces.**

**Winn graduated from Dartmouth College in 1973 as a Senior Fellow in Russian and Comparative Literature. He has visited 90 countries, a modern wandering Daoist (Taoist). His first job was as a Grand Canyon white water guide, which led to him running a 1981 rafting expedition to North Yemen for National Geographic. Later he participated on a first descent of the upper gorges of the Mekong River in China.**

**His first wife was Ethiopian, Shamai (Candlelight) Abebe. After getting fired from a New York publishing job for being “too creative”, he succeeded as a war correspondent and photojournalist in Africa. His first break came in 1978 when he was thrown into prison in Ethiopia during its civil war and got a scoop on the Soviets running its torture system.**

**He later opened Abyssinia Ethiopian Restaurant in New York’s Soho in 1980, and ran it for 20 years as a side business. During this period Winn, a “goy” or gentile, organized and operated an “underground railway” that smuggled over twenty white Jewish missions into Ethiopia to bring medicine and support for a struggling tribe of Black Jews (falasha). It ultimately led to their mass exodus back to their promised land in Israel.**

**For one of his stories he locked himself inside the Great Pyramid overnight. He hitchhiked across the Sahara desert for another story. In 1983 and 1985 he spent a total of five months following Marco Polo’s route over the Hindu Kush mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan and 4000 miles overland across China’s vast western deserts and along the length of the Great Wall. This was near the beginning of a long love affair with the Tao. He met his second and current wife, Joyce Gayheart, at a Healing Tao retreat in 1983.**

**He eventually switched from outer travel adventure to inner spiritual adventure. During his wanderings, Winn began exploring different esoteric systems, mostly to “demystify” for himself the ancient Mystery Schools. He hoped to find the most effective methods of improving health and refining spiritual awareness. Besides various Daoist/Taoist schools, he studied tantric kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, dzogchen (Bon), Tibetan Buddhist vajrayana practices, and Atlantean**

internal alchemy (original, pre-Egyptian Kaballah). He will release a book on this latter topic shortly.

He took many teachings and initiations with the Dalai Lama, and worked closely for years with Paramhansa Hariharananda (successor in India to Yogananda), and edited his *Bhagavad Gita in the Light of Kriya Yoga*. All this shaped his spiritual practice, but he always returned to his roots in the Tao because of its natural simplicity and practicality in honoring the body.

He tested over sixty different *chi kung* (*qigong*) forms and Tao meditation systems. He studied with dozens of different masters, often only to get one superb movement or tiny but valuable insight they had. Master T.K. Shih lived with him for two years. He studied pakua chang with B.K. Frantzis and edited his first book, as well as several books for Tao master Ni Hua Ching. His Wu style *tai chi* teacher was grandmaster Ed Yu in New York's Chinatown (Mantak Chia's *tai chi* teacher). He studied Northern Wu style with David Dolbear (USA gold medalist) and his master Liu Jiang Chang in Beijing.

Winn has traveled to China seven times, to meditate in the caves of its holy Tao mountains and sacred places, and to study medical *chi kung* in Beijing hospitals with the World Academic Medical Qigong Society. Each year he invites top masters to teach at Healing Tao University such as Li Jun Feng and Wang Yan. He has been an organizer of the National Qigong Annual Conference since its inception in 1997. He leads regular trips to China to open the doorway between Western and Chinese internal alchemy adepts of the Tao.

Other worldly doings (for nervous types who trust resumes):

- 25 years experience in teaching subtle energy methods, which led to a medical *chi kung* therapy practice.
- Past President of the National Qigong (*Chi Kung*) Association for two terms. The umbrella organization for all *chi kung* schools, teachers, healers, & practitioners in the U.S. ([www.nqa.org](http://www.nqa.org))

- **Founder and Director of Healing Tao University summer retreat program (campus at Dao Mountain in New York's Catskill Mountains). The largest Tao arts program in the west, with a faculty of 20 masters and 30 retreats.**
- **Writer-editor of seven of Mantak Chia's books. Best known as co-author of *Taoist Secrets of Love: Cultivating Male Sexual Energy*.**
- **Past Chairman of Healing Tao Instructors Association of the Americas for 9 years. One of the original Senior Instructors that launched the Healing Tao, which globally has certified over 1000 instructors and brought the Tao teachings to hundreds of thousands of people.**
- **Written numerous articles in Qi Journal, Empty Vessel and other national publications. Co-author of Qigong Therapy chapter in *Physicians Guide to Complementary & Alternative Medicine*.**
- **Produced ten Tao Home Study audio-video courses that summarize the essence of his discoveries over the last 25 years.**

**Winn reports that far more important than any of his worldly doings and wanderings is his practice of the Inner Smile – the path of the soul accepting its body and destiny. He feels his greatest accomplishment will be to share with the reader the simple and profound joy of the soul's inner smile.**



*The author, wearing a smiling sun-moon image, “holding up” the Temple of Heaven in Beijing. This 14<sup>th</sup> century Daoist temple, built for the Emperor to pray to the Tao, is one of the most sacred in China. The triple roof symbolizes the Daoist notion of Original Trinity and the three levels of heaven.*

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## ***Foreward***

### ***Inner Smile: Root of the Root***

***By Mantak Chia***

The Tao science of *chi* cultivation is so huge. It is easy to get lost in it. Taoists spent thousands of years developing so many different way to refine human *chi* using *chi kung* and meditation. They took the science of healing and medicine to new depth, had hundreds of martial arts systems, found the best way to build houses with good feng shui, and figured out how to bury the dead so the ancestral *chi* is most beneficial. They developed high systems of Tao philosophy, ethics, sexology, herbology, divination and many other things.

But some things are more important than others. So I am very glad that Michael Winn chose to write more deeply about the Inner Smile, because it is so close to the root of the root. By this I mean the Inner Smile is so close to the root of inner alchemy, and inner alchemy is the root of all the other Tao systems, even the *I Ching*.

Lao Tzu says that the man of knowledge acquires something new everyday, and the man of Tao lets go of something new every day. The man who practices the Inner Smile is a man of Tao. I feel Michael Winn is both a man of knowledge and a man of Tao. His writing will help people to understand why the Inner Smile is so important, and how it simplifies so many other good and useful practices.

I have known Michael Winn for more than twenty years, so I know how deeply committed he is to Tao. I consider him one of the best writers on Tao in the West. I am grateful to him for his skillful writing to help explain to Westerners the practical science of Tao subtle energy. People used to think Tao was just an interesting intellectual

**philosophy. Now they begin to realize it is a very deep spiritual science.**

***The Way of the Inner Smile* takes the theory and the practice to a higher level of understanding. It has many new insights, and reveals how his own teaching skill has matured. He has taught many Westerners and figured out how their minds and bodies can most easily absorb Tao methods. He is able to explain the connection between biology, Tao psychology of body-spirits, and inner alchemical transformation of the human soul.**

**His focus on unconditional self-acceptance is a modern way of expressing traditional Tao practice of utter openness to life. It is an openness that must begin with the body.**

**Please enjoy this journey deep into the land of Inner Smiles!**

**Mantak Chia**

**Tao Garden, Thailand**

**May 2003**

## ***Introduction***

### **What is the Inner Smile?**

*Man without smiling face should not open a shop.*

- Chinese Proverb

**The Inner Smile is a simple, effortless Daoist (Taoist) meditation on how to live with an open heart. You can practice it sitting quietly, or while engaged in everyday activities. The Inner Smile challenges us, in a series of “smiling baby steps”, to unconditionally accept every aspect of our body, mind, and spirit.**

**The Inner Smile connects our biological self, our psychological self, and our spiritual self in a practical way. It ingeniously captures the power hidden in our natural impulse to smile. It doesn't try to fix anything or ask any part of us or others to change. It relies on the power of non-verbal communication coupled with a clear mind intent to “creatively find” the harmony hidden within everything.**

**To paraphrase Lao Tzu, the Inner Smile “does nothing, yet leaves nothing undone”. The Inner Smile cultivates the spontaneous nature of our inner heart to accept all experiences in life at their most profound level. This may sound a bit abstract. Our western minds demand more detailed guidance. What makes the Inner Smile practical?**

**What makes it practical is the Inner Smile's power to cultivate our “*chi*” – the subtle breath infused by Nature in our body-mind-soul. This internal effect of the Inner Smile is greatly amplified by various kinds of *chi kung* (*qigong*). What is *chi kung*? Literally it means “skill with subtle breath”. It is the ancient process of allowing (*yin*) and encouraging (*yang*) subtle energy to flow harmoniously in our life.**

***Chi Kung* was originally known in ancient China as *yang sheng*, or “nourishing life”. Its methods embraced both the stillness of meditation and the movement of life. Its art became most famous for its simple, gentle healing body movements.**

**The ancient principles of *chi kung* are the grandparents of the well known martial art, *tai chi chuan*. In China *tai chi chuan (taijiquan)* is quite young, only about 800 years old! The huge time spans involved here give us pause to reflect on the superficiality of modern knowledge about human nature.**

**What could be easier than simply smiling? Can we really learn to practice it as a skill? Many people who practice the Inner Smile experience immediate calmness. For others it opens up inner vistas of spiritual joy. Some practitioners experience spontaneous “miraculous” healing from psychological problems or diseases.**

**Although it is simple, inner smiling is a skill that improves over time and ultimately leads to deep spiritual realization. Some people get stuck in a chronic “Inner Frown” state, the opposite of the Inner Smile. They may need special help, which is offered in this book. It is important to note there is a big difference between the Inner Smile and the ordinary “outer smile”. I will give more details on that later.**

**Where does a smile come from? Should we ask Leonardo Da Vinci, who painted the Mona Lisa? Some scholars think it is his self-portrait, disguised as a woman to amplify the mystery of her smile. Our impulse to smile is certainly, at core, a mystery. But the key to engaging this mysterious smile can be found by the most ordinary person, not just great artists.**



*Mona Lisa's Inner Smile*

**We should note at the outset that smiling is energetically very different from laughing. “Laughter is the best medicine” the saying goes, and laughing certainly releases tension and is good for the body in a number of different ways. According to Chinese medicine, if someone laughs too frequently or too loudly they may have excess heart *chi* and are unconsciously trying to release it. Laughter is more of belly centered emotional release than smiling.**

**Smiling is more subtle than laughter, a more inward and more sustainable experience. Someone who smiles continuously is not considered in excess, assuming it is not a “phony” outer smile. Smiling is less about emotions, which are our response to outer life events, and more about subtle feeling. Inner Smiling cultivates this feeling to a high level, focusing on the spiritual joy that arises from our inner soul and radiates out as subtle presence.**

## ***The Smiling Inner Heart of our Energy Body***

**Thanks to ancient Tao masters passing down their tradition for thousands of years, we now know the secret of the Inner Smile is hidden within our inner heart. The inner heart is not the physical heart, and it is not the emotional or feeling heart. There is a “third heart”, just as there is a “third eye”. This inner heart is a portal to direct experience of what is called “soul”, a concept in the West that has successfully eluded all definition.**

**The ancient enlightened masters gave us a very specific map of the Inner Smile’s pathway within our body. It arises like a wave from the inner ocean of our unknown and unborn self. Before it gently splashes onto the beach of the outer world, it passes through many subtle layers of body-mind consciousness that they mapped out in great detail.**

**This mapped out network of energy meridians and spheres of psycho-spiritual essences hidden within our physical body is known to Tao adepts as the Energy Body. The Inner Smile is a way of awakening and harmonizing our Energy Body. As the smiling wave arises within it can be guided to effortlessly “float loose” our deep sexual, emotional, and mental patterns, which are basically frozen energy.**



*The ability of this smiling infant to swim underwater totally free of all fear of drowning is akin our innate ability to smile and float in the sea of our Original Energy (yuan chi).*

**Smiling can melt energy patterns that we might feel are stuck or frozen inside us. It can reach and dissolve patterns that have frustrated other forms of therapy, if done with proper focus.**

**The Inner Smile is a gentle tool, but so profoundly subtle it can probe powerfully into the depths of our unconscious, where few can**

**reach. It can dissolve patterns without struggle, as it does not encourage divisive attitudes (me vs. them) or attempt to “kill” the sick energy. If you attack your problems, they resist even harder.**

**The Inner Smile operates by embracing the aspects of our pain or dysfunction from within. It awakens our core sense of unity, and activates the inner will of our heart. Inner Smiling causes the sick energy to spontaneously shape shift. By smiling, we are really just liberating the inner will of our stuck energy to become functional and free.**

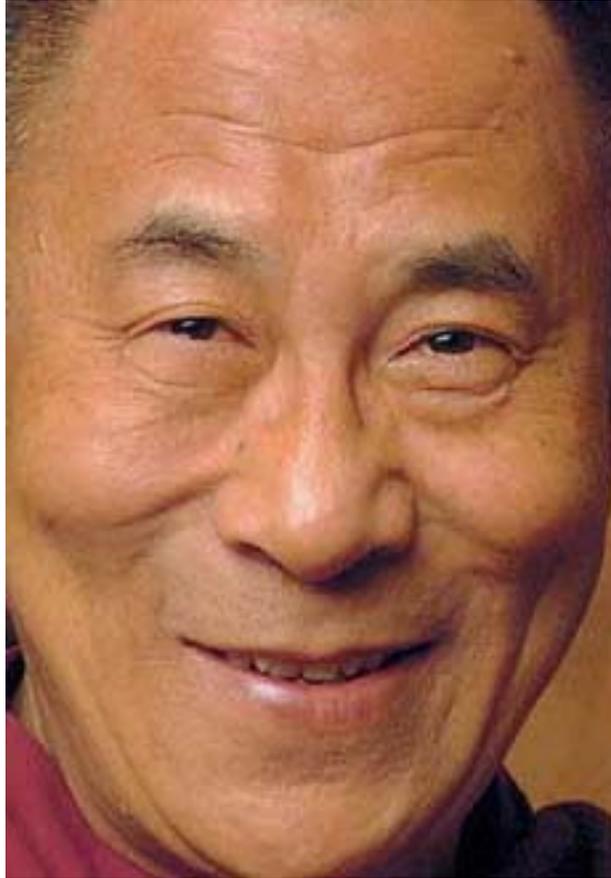
**The Inner Smile is just the first step on an amazing journey to the experience of your true self and to the core of the “multi-verse”– the multiple dimensions of Nature’s grand unity.**

**I hope you will join the growing global community of seekers of the Natural Truth. Tao offers a practical way gain the freedom needed to experience all levels of your reality. I hope that you grow to love and trust the Inner Smile as much as I do.**

**Michael Winn  
Asheville, North Carolina  
Spring Equinox 2003**

# Chapter One

## Inner Smile: The Sages Way to Unfold Tao



*The Dalai Lama gave a teaching recently. The final question asked of him was, "What can we give to you?" He beamed at the audience. "That is easy," he said. "Just give me your smiles. It makes me feel good when I see people smile at me. And if you smile at each other that would also be very good. So please give me your smiles."*

**What is Tao? Tao means "natural way". It is really undefinable, because it includes everything that exists in Nature, plus everything**

that doesn't yet exist! When Tao is applied to humans, it implies the virtue, or "de", of natural self-unfoldment. Historically, the Inner Smile was a foundation practice of Daoist *neidan gong*, or "inner elixir skill". Today, we translate *neidan* simply as "inner alchemy", meaning the science of changing oneself in accordance with natural law, but more quickly.

Inner alchemy simply means that what normally might happen in ten months of outer life events can now happen in 10 minutes of inner smiling practice. This seems like magic, but alchemy is actually a scientific process in the sense of being systematic and repeatable. But it is made possible only when we grasp the hidden essence of life. Once we become aware of *chi* flow in our body, we can shape it. The Inner Smile was the first step in seven highly secret Tao inner alchemy "formulas" for speeding up the stages of human spiritual development.

But the Inner Smile also has a key function in formulas Two through Seven as well. It is amazing to consider that the Inner Smile is at once the easiest beginner method and the most advanced level of realization! (For a full description of the Daoist hermit One Cloud's *Seven Formulas for Immortality*, see "Tao Secrets of Immortality" article on my homepage, or find it at:

[www.healingdao.com/tao\\_alchemy\\_formulas.html](http://www.healingdao.com/tao_alchemy_formulas.html)

The Inner Smile creates a central, positive, open inner mind space in which "self-cultivation" can occur. This state of smiling openness should not be confused with other Asian concepts of "empty mind", which are very difficult for westerners to grasp or retain for very long. Part of this is a language problem. If we replace the notion of "emptiness" with that of "openness" or "complete acceptance" it will clarify the profundity of the Inner Smile practice.

From this Daoist point of view, striving after the goal of an empty mind will lead to unnecessary frustration. Nature will quickly refill whatever you empty, including your mind. This is the dynamic between stillness and movement that is known as "*tai chi*" (or taiji), meaning the Supreme Ultimate. *Tai Chi* is not to be confused with the martial art of

***tai chi* chuan, which is just one application in which one “boxes” with these invisible forces in order to defeat an opponent.**

***Tai Chi* is rather a cosmic principle underlying all life. The secret of *tai chi* in human life lies in getting a smooth and harmonious flow of *chi* through the body-mind space. In this context, the constant “emptying” and “filling” of the mind with thoughts, feelings, and sensations cannot occur harmoniously unless there is an underlying “openness” or feeling of acceptance. In this acceptance is true freedom to change oneself.**

**As both a unique form of religion and as a philosophy, Tao encourages a radical openness to all life without judgment. Most of us have already learned the hard way that we cannot change the outer world or other people against their will. It is pointless to go against others own natural path of unfoldment. But if we change ourselves, the world and all the people in it are automatically changed without any outer struggle.**

**This happens for two reasons. One, “the world” is really just a set of perceptions we carry around inside our own mind. Two, our personal *chi* field (our mind) is part of the cosmic *chi* field (or universal mind). If our personal energy field changes, the larger *chi* field has to also change. Nature is just the playground (*chi* field) where we can go through our life changes. Harmony means we can play freely in the *chi* field of our personal-cosmos or the world-cosmos.**

**All that is needed is openness to our innate smiling impulse to access the *chi* field. Once we claim our peaceful, smiling inner body-mind space, a series of transformative energetic shifts is naturally activated. If we stay relaxed, our inner smiling will continue its natural process until we feel we are back in a state of harmony. If we get uptight, we can simply remind ourselves by inner smiling again.**

## ***Mapping Our Body-Mind's Energetic Patterns***

**It helps to have a map of our “insides” before we begin the Inner Smile practice. It also helps to get acquainted with some common Chinese terms used by Daoists to describe spiritual development. The problem in English is that we often don’t have the words to describe clearly what is going on inside us at a subtle level.**

**“Subtle energy” is not an ordinary part of western culture, and the language around “energy”, “soul”, “spirit” all tends to get blurred into one fuzzy concept. The Daoists had very specific technical terms so that a practitioner could focus their intention with greater refinement and thus intensify the effect.**

**Our personal sexual essence or body substance (*jing*), is said to hold all the imprints of our energy patterns. It is sexual because it is how you reproduce your body cells. This subtle substance – perhaps best described as the substance from which our DNA and RNA are made – instantly feels nourished by inner smiling. Think of your body and its sexuality as your earth.**

**When you smile, it is like the Sun coming out from behind dark clouds, and lighting up your earth. Only this happens deep inside you when your inner heart comes out of hiding and smiles at your sexual substance. Your body feels warm, loved, and accepted, as if it had been lovingly hugged from within. It instantly starts making healthy new baby cells! Can you imagine this “mini love story” happening to all 80 trillion cells in the human body? This is how the Inner Smile can quickly become a very tangible and powerful experience.**

**When our body substance feels accepted, we can then spontaneously and naturally grow into a strong healthy presence or spirit (*shen*). Spirit needs a body in order to experience itself. Our spirit is constantly dissolving the old “body pictures” and creating fresh new identity at the cellular level. This deep natural intelligence is called Original Spirit by the ancient Daoists. This innate intelligence should not be confused with brilliance of intellect or IQ.**

**According to the Daoists, our natural intelligence will give us the guidance we need to fulfill our human destiny in each moment. No one**

has a better or worse destiny than anyone else, and somehow all six billion of our human destinies on this planet are harmoniously linked together, even though we often cannot see how that level of our collective intelligence functions. The Inner Smile is the human interface between our personal Earth and our personal Heaven. Ultimately it will put us into contact with the center of collective human consciousness.

### ***Our Inner Family of Biological Intelligences***

Our personal biological intelligences (*jingshen*) are linked to our vital organ functions like the heart, kidney, liver spleen, and lungs. These organs and their energy meridians are controlled by different kinds of intelligence. In this Daoist theory, tested over thousands of years of practice, the whole body thinks, feels, senses, and knows – not just the head brain.

Our whole-body brain includes many different kinds of intelligence. Think of it as your inner soul team or family. Each kind of intelligence has a different job to do. Some times these intelligences work together, sometimes they fight. Our body-sexual intelligence asks, who is a good partner for me or my children? What does my body need to heal? Our social intelligence asks, how do I make friends and function in groups?

Our creative intelligence is looking for new ways to exercise its imagination, in everything from deciding what clothes to wear to creative projects. Our spiritual intelligence has the ability to perceive ordinary reality from the soul level, which gives it a very different information than what our senses offer.

The goal of Daoist meditation is to live in dynamic balance. This requires getting our entire family of inner biological intelligences to smile to each other. The goal is not to sit in emptiness, but to cultivate our Authentic or True Self (*zhen ren*), which always seeks harmony.

## ***Inner Smile is Deepened by other Tao Practices***



*Painting of two female Tao immortals. Deer is symbol of gentleness and the crane of long life. Behind the <sup>3</sup>inscrutable<sup>2</sup> Oriental inner smile is concealed a vast wisdom of internal energy arts and the adept's contentment with their inner soul cultivation.*

**There are many other Daoist practices developed over the millennia that take the Inner Smile process to a more refined level of physical and mental self-healing and soul development. They all help create and stabilize a joyful and calm inner space that smoothes the flow of our life journey. These include the rest of the *Chi Kung* Fundamentals 1 training in the [Five Animal Frolics](#) and [Six Healing Sounds](#), which**

teach us how to communicate more deeply with each aspect of our normally unconscious five major biological intelligences (*wu jingshen*).

Then in *Chi Kung* Fundamentals levels 2, 3, and 4 we learn basic energy pathways in the body of the [Microcosmic Orbit](#), and [Internal Chi Breathing and Rooting](#). Once you have this basic grounding, [Fusion of the Five Elements](#) helps you balance your emotions and activate hidden psychic power channels. [Healing Love](#) (sexology for health and bliss), [Dream Practice](#), and [Water & Fire Alchemy](#) (*kan & li*) are all optional higher stages that allow you to have truly marvelous experiences most people have never even dreamed of.

But without Inner Smile, these practices would not be as deep or as effective. At each level there is a *chi kung* movement practice as well as a sitting meditation practice that balance each other. When people ask me, “what is the best way to prepare for higher levels of practice”, I usually tell them to practice the Inner Smile more deeply. A state of total openness is the best way to learn something new. Smile to your rigid boundaries, open to a new level of flowing *chi* harmony.

These Daoist practices, refined over thousands of years of testing, help us to gather the essences of the outer macro-cosmos (Nature) into our personal micro-cosmos (body). This is a fancy way of saying that they help us grasp the relation between our physical, tangible self and our intangible, cosmic self.

It is truly wonderful to do the Inner Smile in combination with dynamic *chi kung* or sublime alchemy meditations. Yet the Inner Smile is also a simple, fun, and easy “stand alone” practice. It can be even more than that. The Inner Smile can be a complete path unto itself, if you choose to make your only practice.

***Sexual Tension of Personal Becoming  
versus  
Tai Chi Harmony of Cosmic Being***

Energetically, the Inner Smile asks us to accept that our personal inner Being is part of the Original Spirit (*yuan shen*) of the Tao (Dao). According to ancient Chinese thinking, Original Spirit exhaled the Original Breath as the pure, non-polar breath of the Cosmos. This breath follows the cosmic law of the *Tai Chi* principle of harmony. Its invisible guidance deep inside our body is why we constantly seek harmony in our everyday life.

Think of Tao as the Source of Nature. *Tao* breathes out its spiritual qualities or “*de*”. The *de* shines out as our personal inner will power to manifest the various spiritual qualities in our life, one of which is our physical body itself as a vessel for cosmic energies. Thus the title of Lao Tzu’s classic of 500 b.c. was titled the *Tao te Ching (Dao de jing)*, the Book of the Way and its Power.



***Smiling Lao Tzu (Laozi) rides on an Ox. Ox is the symbol of worldly burden, the earth element, and of the human soul riding atop its physical body. The Tao sages in China are usually depicted as smiling. This is an Inner Smile, suggesting that no matter how bad the worldly burden becomes, the Tao within their inner heart will remain an eternal source of smiling joy.***

***There is a classic painting of Confucius, Buddha, and Lao Tzu sitting around a vat of vinegar. Each one is taking a sip of the vinegar. Confucius has a sour look on his face. Buddha has a bitter look. Lao Tzu has a big smile on his face. Life's outer vinegar is alchemically transmuted to inner wine in the Tao adept's inner cauldron.***

**As our Tao-Being “breathes” our de-Becoming into the physical plane, our non-dual Original Breath polarizes into *yin* and *yang* breaths. The harmonious flow of this trinity – the two *yin-yang* breaths and the one Original Breath – is called *Tai Chi*. This polarizing of energy into *yin-yang* creates all the forces of Nature such as hot and cold, night and day – and female and male bodies.**

**This polarization of our original cosmic energy injects a dynamic tension into our physical Becoming that is essentially experienced as a sexual-creative tension in our personal body-mind. Everyone is unique, so everyone experiences this sexual-creative tension differently.**

**Some of this tension gets acted out in our sexual relations. But mostly it is directed at sexual reproduction at the cellular level, the constant task of birthing a new physical body. In Daoist alchemy, the psycho-sexual tension is re-directed to birthing our physical lead-like heaviness into a “golden light body” that is not subject to death. That is the “gold” substance that internal alchemy seeks to cultivate.**

**This sexual-creative tension is what makes worldly life exciting, as in the beautiful interplay between loving men and women. But it can also make life miserable, as in the ugly battle between the sexes or the struggle between mind and body that results in illness. Underneath, this outer tension originates as the tension between our neutral inner Being and our sexually polarized process of Becoming.**

We could call this Being-Becoming tension an *apparent* split between “mind and body” or “spirit and matter”. But the ancient Daoists didn’t see this as a split. They experienced these polarities as a smooth continuum. Even though humans find themselves in a male or female body, each of us internally has a continuum of masculine and feminine qualities.

The ultimate purpose of the Inner Smile is to bring this underlying tension into consciousness, embrace it, and harmonize it. Smiling is a method to smooth out this tension that is incredibly simple, powerful, profound, peaceful, effortless – and FUN!

Using the Inner Smile to cultivate our Original Breath (*yuan chi*) is a key secret to resolving this deep tension in our body-mind. This *yin-yang* sexual-creative tension is so deep that many of us don’t even know it exists. *Yuan chi* is inherently neutral and balanced. The topic of sexuality is too vast to be covered here. If you are interested in exploring it more deeply, you may find the [Daoist secrets of sexology](#) and [inner sexual alchemy](#) quite interesting. (Both available as [Tao Home Study courses](#), but recommended only after proceeding through the [Chi Kung Fundamentals](#) and [Fusion of the Five Elements](#)).

Experience of *yuan chi* inspires us to live in a simple, continuous, heart-centered *chi* flow. It grows our inner feeling of peace and deep presence, even while life and other people struggle around us. Our *yuan chi*, or Original Breath, is what allows us to embody the notion of *wu wei*, or “effortless action”.

When one’s inner being smiles, all doubts – accumulated for years – disperse instantly, like shadows fleeing sunlight. People think, “I don’t have time to meditate”. This is really just a way of saying they choose to put their priority elsewhere, or that their outer life is so stressful they can’t take care of their inner life. Welcome to the Inner Smile, where that excuse doesn’t work.

It doesn’t take any extra time to smile. You can practice the Inner Smile even while you do everything else in your busy life. We don’t sacrifice anything when we inner smile. We are only *adding* more

**heartfelt presence to whatever else we are doing. The only thing we lose by smiling inwardly is the unconscious “inner frown” many people are carrying around.**

**This inner frown is a form of self-inflicted chronic stress. Over time, it begins to weigh on us, as if we were wearing our resistance to life like a big heavy chain around our neck. Unfortunately, we often inflict this inner frown on those around us. If you look into the mirror of your life, you can see if this is the case for you. We each need to ask ourselves, I am ready to get serious about throwing off this heavy yoke, and begin living more lightly, guided by our inner smiling self?**

***Have people used the inner smile to change real life situations?***

**I have heard many, many stories from people about their outer success with the inner smile. One person told me they got a big salary raise. A woman did the Inner Smile to her very mean boss who was very tight with money.**

**She started smiling at the guy for a couple of days, just connecting her inner heart to his inner heart, careful not to project anything about money. Then she just walked in one day into his office and said, “I really need a raise”. The mean boss looked up, just kind of smiled, and said OK.**

**That is what I call effortless change. Mean, stingy people don't *want* to be that way, they are just afraid to be something different, to be someone that is loveable. So when you in effect love someone silently, in a safe, neutral way, their being can then shift the structure of the outer personality. And voila!**