

The Empty Vessel

The Journal of Taoist Philosophy and Practice

Fall 2016

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Treasure House of Jing**

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Founder of Energy Arts, Bruce Frantzis is a Taoist Lineage Master with over 40 years of experience in Eastern healing systems. He is the first known Westerner to hold authentic lineages in tai chi, bagua, hsing-i, qigong and Taoist meditation. He has taught Taoist energy arts to more than 15,000 students. Frantzis trained for over a decade in China and also has extensive experience in Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, yoga, Kundalini, energy healing therapies and Taoist Fire and Water traditions.

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How does Tao Healing work?

Everyone and everything is made of shen qi jing (pronounced *shun chee jing*), including human beings. "Shen" includes soul, heart and mind. "Qi" is energy. "Jing" is matter. In our book, *Soul Mind Body Science System: Grand Unification Theory and Practice for Healing, Rejuvenation, Longevity, and Immortality*, string theorist and physicist Dr. Rulin Xiu and I scientifically explain how:

- People get sick because of misalignment of their shen qi jing.
- People get old because of misalignment of their shen qi jing.

When a human being's soul, heart, mind, energy and matter are all aligned with the Source (Tao) of all creation, the person is happy and healthy. You have the power to connect with the Tao – just "say hello." In my teachings there are many ways to connect and align with the Tao (Source).

Chanting sacred phrases like Tao Love or Tao Light is a meditation that can manifest the nature of Tao Love or Tao Light in your soul, heart, mind and body, or any aspect of your life. Aligning with Tao nature is healing and rejuvenating.

Dr. and Master Zhi Gang Sha is a Tao master healer, spiritual teacher and bestselling author of 21 books, including Soul Mind Body Science System. As a medical doctor trained in Western medicine, traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, he is a grandmaster of ancient arts, including tai chi, qigong, kung fu, I Ching and feng shui. Visit DrSha.com.

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What is Taoism (Daoism)?

"The Tao (Dao) that can be described is not the eternal Tao." So begins the *Tao Te Ching (Daodejing)* of Lao Tzu (Laozi) written some 2,500 years ago. How then, to describe the indescribable? How to fit into words that which is beyond words? The Tao can only be pointed to, or referred to, say the ancient sages. It cannot be held, only experienced. It cannot be touched, only felt. It cannot be seen, only glimpsed with the inner eye.

Tao, then, is the Way, as in direction, as in manner, source, destination, purpose and process. In discovering and exploring Tao the process and the destination are one and the same. Lao Tzu describes a Daoist as the one who sees simplicity in the complicated and achieves greatness in little things. He or she is dedicated to discovering the dance of the cosmos in the passing of each season as well as the passing of each precious moment in our lives.

Taoism was already long established when Lao Tzu wrote the *Tao Te Ching*. It originated in the ancient shamanic roots of Chinese civilization. Many of the practices and attitudes toward life were already established before Lao Tzu's time. For many centuries Taoism was an informal way of life, a way followed by peasant, farmer, gentleman philosopher and artist. It was a way of deep reflection and of learning from Nature, considered the highest teacher. Followers of the Way studied the stars in the heavens and the energy that lies deep within the earth. They meditated upon the energy flow within their own bodies and mapped out the roads and paths it traveled upon.

It is a belief in life, a belief in the glorious procession of each unfolding moment. It is a deeply spiritual life, involving introspection, balance, emotional and spiritual independence and responsibility and a deep awareness and connection to the earth and all other life forms. It requires an understanding of how energy works in the body and how to treat illness in a safe, non-invasive way while teaching practical ways of maintaining health and avoiding disease and discomfort. Taoist meditation techniques help the practitioner enter deeper or more expansive levels of wakefulness and inner strength. But most of all, it is a simple, natural, practical way of being in our bodies and our psyches and sharing that way of being with all other life forms we come into contact with.

Today in China and in the West, Taoism is often divided into two forms, *tao jiao* and *tao jia*. Or religious Taoism and philosophical Daoism. Many scholars argue that there are not two distinct forms of Taoism and in many ways they are right. There is really a great intermingling of the religious form of Taoism and its various sects and the philosophical Taoism of Lao Tzui and Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi). But many people who follow the Tao do not consider themselves religious people and do not go to temples and are not ordained as priests. Rather these two forms exist both side by side and within each other.

It is up to each of us to find the way to the Way in our own way. What we try to do with *The Empty Vessel* is offer articles and information to help you, our dear readers, to do that.



The Empty Vessel

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Statement of Purpose

The Empty Vessel is dedicated to the exploration and dissemination of Taoist philosophy and practice. It is open to sharing the various traditional and contemporary teachings in a nondiscriminatory manner. We at The Empty Vessel believe that it is in using these practices and attitudes of the ancient achieved ones in a timely and contemporary manner that we can best benefit from them and in doing so, be able to effect change in the world around us.

New from Solala Towler

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MICHAEL WINN founder of healingtao.com

Most people think of the *Tao Te Ching* as a book on philosophy or a treatise on leadership. Yet there is a little-known treasure hidden within the familiar passages of Lao Tzu's work: step-by-step practical guidance for the spiritual journey. With *Practicing the Tao Te Ching*, renowned teacher Solala Towler reveals a new facet to this spiritual classic, offering accessible instructions paired with each of the 81 verses of the *Tao Te Ching*. "Tao is a way of deep reflection and learning from nature, considered the highest teacher," writes Towler. "It teaches us to follow the energy flows within the heavens, the earth, and our own bodies." With lucid instruction and deep insight, he guides you through meditations, movement and breathing practices, subtle energy exercises, and inner reflections—all to help you to embody Taoist wisdom in every aspect of your life.

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Along the Way

As I begin my 24th year of publication of this journal I do so with a full heart of gratitude to all the wonderful people who have been a part of this publication over the years – from all the people who have written articles and poetry; who have so generously shared their art and photographs; who have spent the time to sit down for an interview; for all the schools, organizations and teachers who have advertised with us; for the folks who have helped proofread and edit; and last but not least, all our loyal readers all over the world!

When I began publishing this journal back in 1993 I did so because I saw a need and a usefulness for a journal covering the Taoist arts. There were and still are, many publications covering Buddhist practice but we are still the only one that covers Taoist thought, practice, and philosophy. (There is another fine publication called *Qi Journal* that covers tai chi, qigong and Chinese medicine but we also cover both the religious and philosophical aspects of Taoist thought and practice.)

On my travels around the country teaching qigong, Tao Te Ching and doing Taoist Gongfu Tea Ceremonies I get to meet and interact with some of you. It is always wonderful to meet one of my readers and supporters, some of which have been with us since the beginning.

I see the interest in the Taoist arts of qigong, tai chi, meditation and even gongfu tea growing all the time. It is such a delight and honor to be a part of that. Taoist practices are not something to be learned in a weekend and then practiced sporadically afterwards. They really do require a level of commitment and self discipline. We cannot hope to become and immortal or even a good student by only practices here and there. Our practice needs to become just as much a part of our lives as eating and breathing.

In my book *Practicing the Tao Te Ching: 81 Steps on the Way*, I offer a practice for each chapter. These practices, while very simple, can have a profound effect on our lives. In this ancient book, Lao Tzu tells us over and over that "head knowledge" is inferior to "belly knowledge." What he means by this is that we need to get our energy out of our heads and into our bellies, our Dan Tiens or "fields of elixir". It is only in this way that the practices will have the full effect.

I have joined forces with a good qigong friend Jessica Kolbe, for our upcoming China Tour (see pages 14-15). We will be spending a little more time than usual in Wudang Mountains studying qigong and tai chi with a teacher there. I have traveled to almost all of the Taoist sacred mountain areas and there is something about this place that speaks to my heart so deeply. If you are interested in joining us please let us know soon as we are already half full. We are capping the group at around 20, this will make it easier logistically but will be a better experience for the students as well.

So, a deep bow of gratitude for everyone who has helped me along this journey. May we travel together for timeless time to come!

Solala Towler, editor



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Supporting the Kidneys:

Treasure House of Jing

Minke de Vos

In Taoist practice, the kidneys store the essential energy that powers all of the other organs. This energy is a combination of your Original Qi (formed at conception) and the Postnatal Qi that you acquire through the digestion and refinement of food and water. This combined energy acts as your core energy reserve, supporting all bodily functions throughout your life.

In addition to storing essential sexual energy for your survival and for emergencies, the kidneys govern the sexual organs, sexual energy, the bladder, the bones, and the brain. They are associated with hearing and balance and also govern the qi of absorption and storage.

When the orb of the kidneys is in balance and full of life force, we feel energized, calm with the strength of inner peace, and supported by Mother Earth. We have a healthy sex drive and feel passionate, sensual, gentle, and creative. Strong willpower creates the magnetism and charisma to manifest our dreams. We are able to surrender through our faith in our bodily wisdom. We feel safe to open and breathe in life deeply.

Kidney Energy

Kidneys are the “trunk where the gathered treasure takes root.” This saying describes how the kidneys store jing—the inheritance or treasures you were given from your ancestors at birth. This jing, also called Prenatal Qi, cannot be replenished and is gradually spent during our lives. This is why it is vitally important to conserve it through Qigong practice, and to supplement it with Postnatal Qi—the types of qi we can acquire through food, drink, and respiration.

A positive attitude toward life is another source of Postnatal Qi. Spiritually we are nourished by inspiration of the highest good that supports us in our lives. By realizing the divine intention in all our experiences, we reap the potential energy to manifest our destiny, which we received at conception.

Yin and Yang Kidneys

The kidneys are the root of yin and yang energies in the body’s organs and tissues. The left yin kidney is considered the “water of life”; it is the fundamental substance of all yin the body, moistening and nourishing the tissues. It rules the cycles of birth, growth, maturation, and reproduction. It is the foundation of yin energy in the body.

The right yang kidney is the foundation of all yang

energies in the body. It is the primary motivator and is considered the “fire of life.” Kidney yang provides warmth to the organs and tissues.

Mingmen, the Gate of Destiny, is the moving qi between the kidneys, which pulsates with the influence of ancestral qi.

Kidney Balancing

Visualize the left kidney as deep blue and the right kidney as bright blue. Become aware of which kidney feels tighter or harder to breathe into. Take extra sips into the weaker kidney to internally balance the yin and yang kidneys.

Breathe into Mingmen to connect with a portal to Yuan or Source Qi, the foundation of all the yin and yang energies of the body and the spark of change. Thank your ancestors for supporting you in living to your highest destiny.

Your Kidneys Are Your Batteries: The Importance of Preventing Burnout

The kidneys are the bio-batteries of the body. If there is no charge on your battery, there is no connection! That means it’s hard to connect to yourself and others and to listen to divine guidance. It takes a certain amount of charge in the kidneys to pull cosmic qi deeper into the body.

If your fire burns too hot and you don’t turn down the flame, your water will boil away and the pot will be burnt or broken. Women tend to be big spenders who love shopping and pleasing others. This is all good if we balance this overgiving tendency by giving back to our bodies and topping up our energetic bank account.

When we are overgiving we crave stimulants like sugar and coffee; we stay up late and try to rev ourselves up with loud music or push ourselves into exercise. This is called “false yang”—a superficial energy without the real substance behind it. This will eventually burn up the adrenals and kidneys, the central source of willpower in our body. Taoist yoga offers ways of conscious resting that will allow our natural reserves to be replenished.

The signs of kidney energy depletion can be fatigue, weak knees, back pain, poor short-term memory, low libido, incontinence, stiff or achy joints, poor hearing, hypersensitivity to noises, fear, and lack of initiative or creativity. More signs are hormonal imbalance, especially after menopause, night sweats, dizziness, osteoporosis, and accelerated aging. As you can see by this list, it is very important to consciously

replenish your kidney energy!

Test Your Batteries

To test how much charge you have in your kidneys, you can intuit a number between 1 and 10, visualizing your energy like the green bars on a charger. There might be a different number for each kidney. Practice Packing the Kidneys for five minutes, gently holding the breath in the kidneys. Then take another reading. After decades of doing this test with groups, I've found that people consistently get about two more bars!

Building Your Core Reserves

Replenishing Yourself—Replenishing Your Kidneys

Women tend to be great givers. It is vital for us to replenish ourselves on a regular basis through energetic self-care. In order to build kidney energy, we need to balance movement with stillness, and doing with being. What are the ways we can replenish ourselves? Let's look at what women already do: soak in the bath, rest in nature, receive a massage, go to the spa, get pedicures, meditate, practice Qigong and yoga. We can enhance these activities by being quiet, being aware of bodily sensations, receiving pleasure, and conscious deep breathing. Simply by closing our eyes and basking in the dark yin, we can begin to restore our vital energy. Going to bed early (before midnight) and listening to soft music, to nature sounds like running water, or to silence replenishes our kidneys.

Building the core reserves is essential for women who would like to empower themselves. The following kidney practices will give you effective ways to get charged and stay charged up.

Kidney Neigong

Neigong is inner work, mainly focusing on breathing. Kidney Neigong fills the kidneys with nourishing earth energy. This increases stamina and helps prevent adrenal burnout. It can also help to regulate blood pressure. Any overflow of kidney energy will flow into the bones, which are ruled by the kidneys.

Kidney Neigong has been an essential daily practice of mine for decades. The kidneys are nourished by receiving the yin energy of the earth, like a geyser bubbling up from underground waters. There is an abundant wellspring of life force to be tapped. Kidney Breathing is nourishing before, during, and after menstruation, or whenever you feel tired. It feels supportive and eases lower back discomfort during menstruation. It prevents drying up after menopause.

Basic Kidney Breathing

To initially access Kidney Breathing, hold your hands at your waist, with your thumbs on your back. As you exhale, hug/squeeze your floating ribs and gently press your thumbs into your kidneys (fig. 8.7).

Inhale and push out against your hands and thumbs. Breathe into the kidneys and feel them widen.

Drawing from Deep Wells

• Rub your hands until they're warm, then tap the Bubbling Springs points in the soles of your feet. Tap into deep underground waters and draw from a healthy, energetic pipeline of earth's creative energy to nourish your kidneys.

• Claw your feet like suction cups. Suck qi in through the Bubbling Springs points, up the insides of your legs, through your perineum, and into the kidneys. Keep your perineum firm to enhance the suction power.

• Exhale into your kidneys.

Kidney Packing

This practice can be done lying down, sitting against a wall or chair, or standing in Horse Stance against a wall or a tree.

• If lying down, press your kidneys gently into the floor or bed and feel them widen.

• In a sitting position, press the kidneys gently against the back of the chair.

• Standing in Horse Stance against a wall or tree, fill out your kidneys and lengthen your middle back into the support behind you.

Other postures that expand the kidneys are Child Pose (kneeling with head down), sitting and leaning forward over your bent legs, or lying flat with knees to your chest.

Inward Mudra

This hand position helps focus energy in the kidneys.

• Tuck your thumbs into palms, with the thumbs touching the base of the ring fingers.

• Curl your fingers around your thumbs into a loose fist. Place your hands on your belly in front of the kidneys. This will draw your mind inward to build qi in your kidneys.

Packing the Kidneys

• Sit or stand with your hands over your kidneys.

• Pack qi into the kidneys, filling them with calm, blue, luminous mist. Smile to the kidneys, making them soft, receptive, and comfortable.

• Hold and spiral earth energy nine times in and around the kidneys to absorb the energy.

Say inside the words of internal power, "Peace" or "Shanti," three times.

• Exhale slowly into the kidneys.

Packing the Qi Belt

• Place your thumbs over the kidneys, below the floating ribs.

• Feel the breath push against your thumbs as you inhale.

• Keep up the breath pressure against your thumbs as you exhale.

• Keep your "tire" pumped up around your waist as you continue to inhale and exhale.

• Do not strain, and smile into the power you are building in your abdomen.

Turtle Drinks from Deep Pools

- Take sips into the kidneys and spiral the energy in them.
- Breathe in Earth !i through your left Bubbling Spring. Pull up the left side of the anus to pack the left kidney. Make a fist with the left hand in front of the left ovary.
- Breathe in Earth Qi through your right Bubbling Spring. Pull up the right side of the anus to pack the right kidney. Make a fist with the right hand in front of the right ovary.
- Sip to both sides at the same time, then exhale deeply into the kidneys, blowing down warm qi from the heart with the “ha-a-a-a-w” sound. This is known as “melting the ice”: love melts icy cold fear, which is a major obstacle to liberating sexual energy. Melting the ice will relax and lengthen the psoas muscles—the “muscles of the soul.”

Filling Deep Yin Pools

In this version of Kidney Neigong we practice Empty Force Breathing. Imagine that you dig a hole in the sand and allow the water to fill it: the more you empty, the more you can fill.

This feels wonderfully relaxing lying down with your knees up.

- Place your fingers on the B spot (“b” for “breath”) just above the pubic bone, and gently press in as you exhale. Exhale very long and pull up your perineum and urogenital muscles. Hold out the exhalation as you deeply relax into the emptiness. Feel the life pulse in your ovaries.
- Inhale and feel your kidneys magnetically drawing cosmic forces deeper into the body. Allow the water of life to fill the pelvic basin from below upward, widening your kidneys and filling them with yin energy. Your lower belly will push your fingers outward.
- Feel the peaceful grace and blue light of the water element. Relax. Breathe rhythmically and count by your heart-beat: 6 beats exhaling, 6 counts suspending the emptiness in the kidneys, 6 counts inhaling, and 6 counts suspending the fullness.

Descending Yang, Ascending Yin

As you exhale, stroke down the yang meridians, down the back of the legs. Pick up some earth energy with your fingers, stroking around the toes. Stroke up the yin meridians, up the insides of the legs, as you inhale. Stroke around the waistline (Qi Belt).

Rub the kidneys warm.

Reverse Breathing

Reverse breathing is also called “tortoise breathing” for its longevity qualities, as the tortoise lives a long time. It is a natural breathing pattern that occurs with laughter, yawning, and shouting and during exertions of power. Express “HA!” as if you were doing a punch in martial arts, and notice how your belly moves outward or gets firm on the exhalation. This is the reverse of relaxed breathing, in which the belly moves inward on exhalation and outward on inhalation.

The belly comes in on the inhalation as the kidneys

expand in the back, and it goes out a bit on the exhalation as the qi pressure builds in the dantian. Applying Newton’s law of counter forces (for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction): the more qi pressure goes down and in, the more force is projected into the limbs, voice, mind, or wherever you direct it. This is why reverse breathing is practiced extensively in Qigong, Taiji, and other martial arts, as well as in some Zen circles to penetrate the riddles of life.

This breath pattern is also known as power breathing, dantian breathing, or paradoxical breathing. It is called “paradoxical breathing” because you cannot see from outside if someone is inhaling or exhaling. A striking samurai warrior would watch carefully because the opponent is more vulnerable on the receptive inhale.

The following exercises are reverse breathing practices that help build qi pressure in the dantian.

Resilient Qi Ball

Use reverse breathing to compress the qi ball in your dantian. Use this breath to counter any deflation that happens in your Qi Belt when you are stressed. When you are stressed out, you have dropped the ball.

In this exercise, your perineum will bounce like a yo-yo as you pull up on the inhalation and pull up even more on the exhalation.

- As you inhale, fill up your dantian like a beach ball, expanding on all sides. Draw qi into the perineum.
- As you exhale, blow down into your core like blowing up a balloon in your belly, building qi pressure. Pull up the pelvic floor and squeeze the ball from above and below, noticing how the sides of the qi ball widen. This sends qi down the legs to root (fig. 8.8).
- Once the qi ball is pumped up (like a tire), do not deflate it.

Sounding the Six Healing Sounds or other vocal expressions can strengthen the compression of the qi ball and thus the projection of power in or out of the body. Lifting a yoni weight by bearing down on exhalation as you simultaneously lift the pelvic floor further compresses the qi ball.

Minke de Vos, MMQ, is a senior Universal Healing Tao instructor and medical Qigong master therapist. Known internationally as one of the top teachers of self-healing and sacred sexuality, she has been practicing Qigong for over 30 years and is the founder of Silent Ground retreats, Feminine Treasures workshops, and Tao Tantric Arts classes. She lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. <http://www.silentground.com> & <http://www.femininetreasures.com/minke/>

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Chi Nei Tsang Cosmology and the Wheel of Life

Karen Sörvik

I present here a brief overview about the cosmology of the Dao or Tao and where Chi Nei Tsang fits in. The word “Dao” means *everything* — the One you cannot name because you are an aspect of it, and trying to name it would only result in being beside the point or a little bit off, at best. This is the Dao or Tao, spelled with a capital letter.

And then we have the second *dao*: represented in Chinese calligraphy by the character “looking at a foot” and together this can be thought of as The Way, the way we go through life. Both are represented by a large circle, inside of which is everything, everything happens from inside of it. It’s always from within the Dao that we work and within the Dao that we see things as we do in this world. It also is represented as the “Sea of Potential,” where everything comes out of being, out of nothingness.(figure 1)

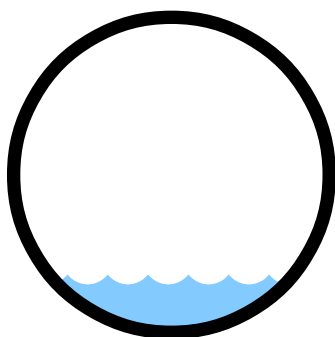


Figure 1

Out of this big soupy mass something rises . . . and it becomes a star, it becomes something that now has form. Here we confront duality: formless, and with form. Duality: night and day, in and out, up and down, all of these opposites that are attracted to each other. They cannot exist without the other, the *yin* and the *yang*. (figure 2) Out of this attraction, a center of energy emerges that connects two sides of a mountain, two sides of a coin, everything in creative tension within something else either becomes, manifests, or retreats into nothingness. There’s an edge that keeps them connected. This connection creates a wave: from one becomes the other.

The wave means that there is a rising and there is a falling. Out of nothingness, something rises into form, and from form it thus comes down dissolving into nothingness. The attraction between reposition, is the *chi*, the energy. (figure 3) We can see the Tai Chi symbol in the movement of this wheel. In figure 4 the wheel has four spokes: the water element (shown as the

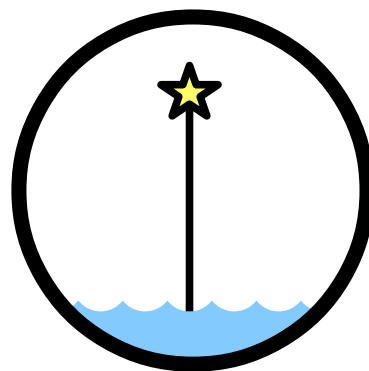


Figure 2

dark blue circle), is a sea of potential, a forming energy. It rises with that energy called the *Wood element* (green circle). We move from here to complete manifestation, the flowering, the Sun, the *Fire element* (red circle). We sink into the *Earth* (yellow circle), and then we keep falling the energy of *Metal* (grey circle) and dissolve back to water. These four spokes, the cross, gives us our compass while we are planted on earth: the cardinal North, South, East, and West, Fire, Water, Metal, Wood.

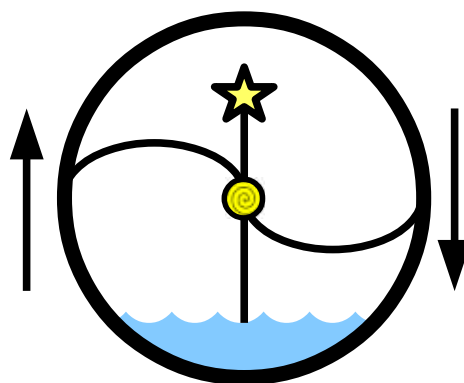


Figure 3

So we have:

- 1 Dao — that which cannot be spoken
- 1 dao — the way
- 2 Yin & Yang
- 3 Chi — energy
- 5 Elements

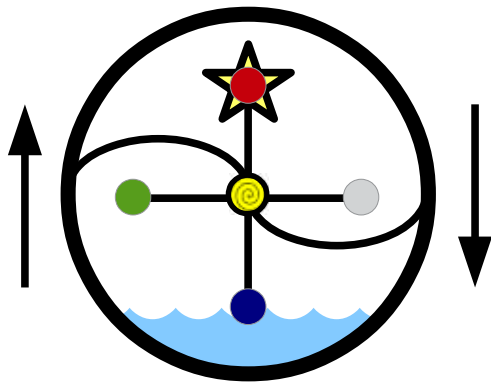


Figure 4

But if we just have four spokes, it's too "square" or bumpy, not smooth. So, as in everything (so important in Tai Chi), we have transitions between these four spokes. You go from one spoke to another and there's a transition in between. (Figure 5)

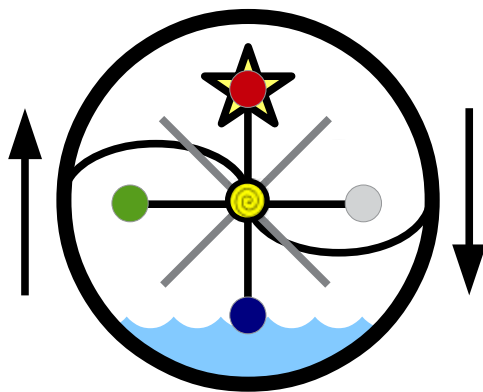


Figure 5

We have four celebrations throughout the year that are connected to these transition points. Out of the darkness, we have the beginning of spring: the Chinese New Year — the 2nd/3rd of February, or slightly earlier/later as the moon changes. This is the time when the Earth starts to wake up underneath, and there's a celebration. It's always connected to fire. There are fire-crackers for example. Then we come to full Spring. The second transition is called the mating season, May 1st — the moment when Heaven and Earth are working together very actively. This is the moment of copulation, of breeding. There are dances around maypoles, and festivals, and fires again. Then we have high Summer and we come to the harvest moon when we collect the bounty of the Earth. So up until this point, Earth has woken up, mated, flowered, and given fruit.

And then we come to the second cycle, when Heaven and Earth begin to separate. We come to the Fall. After the Fall, we have the last celebration, which is Halloween, Night of All Saints and All Dead. This is the moment where the veil between

Heaven and Earth grows thin, and souls come in and out to be reborn — a new cycle begins. This is the "X" in the diagram, and it is connected to Heaven.

The cross for the Earth, and the X for Heaven produce a wheel with eight spokes, and now we have the Eight Directions, the *Bagua*. Each one of these is connected to a Spirit Helper, a quality. In the I Ching, the Book of Change, the trigrams are qualities that are connected to these directions. The East is Thunder, the South-East is Wind, and these are two activating, penetrating, moving energies — the qualities of Wood. The Fire is the direction of the South, South-West is the connection to Earth — it is the harvest, the most important time of the Earth. Then the West, which is metal, is connected to Lake and self-reflection. As we keep coming down in the wheel, we come to Heaven, the North-West. From that moment of self-reflection and surrendering, we come to dissolving, falling in space to Heaven. We dissolve back to Water, the North, the sea of potential, rebirth as we come out of the Water, this is the spoke connected to Earth. The North-East is the Mountain, the cave, the place of the hermit, or the womb.

Now we have the Five Elements mixed with the Eight Directions. Those trigrams, or Spirit Helpers, are qualities. As we face each direction, we can be connected to it and activate the quality of energy associated with it.

This is a calendar connecting the Sun, the 365 days, and the seasons. And then there's the other way of looking at this — namely that the Water collection point can also be thought of as the Moon. We have the Sun and the Moon. There are thirteen moons that happen through the year, there are thirteen joints in the body, the Tai Chi form has thirteen movements. The 12 meridians and the orbit/center channel. It's a number that is connected to the moon. And the moon is connected to our Sexual Palace. We are ruled and guided by the moon, and it is from the moon that we get our power. So, now we have a Sun/Moon calendar, and it's the mixture of these that brings balance.

- 1 Dao — that cannot be spoken
- 1 dao — The Way
- 2 Yin & Yang
- 3 Chi — the energy
- 5 Elements
- 8 Directions
- 13 Moons

This map becomes a map of our body. (Figure 6) The center of the wheel becomes the navel. Notice the large intestine pictures here. Activating the four corners of the large intestine activates the wheel, and those points are the transition points in the wheel. If you look at the numbers {1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13}, we have the *Fibonacci sequence* of creation. We could say that in Chi Nei Tsang, we're really working to make this "Wheel of Life" come to life.

Whenever it's stuck, we make it move. There's a momentum that occurs — we don't have to keep digging. We're going to look for whatever has made the wheel stuck or stopped — and we're going to move it, so that everything is touched, everything is connected, and the wheel keeps turning. And when this wheel turns, there's life. And where there's life, there's health — it's that easy! It's important to keep coming back to this map, because it is the 13 moons, the 8 Directions and the 5 Elements . . . It becomes the 3; it becomes the 2; and it comes back to the 1. All those layers are there. What we want

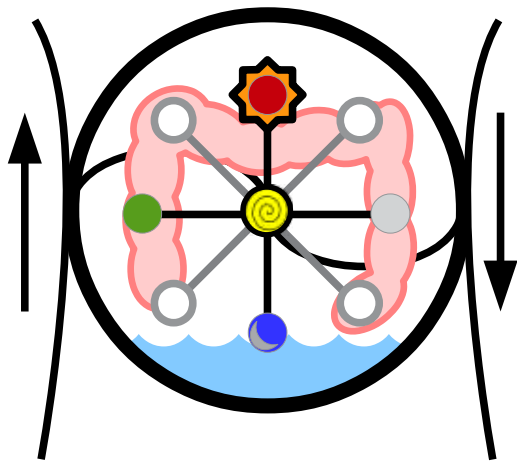


Figure 6

is to come back and become “1” with the Dao. With the Chi Nei Tsang practice this map translates into how everything comes back together and into the navel.

Around the rim of the navel, we have the connection to the 8 Directions. They can be seen (or felt) as knots and tangles that we work on to release any trapped or knotted place, so that there is a connection and an activation. As we work, we press on the Cardinal cross centers, and we activate what are called the “Collection Points” of the 5 Elements — we activate these centers. This means that we give an imprint and a memory of what that place is for the body. In doing this, we’re talking to the body, and teaching at the same time. In the Healing Tao, this becomes the *Fusion of the Five Elements*. We are becoming alchemists. We start working with the Elements, activating and moving whatever is dormant or whatever is in excess so that the system becomes balanced, even and flowing.

Each of us has a particular dominant quality — we may be a wood type, for example. As a practitioner, it’s not our intention to change this dominant quality when we work with people, but we do want to make sure that’s not affecting them to the degree that they are off-center. So, we bring it back to move into the circle.

We can, for instance, press and activate Water and Fire, and in doing this we create steam, we create Chi, we create energy, or activate dormant energy. We don’t look for energy outside — it’s already in the body, in the organs — it just needs to be activated. If it’s dormant, and it continues to stay dormant, it becomes dead and it becomes an illness. We reactivate it, it moves, and from something that was solid, stuck, like raw material, or low-frequency emotions — we activate it and whoosh — it creates steam, it becomes energy. If the energy then keeps moving and flowing, eventually it becomes *shen* (spirit). Things move that way. This is what we’re looking at in the big picture. We don’t want to lose this bigger picture as we go into any particular technique. The bigger picture is that we’re just here to build a momentum, and then the body’s intelligence comes into play and works. We’re not there to fix — we’re there to facilitate the learning process and reawaken the intelligence of the body.

We’re going to start from the surface and move down. We are going on our “rounds.” It’s called a “round” because we go in the shape of a circle, and also because we go around the table and touch everything. We do one layer, then a second

layer, and then a third layer. And depending on how open the body is, we’re able to keep going deep and deeper and deeper, to the spine. Within a treatment, there is a moment of opening the body to be able to connect and receive, and there’s a second round of addressing the priority: what is THE thing that if I just touch that, there’s a ripple effect and everything else happens. Instead of having to go to ten different places, I work on the root, the place that is the source of all the symptoms. So we’re not working on the symptoms, but that which is hidden creating the symptoms. I’m able to diagnose this in the first round. Then the third round is just the integration, allowing the person to be able to hold the treatment so that it keeps unfolding. We want the person to be able to leave and not recoil back to their old self, but rather be able to hold the new matrix that the body has experienced through the treatment.

In the first round, we start with the large intestine and lungs. This is the Metal element, and the Metal element is the one that lets go. You cannot bring in anything new if the old shit is still there . . . literally, sometimes! Sadness, grief, and depression are signs of the Metal element collapsing, not having wings to enable courage. By vibrating here and activating it, we’re turning it up, bringing it from low-frequency (sadness, grief, depression) to high-frequency (courage). It’s a sound system. We’re tuning it from being out of tune, to being in tune. And that also gives us courage to dive into the unknown. We build a little bit of courage at the beginning of the treatment, so that the person is willing to go somewhere absolutely unknown. This becomes the Opening of the Metal Gates.

We’re going to start touching the acupuncture points — Points 1 and 2 of the Lung Meridian — and working on the beginning and end of the large intestine. {Figure 7} On the right side of the body, we have the Ileocecal valve (the valve that connects the small intestine to the large intestine) and the appendix, and on the left side we’re going to be working with the sigmoid colon. By activating these four gates (the Lung Meridian points 1 and 2 on each side, the Ileocecal valve, and the sigmoid colon) we begin the process of opening the body which had been closed previously. We bring it from a low frequency to a higher vibration, just by vibrating, shaking and cat-walking (a type of pressing). We want the tightness in the hips to be able to let go, so that the body will start to sink into the table and be open for treatment. And at the same time, this will help the diaphragm. The diaphragm is key in Chi Nei Tsang: if we breathe fully, the organs are massaged and everything happens. As we inhale, the diaphragm comes down, and all the organs go down, forward and in. As we exhale, everything comes back up and into place. Walking and breathing should be enough if you have a very healthy body. What often happens is that the diaphragm gets stuck.

Once we open these four gates, we begin to work on bringing everything back into the wheel. {Figure 8} We’re going to work on both sides of the chest — on a diagonal from the right shoulder towards the navel, and then similarly from the left shoulder towards the navel. The right side is connected to the liver. The left side is connected to the stomach and the spleen. We’re going to press stomach points on the chest to bring the energy down to the stomach. Pushing the stomach down and pushing the liver down is going to bring the diaphragm down too, and you’ll be able to feel which side is tighter in the person. The organ can be so strongly attached and so tight (it may even feel like a rock), that it won’t allow the diaphragm

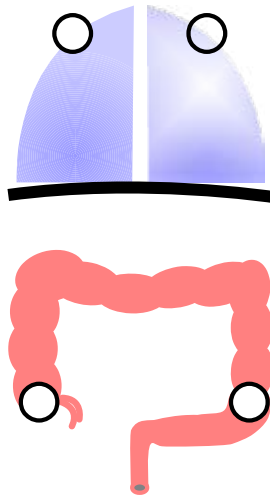


Figure 7

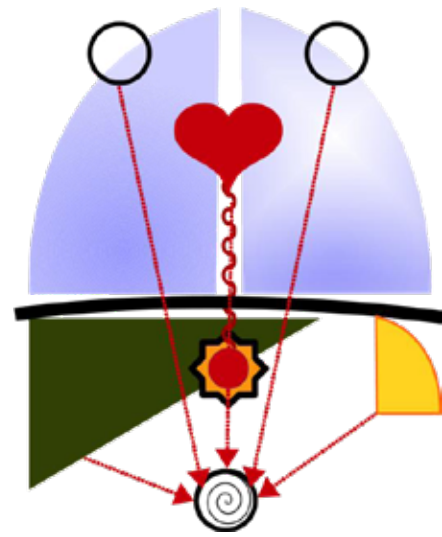


Figure 8

to move down. Because of this, the person may breathe better on one side or the other.

After this, we have the third spoke: the heart, which is connected to our solar plexus. We want to be able to cook things here. We want the heart and the fire to be rooted into the solar plexus, and the emotions to come down to be digested. This is how we start with the wheel, how we begin the first round — and create Collection Points.

We're going to work on triangulations. Right now, we're working with the upper three elements (Wood, Fire, Earth) — grounding them, bringing everything down back to the Earth. So now the area above the diaphragm has free space to breathe, everything is pushed down, and everything comes back and in through the duodenum. If the tip of the liver comes down, it connects back to the "Mother." There's connection now, and Water comes in. If the liver is too high up (which is the tendency of the liver to just keep rising), it dries up. If it comes down, it gets moist again. And then instead of going up to attack the heart, it goes to the solar plexus Collection Point, moving the wheel forward. We want everything to stay below the diaphragm, because this is where we can really cook it, digest it and transform it. The navel is our cauldron, our place of transformation. Up above the diaphragm, emotions become too volatile. Below the diaphragm they are more grounded.

So then we bring all of this down into the small intestine. The small intestine is Fire, and as we bring the heat down into the belly, the belly becomes warm. If there is any gurgling or gassy digestion that is not going through the system fast enough and stays sitting there for a long time, just bringing heat will evaporate the gas. Food is then absorbed, we can extract the light, the *chi*, out of the food and be revitalized. Now, we move it down the large intestine, and as we move it down the large intestine, we create the Collection Point for the Metal Element. So we move it across the small intestine, then the large intestine, and down. And now we're going to go down the legs along the bladder meridian, and come up the legs again along the kidney meridian. We activate the Sexual Palace — the Water Collection Point — bringing water from the soles of the feet (K1 - *Bubbling Spring* point), and activating the inside of the leg. This is going to be the first round. Everything has been touched. In this way,

we end up transforming stress back into vitality.

And so if we can just "eat" stress, digest it, and use it as a source of energy, we're always going to have energy because we're just transforming whatever is in our system — there's no need to go out of ourselves. But we must develop this different relationship with stress. Instead of stress stopping us, we go through it and use it to our advantage. Being on Earth is stressful. Eating is stressful. It's how we relate to our experiences that's going to make them passionate and creative or overwhelming. Everything has to do with our relationship with the Earth. We're here in a physical body, and we might as well make the best out of it, and be able to have the experience of what it is to be in a physical body. Because the more we are in our physical body, the more we can then move out. If we don't really embrace who we truly are, we are only half-alive. Chi Nei Tsang is a way of being able to sink into the source. And when we are more connected to our center, we're happy. So then when something happens to us, we can say: "Oh, it's another bump on the road . . . that's all, just another bump, another experience. I survived it — yay! Oh, that was a difficult one!" It's not that you're going to have any bad luck. You're going to have dozens of things happen to you that are bad but they won't knock you down. They will make you grow and become rich in experience. Become wiser.

So, we build up the body to be able to have a new relationship with stress: that stress brings energy and vitality. Food also does this. And this is something literal that we're going to work with. So there's something that is very literal, very physical — we're moving waste out of the body. We're really working on activating the digestion system to be very, very good. And then we're going to deal with the emotions that are connected to all of the organs, and the grid of energy, the path — to see if the energy is stuck somewhere along the meridian. We're going to be working on the vibration and the circulation of that energy. As we work on those three bodies (physical, emotional, energetic), they come into tune with each other, there is a connection between heaven and earth and there is a line. And so, as we do this first round, we can diagnose where the problem is, and when we'll go back on the second round, to whatever

was the most challenging point where our attention is needed.

As a teacher, what I always want to do is bring it back to the elements, back to the body ... make it simple. There are many different techniques — I will include some here — and you can come up with thousands on your own. Now it's up to you — how you use your hands. But this is what lies beneath, everyone finds different ways to activate the wheel and bring it into motion.

This brings me to another point: the hand also has the Five Elements. If we use the edge of the hand we're using the Metal element (cutting like the blade of a knife). As we stand we *become* that element — our whole physicality *fully* becomes that element as we work. If we use our tendons, and push, extending our fingers outwards, we're using Wood element, and we're activating and using it. Sometimes you're going to use the same element as the organ that you're working with, or you're going to use another one that is more soothing at that time. For example, if there's a lot happening in the liver, and you use your Wood fingers, the person is going to hit you — it's too much. You will have to use something to soothe it first, before working with Wood fingers. Just holding it, and opening the *lao gong* (the center of your palm, which is connected to the pericardium) produces heat. As you hold it, you're cooking it, steam is created, and in this way you'll be bringing heat to the area. OR you may close the *lao gong* a little, and it becomes still, which is different from cooking. Stillness is the Earth element. Or you can "wave" it, and you become the Water element. You can disperse it, and your fingers and all your movement is now the Water element.

So the hands have the elements in them, but it's not only the hands — the hands are connected to your whole body. You *become* the element so there's a resonance with the element, and as you align yourself to a direction, you're going to enhance the effect in that direction. If you put yourself in a place that is the Water element, and you're working with the Water (you're at the kidneys, at the person's feet, for example), everything is connected all the way up to planets. Everything is connected to Water and then it's easy for you. As a practitioner you are recharged after the treatment, and not depleted. This is very important with Chi Nei Tsang: your personal practice. While we work, we stand as "Embracing the Tree," and we move as we do in Tai Chi — the whole body is connected. You're not going to work from the top of your body. Be very aware, that as you do this bodywork, you're coming from *your center*, moving from *your spine*. Your whole body is moving in a connected way, rooted to the Earth and up. How you are and how you move around the table is very important so that you prevent burn-out. There shouldn't be tension; no sweating, no emphasis on speed — less is better. Don't sweat. Whatever the person on the table brings to the session, if you have similar issues, you're going to resonate with them, and your organs are going to start reacting — you may notice, for example: "Ah, there is some excess heat, and trapped Fire rising in my boy too." So breathe — it's a time for both of you to work together, because as we touch, we become one. And then the line between who's treating whom becomes blurred.

We have the elements in our hands, and we can focus our intention. As we look with our eyes, we *become* the element and we guide it. Now everything sinks, and it's all connected. This way it's effortless — you don't have to force or muscle through it, cut it and get it out. You wait. You *are* the element, and that element is going to bring a resonance so eventually, on an exhale,

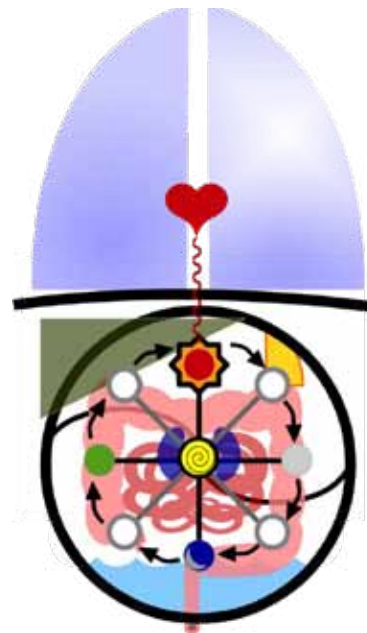


Figure 9

it all begins to flow. {Figure 9} And this is how you become more efficient and how you develop a greater understanding of how to work the wheel. The Wheel of Life.

Karin Sörvik is a Taoist Minister and Senior Instructor and Senior Teacher with the Healing Tao System. Her first career was in dance, theatre and music, earning her degree in acting from the Escuela Nacional de Arte Dramatico. Most of all she loved the magic/spiritual space that's created during a performance. To further her search she began to look into Eastern methods. She studied Tai chi and I Chuan with Master Tung Kuo Tzao in Argentina and became a Taoist Minister with D.A.R.I. She also won several Tai Chi Chuan competitions in South America. She moved to the US in 2001 to serve the Taoist community and to further her practice. She studied with several Taoist Masters: Ron Diana, B.P. Chang, Dr. Stephen Chang and Master Mantak Chia. Karin Sörvik is currently the Director of the Healing Tao Center and Tao Healing Arts.com. She is President of the HTIA and a member of the Council of 9 of the UHT Foundation; and Founder of the non profit Healing Tao Society. She is a practitioner and counselor in Taoist Healing Practices. Practices include: Tao Yin (Taoist Yoga), Nutrition, Herbology, Meditation, Tai Chi, I Chuan, Chi Nei Tsang and Chi Kung Therapy. She has been teaching for the last 15 years in Europe, Latin America and the US. www.taohealing.com and www.taohealingarts.comWU



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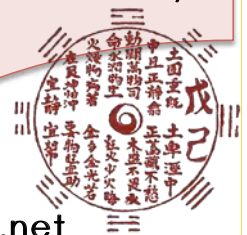
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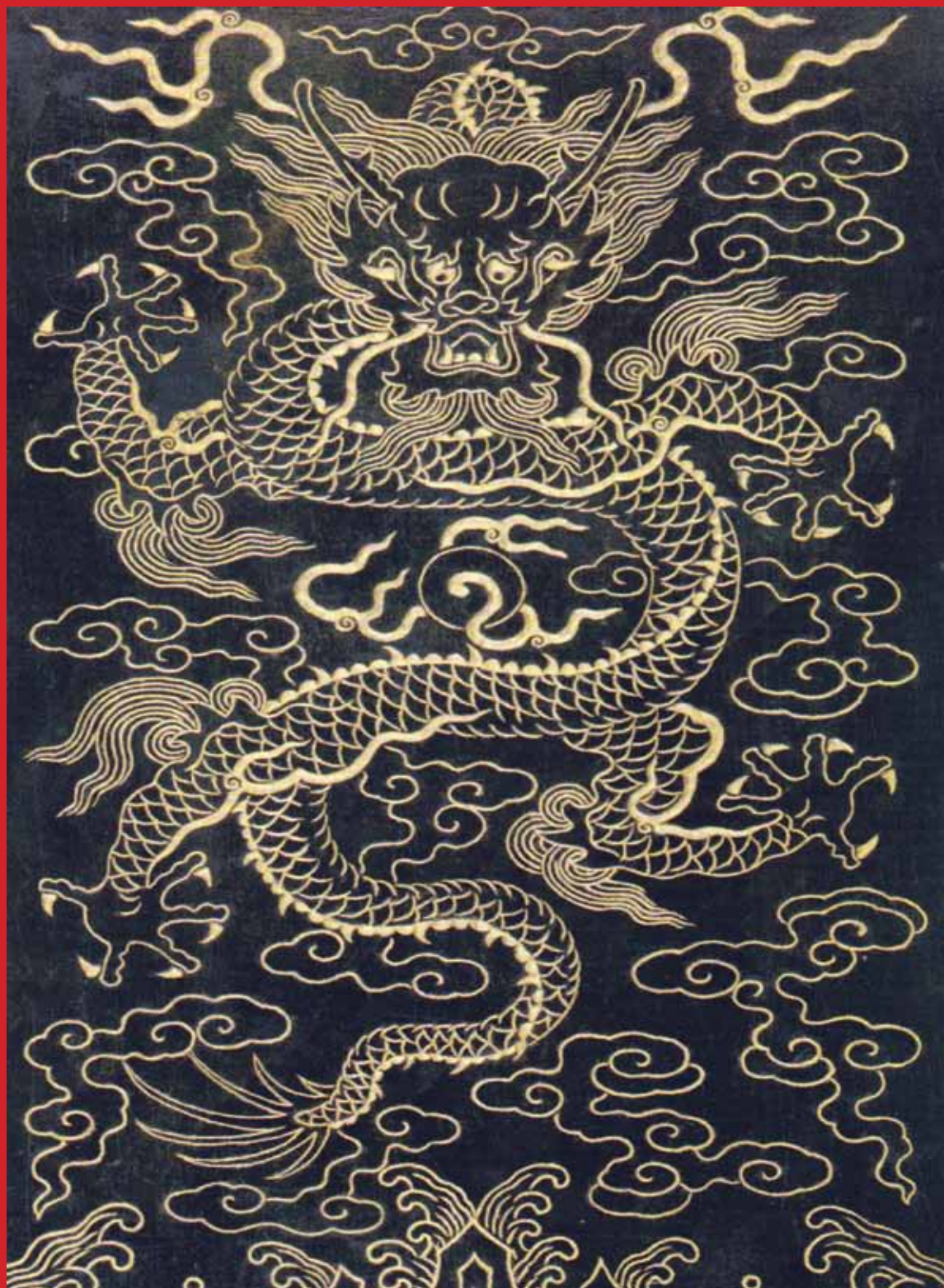
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Meeting My Teacher/Dragon in Taiwan

Mark Johnson



Meeting My Teacher/Dragon in Taiwan

It was a stinking hot day in southern Taiwan in early 1975 when the three of us walked into the acupuncture clinic/home of my future teacher. We rounded an ornate partition and saw a young-looking man sitting with his hands in his sleeves resembling the leading male in a martial arts movie. With his short crew cut and enlarged knuckles, he resembled many Gung Fu (phonetic for Kung Fu) fighters I had met. Yet his unwrinkled face, high forehead, and slender fingers suggested an intelligent, sensitive, and refined individual. He looked much younger than my 33 years so I figured I had nothing to learn from him. Later, I learned he was 47 at that time. I was glad I ignored my first impression and decided to study with him.

After knowing him for several decades and living in the same house with him in Malibu for eight years and even after his kicking me out of his lineage, I still regard him as being the most mysterious, compassionate, and powerful person I have known. Training with him was like trying to drink from a fire hydrant. He should come with a disclaimer: Beware (be very aware), I am a catalyst for deep change.

Dragon's Play in Taiwan

After working with him, I became aware of his other unusual gifts and powers. He eventually invited us to join him and his local students in their Sunday morning service. Every week they meditated, read from his sacred books, and asked questions about Daoism. Occasionally, unusual phenomena happened

A really strange incident occurred when I found an ancient sword used in exorcisms. I tried to pull it out of its sheath but it was rusted shut.

"Don't fool around with it. It has a lot of inherent power that could be dangerous to you," my teacher warned. I didn't believe him and kept trying to pull it out. Eventually he said he would do it to prevent me from hurting myself.

Before continuing this story, you must know of the fat rat in his house that ran often across the rafters. My teacher called him the Mayor of Gau Shung. When my teacher pulled on the sword with great force, it ended up pointing to the rafter where the rat was sitting—and down fell the Mayor with a thud! Dead. (Three of us witnessed it.) Even though my teacher later cultivated the power of exorcism in me, he never gave me that sword. I can't help but think this had something to do with the cautionary tale told in the Disney movie of The Sorcerer's Apprentice

The Dragon Comes to Malibu

Soon after our initiation in mid-1975, we returned to the United States to prepare a center for our teacher. My traveling companions had a home in the Malibu hills so we converted their multi-level house into an acupuncture clinic and shrine. We had to wait a few months for him to join us because he had trouble convincing his wife and two boys it was a good idea to move to the US. Eventually, all the arrangements were made, and I must say, his departure from Taiwan made the story of my planned move to Darwin look like a minor incident.

On the day he was scheduled to leave Gau Shung, a super typhoon (Nina—the worst storm in recorded history in that

area), hit the city and seriously damaged it. We were unable to get through on the telephone for several days. We finally reached his wife who said there was so much damage to the city and airport, a student of his had to arrange a military aircraft to get him out. (My teacher was a bodyguard for Chiang Kai-shek and still had military connections.)

After speaking with her, we breathed easily until we turned on the TV the next night and saw the Taipei airport runway torn up by that same powerful storm. Apparently, the storm headed north and slammed into Taipei the same day he was to leave there. We got through on the telephone immediately, and found out from his friends that he had caught the last plane out before the airport was shut down. Even the air traffic control tower was destroyed. Then the storm headed into the mainland and did a lot of damage there.

"What was that all about?" I asked upon meeting him at the Los Angeles Airport. "The forces of darkness were trying to stop my influence in the world, but they had no chance," he responded in his usual understated tone.

Playing in Malibu

The first thing our teacher had us do after his arrival was to meditate in the tops of the evergreen trees growing in the backyard. He claimed we needed this because we were all too restless and aggressive. I hoisted a small chair up near the top of a tree, and made myself as comfortable as possible. I hear the chair is still there. The energy up there is quite calming. Try it if you suffer from mental restlessness.

Next, he introduced his Eight Treasures Chi Gung-style to us. I referred to the Eight Treasures as the Roto-Rooter of the meridian system, which are the energy channels of the body used in acupuncture. I still regard the Eight Treasures as one of the more physically demanding and complex energetic styles available today. I have seen quite a few styles having judged over 50 Tai Ji tournaments in the past 25 years.

Another cultivation we would do every morning was to march single file to the top of the Malibu hills to absorb the energy of the sun rising. Sometimes we would experience the full moon setting in the West at the same time so we would absorb the energy of each heavenly body through our palms simultaneously. Wow. It was almost like sticking our fingers into two bare light sockets at the same time while standing ankle deep in a puddle of water.

We also read incantations and meditated in different standing and sitting positions. We even had a sleeping posture that stimulated acupuncture points on the right side of our brains (the creative/intuitive side of the brain). We were in a meditative state every second of the day and night regardless of what we were doing.

It was around this time I learned that the phenomenon of "poisonous palms" is not just a fairy tale. I had heard many stories about old Tai Ji masters debilitating or outright killing people with a touch but I didn't take them seriously. Now I am a believer because my beliefs are based on my own personal experience. I take no one's word for anything. I question everything. You can avoid a lot of mythical/fantasy nonsense with that attitude, and most of my experiences are repeatable—al-

though I chose not to repeat that one.

One day before our Tai Ji class, our teacher asked us to try pushing him down. Of course, no one could do it. When it came my turn to try, I decided not to go easy on him and that I would quickly knock him on his ass before he knew what hit him. Since I have cat-like reflexes and had done a little boxing while living in Pittsburgh, I was confident I could do it.

He seemed to sense what I had in mind when he said, "If you have any notion of succeeding, I want you to know you are not even in my league, so don't even try." With one finger, he lightly touched me on the right side of my chest and walked away with a smirk on his face.

I wondered what he was smiling about until the shock wore off and the pain began. Have you ever had a Charley horse cramp or muscle spasm? Imagine five muscles cramping up at the same time and in the same location, and you might have a sense of what I was experiencing. I rolled around on the ground clutching my swollen chest, trying to scream. He returned to assure me he only put his finger on my chest so there would be no serious consequences. Thank God for small favors. An hour later, I had to turn the ignition key in my car with my left hand because my right arm was still useless.

Later, he admitted that stories about masters killing tigers on another mountain by pointing at them were highly exaggerated. He told me only he and one other person he ever met had that kind of training and power. He insisted that close physical contact is necessary. Rest assured, you cannot be killed by a martial artist pointing his finger at you from a distance. Of course, pointing your middle finger up at someone else might get you killed, so be careful about that.

It was also during the first two years of training he grew "tonsils" on my elbows. This was after I casually let it be known I had my tonsils removed when I was a kid. Horrified, he said, "Our tonsils, like our appendix, are like a red signal light that flashes when things are getting too toxic in our bodies." He asked me, "If we take those signaling devices out of our bodies, how do we know when we are getting overly toxic?"

Of course I had no answer. He said not to worry; he would grow new tonsils for me.

I thought he was going to grow them in my throat, but he started a fire on my elbows! He put a piece of ginger on an acupuncture point at Large Intestine #11, which is located at each elbow. He then put a small pile of moxa (an herb that burns) on them and lit them! They burned down into those spots and hurt like hell. That pleasant little procedure raised two white welts a quarter of an inch high, which lasted for years. He said he would have to renew them every few years. I politely declined.

Sure enough, whenever I pigged out on sweets around Christmas time, my new "tonsils" glowed red for a few days until I fasted. He explained that removing our tonsils is almost as ridiculous as driving while a red light is flashing on the dashboard, and then what do we do about it? We pull over to the side of the road and tear out the red light!

Around the third year, he came to me and said that having the power of exorcism would be useful to me in the future, so I consented to learn it. Once again, I didn't know what I was getting myself into. My preparation and training turned out

Another cultivation we would do every morning was to march single file to the top of the Malibu hills to absorb the energy of the sun rising.

to be 49 days of fasting with night-long incantations invoking the power of the deities of the Big Dipper. The most difficult part was that I wasn't allowed to have sex during that time. He always insisted that if I would simply remain celibate, I would live forever. Well, what I discovered is that you don't really live forever; it just seems like forever! I was celibate for 16 years once, but the minute I turned 17, I said enough of that nonsense.

The Daoists don't hold up a cross and hope for the best when doing an exorcism. They are quite scientific about it. They maintain that the configuration of the veins in the upper eyeball, which are normally out of sight, will change according to what kind of spirit is possessing someone. My first duty was to roll

back the upper eyelids on the poor wretch who was screaming obscenities and projectile vomiting green slime all over me. (As you might guess, I have seen "The Exorcist.") After checking out a person's veins, I refer to a chart of vein configurations to know what kind of spirit I was dealing with.

What if you unknowingly build a house on a sacred burial site and anger the spirits there? Negotiation and compromise are often possible. If not, I have the power and techniques to destroy any invading nasty spirit. "Who ya gonna call?" (as in Ghostbusters)

The night I graduated from that training, I was having dinner in a restaurant with a friend, and a friend of hers came up to our table and asked if she knew anyone who was an exorcist! She became my first client but she turned out not to be possessed—she was just crazier than hell. I gave her an amulet to tie around her ankle and from that moment, she had no more problems with invading spirits.

I have been called to do an exorcism only two other times in 30 years. Neither time did I find they were possessed. I suspect that in our modern age of disbelief in such things anyone who might be possessed is in a nut house or running for political office. My teacher once mentioned that a person cannot be possessed unless they are already in a weakened or imbalanced state. So stay healthy, balanced and wise and you will have nothing to worry about.

Mark Johnson is a Tai Ji and Chi Gung instructor and healer. He is a founder of the National Qigong Assoc. and serves on the Advisory Council. He continues to judge Tai Ji tournaments regularly and leads Daoist retreats to China and Tibet yearly. He sells his Tai Chi for Seniors video and other instructional DVDs through his online company. (700,000 sales so far!) He has apprenticed with some of the world's most prominent spiritual teachers in the world. This article is from his book, Life As Play, published by Dao Publishing (www.daopublishing.com).



Empty Vessel China Tour 2017 with Solala Towler and Jessica Kolbe

Hangzhou • Wudang Shan • Beijing

May 14-30, 2017



Join us in May when we travel to the sacred Wudang Mountains – home of Taoist tai chi, qigong and martial arts. While we are there we will be studying a unique form of Wudang Tai Chi as well as Wudang Qigong with Master Zhou Ju Bu. This will be a nine-day immersion into the sacred arts of Wudang! Master Zhou has been studying Taoist gongfu since he was 10 years old, and has students all over the world. We will also spend time hiking and visiting some of the many Taoist temples there, drinking tea in the temple teahouse and visiting our friend Jiaye, who has lived in a cave above the Purple Heaven Temple for over 20 years! (See our video interview with him on our website.) We will also be spending time in Hangzhou, one of the most beautiful cities in China. Hangzhou, circling around West Lake, has long been revered for its beauty and culture. While there we visit a tea plantation (where the famous Dragon Well tea is grown), as well as the museum of Chinese Medicine and take in an awe-inspiring lake show by Zhang Yimou, the well-known Chinese film director, called West Lake Impressions (check it out on youtube). The last few days will be spent in Beijing, where we will visit the White Cloud Temple, the Great Wall and the fabulous tea market as well as attend some amazing acrobat shows. All along the way we will eat amazing food, meet qigong masters, artists, musicians, tea masters, and one cave dwelling hermit.

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Our teacher in Wudang, Master Zhou Ju Bu

All along the way there will be time for reflection, sharing, exploring, eating incredible food, learning and practicing qigong and making new friends! We will be learning a special form of qigong and meditation in the mountains of Wudang, home for centuries of Taoist martial arts and qigong masters. Each day will begin with qigong practice led by Jessica. During the day we will have class with Master Zhou and lots of time for hiking the beautiful trails and visiting some of the ancient temples on the mountain. At the end of each day we will gather for group meditation, sharing and classes on *Tao Te Ching* with Solala.



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Jessica Kolbe is a Senior Teacher Trainer for The Institute of Qigong and Tai Chi, (IIQTC) and a faculty member of The Esalen Institute. Jessica is based in the Santa Barbara area, where she leads classes, workshops, corporate wellness programs, certification trainings and private healing sessions. In addition Jessica has an award winning TV/Internet show, “Qigong with Jessica Kolbe.” To learn more about Jessica please visit www.QigongSB.com.

Solala Towler has been teaching qigong for 23 years. He has been the publisher of *The Empty Vessel: The Journal of Daoist Philosophy and Practice*, since 1993. He has had 12 books on the Daoist arts published, including *The Inner Chapters of Chuang Tzu*, *Tales of the Tao* and *Practicing the Tao Te Ching: 81 Steps On the Way* and has recorded four cd's of meditation/qigong music. In addition, he is a founding board member and past president of the National Qigong Association. This will be his ninth trip to China. solala@abodetao.com/www.abodetao.com

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Secrets of the Tao Te Ching

Luke Chan



1 Tao Secret One: Tao

Where do I come from? Where am I going? I am Tao. I have never left.

Getting up at the first light of dawn and going to bed after twilight was the rhythm of rural life in China when I was a child. I remember one time I went fishing with my uncle at sunset during a summer day. Even before the light was gone, the stars began to emerge. It was a moonless night. I was supposed to concentrate on fishing, but I was distracted by this bright starry night. The Milky Way was just above my head. I lay down on the grass and my hand could almost touch the stars. For a brief instance I became the stars and I couldn't feel myself. I was startled but felt joy nonetheless. Even though I was too young to ask: where do I come from? Where am I going? What is the meaning of life? I was in awe of this mysterious experience just the same.

Oh a long time ago, a master told his student a story about the origin of Heaven and Earth.

"Upon millions and millions of years ago, there appeared a small egg from nothingness. It was smaller than the smallest egg, tinier than the tiniest seed.

Oh! A baby was inside the egg!

As time went by, the baby grew into a giant! One day, the giant woke up and began to stretch his hands upward to form the sky and be-

gan to stretch his feet downward to form the earth.

As the giant grew, he continued to hold up the sky and push down the earth. One day, the giant reached his full size and he opened his eyes. His right eye became the sun and his left eye became the moon. His hair became the stars.

His muscles became the earth, his skin became the animals, and his body hair became the plants and trees. His sweat irrigated the plants and gave drinking water to all living things. His heart and internal organs became the diamonds and precious metals. His breath became the wind to regulate the seasons."

The master finished telling his story and crossed his legs, beginning to meditate. His student followed his master and also meditated. After a long time, the student opened his eyes; he saw his master already awake.

"Oh master, what gave birth to the giant egg?" the student asked curiously.

"Tao," replied the master.

"What gave birth to Tao?"

"I don't know. Tao is the first mover that moves all things. You can't ask more otherwise there will be no end. You must take Tao as it is."

"Oh master! Please tell me more!" the student kept on nagging his master for an answer.

"Don't pester me anymore, my student. We are only a shadow of a shadow. We are the product of the four dimensional world. How do we know the other dimensional world?" the master replied and told the following story:

The shadow of the shadow asked, "What do you mean when you say that you don't know your real master?"

The shadow answered, "I was once a shadow of a snake and once a shadow of a cicada. They moved, I moved; they stopped, I stopped. Then one day they shed their skin. Then I realized that the skin was

waiting for its owner to move. Am I the shadow of the skin or am I the shadow of what is inside the skin? How many owners do I have? I really don't know."

The student finally understood and stopped asking.

As in a dream yet not a dream, as real yet not real, I have returned to the Reflecting Pond. It is a summer night with the Milky Way above my head. I sit down

and meditate on the questions: Where do I come from? Where am I going? What is the meaning of my life?

Suddenly I hear a voice echoing through time and space: You are Tao. You come from Tao and you go back to Tao. You have always been here and you have never left.

"If I am Tao and Tao is unknown, what is the meaning of my life?"

"Why do you think life must have a meaning? Why do you want to separate yourself from Tao? The Reflecting Pond does not ask its meaning but it is." The voice disappears.

So here I sit and go into deep meditation. Suddenly, I wake up and realize that I am the giant - the biggest meaning of life has no meaning. Yet everything is unique and important. Everything is a miracle.

Oh man! You may be rich and powerful. You have everything you need and more. Or you may be down and out. You have nothing and you are hungry without a place called home.

Oh yes, life seems unfair. Yet you are important. You are a miracle because you are unique. Without you, there won't be I. Without you,





there won't be a universe.

Oh it is so simple – all things are parts of the whole which we call the universe. This is the first secret of Tao Te Ching.

Indeed, stars are a miracle! Life is a miracle! You are a miracle! I am a miracle!

Where do I come from? Where am I going? I am Tao. I have never left.

Chapter 4: Whose child is Tao? I don't know.

Tao is empty but its use is never exhausted.

Oh, fathomless ancestor of the ten thousand things!

Blunting sharp edges,

Untying knots,

Softening the light,

Settling the dust,

It evolves us all yet we don't know it.

Oh, profoundly silent but ever present!

I don't know whose child Tao is.

Tao is here before the dawn of time.

Interpretation of Chapter 4:

I don't know whose child it is.

Tao is empty yet its use is never exhausted. Oh so deep, it seems to be the source of all things.

Tao is balanced and resourceful: It fills up all edges; unties all knots; softens all lights and merges with all things in the world.

Oh profoundly quiet, Tao seems not to exist yet it exists. It is

so mysterious that I don't know where it comes from. I don't know whose child it is.

Indeed, Tao is beyond Emperor Image, the dawn of time. We are the product of space and time, and therefore, Tao exists before us. We are only the shadow of the shadow of Tao. What do we know?

Lessons from Chuang-tzu:

(QiwulunChapter) A shadow of a shadow asks its shadow, "Just a minute ago you walked and now you stop; just a moment ago, you sat and now you stand. Do you know what you are doing?"

The shadow replied, "How do I know? I am just waiting for my owner to move. When he goes I go; when he stops I stop. But my owner is also waiting for his owner to move. When his owner moves he moves; when his owner stops he stops. Tell you the truth; I really don't know how many owners I have."

The shadow of the shadow asked, "What do you mean?"

The shadow answered, "I was once a shadow of a snake and once a shadow of a locust. They moved, I moved; they stopped, I stopped. Then one day they shed their skin. Then I realized that the skin was waiting for his owner to move. How many owners do we have? I really don't know."

Comment: Tao begets all things. Where does Tao come from? We don't know. We are but a shadow of a shadow of Tao. We live in a three dimensional world, how do we know the other dimensions?

Quotation:

"We don't know a millionth of one percent about anything."

Thomas Edison.

Chapter 14: Tao cannot be known through the five senses.

Looked at, but cannot be seen – it is beyond color.

Listened to, but cannot be heard – it is beyond sound.

Grasped at, but cannot be touched – it is beyond form.

These three things elude the five senses, but they cannot escape the intuitive mind.

Therefore, they can only be perceived as Oneness.

As Oneness, it is undefined,

Above is not bright;

Below is not dark.

A continuous whole beyond description,

And it returns again to the nothingness of Tao.

As Oneness:

It is a formless whole and it gives rise to all forms;

It is a timeless whole and it gives rise to all life cycles.

This is called indefinable and unimaginable order in chaos.

Man is a part of the whole and we cannot stand out of the whole.

Welcome it; we can't see its head;

Follow it; we can't see its rear.

But we can practice this timeless Tao and use it to manage the current affairs.

Knowing that the ancient beginning is here and now is the essence of Tao.

Interpretation of Chapter 14: Tao provides space and time for all things:

You look at Tao but can't see it. You are not blind; Tao is yi夷, colorless. You listen to Tao but can't hear it. You are not deaf; the sound of Tao is xi希, silence. You touch Tao but you can't grasp it. You are not numb; Tao is wei微, too small for you to feel.

You cannot rely on your five senses to understand these three aspects of Tao. How do you know Tao? You have to use your intuition and imagination through a quiet mind. Since we cannot divide Tao into different aspects, we call it as Oneness.

Oneness is an infinite large and homogenous whole: You cannot reach to the top to say it is bright, nor reach the bottom to say it is dark.

Tao as Oneness is a continuous whole and cannot be divided and therefore you cannot name it separately.

Tao has no shape yet it gives shapes to all things. How does Tao

do it? For every shape, every form contains empty space. Tao provides empty space to all things to use without claiming credit. This is called invisible action wuwei.

Tao has no visible form yet it gives all things visible forms as images. In essence, Tao provides time for all things to grow. The images of the world change as time changes. So Tao provides time at the right moment for all things to flourish. This is also called invisible action wuwei of Tao.

Tao provides space and time for all things in an infinitesimal way. It is called a seemingly fuzzy, chaotic way. You cannot stay ahead of space and time nor can you follow the end of space and time. Why is that? Because space and time is Oneness, a boundless whole, without beginning and ending.

Yet you can use the ancient way of wuwei of Tao to manage today's affairs. If you understand Tao works in colorless yi, in silence xi, and in invisible wei to complete all things of different shape and sizes, sounds and colors, you are enlightened with the essence of Tao.

Lessons from Chuang-tzu:

(Renjianshi 4.5 Chapter)_"How do I experience Tao?" asked a student of a Taoist master.

"My student, don't listen to Tao with your ears but with your mind. Don't listen to Tao with your mind but with your Chi. Ears are limited to sound and the mind is limited to what is inside you."

"Master, what do you mean by listening with Chi?"

"Chi is empty and Tao comes to where is empty. When you listen with Chi you listen with your whole being. Body, mind and spirit have blended into one Chi, life energy. Only then you can experience the wonder of Tao and gain the power from it."

The student followed the instruction, instantly felt his body disappear, and had a mysterious experience.

Quotation:

"The whole history of science has been the gradual realization that events do not happen in an arbitrary manner, but that they reflect a certain underlying order, which may or may not be divinely inspired."

Stephen Hawking.

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Luke Chan is a qigong teacher living in China. His books include 101 Lessons of Tao and Secrets of the Tai Chi Circle: Journey to Enlightenment. He can be reached at lukechan@chilel.com.



Reinventing the Wheel: A Top Down Perspective on the Five Elements

Lonny Jarrett

I would like to take a look at the cultural forces at play that deny the absolute dimensions of self to glean an understanding of how Chinese medicine (CM), and spiritual practices in general, have been compromised by the failure of postmodernity to recognize hierarchy. I consider this within the context of the Five-Element (5E) system in order to illuminate a significant distortion and cause of stagnation in our culture of healing.

This distortion results from the overextension of the pluralistic perspective, and the conflation of it with relativism, to such a degree that it has led to a virtual inability of the last several generations to recognize hierarchy, constituting a condition I term 'Hierarchy Deficit Syndrome' (HDS). The denial of hierarchy is one of the most significant manifestations of the postmodern ego.

The physician's failure to recognize an absolute dimension to his experience is constraining the emergence of integral medicine and serving as an anti-evolutionary force in culture. In short, it is potentiating illness.

Pluralism, Relativism and the Five Elements

In the wake of World War II with fascism defeated, the leading edge of culture transcended the dominator hierarchies that typified the culture of the pre-modern religions and nation states. Postmodern pluralism arose in response to the ethnocentric nationalism and absolutism that gave rise to the Holocaust, an event that is rightly the archetypical example of the dangers inherent in dominator hierarchies. In the face of this horror, some of us recognized that all human beings have an innate right to lead a life of dignity free from the fear of persecution based on gender identification, sexual preference, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. Chinese medicine came of age in the West during the 1970s at a time when postmodern pluralism was reaching its peak.

The ability of the postmodern human being to embrace multiple perspectives (pluralism) simultaneously has laid the foundation for the emergence of holistic and integral

medicine.¹ The mature practitioner of CM has no problem thinking causally, synthetically, taking lab tests into account, and simultaneously assimilating data from multiple perspectives within CM such as the five-elements, six divisions, and the eight-principles.² This ability represents a level of cognitive and neural integration, reflecting our realization of a global world, hitherto unknown in humanity.

However, by relativistically embracing all perspectives as being equally valid, because they are all 'just' perspectives constructed by human beings, we have negated natural hierarchy as the true and right relationship between things. We have compromised our capacity to recognize any perspective or value as being higher than any other. By conflating pluralistic and relativistic values we have thrown the baby out with the bath water by relegating absolute reality, that truth that lies at the centre of the circle and beyond all distinctions, the enlightened perspective itself, to the status of being 'just another' point of view. And this is in fact, the position we most often take in relationship to our own conscience, our innermost known sense of what is true, right, good, and beautiful.

In such an amoral cultural climate, nothing is held as higher than any individual's opinion based on the momentary fluctuation of thoughts, emotions, and sensations. In such a culture there is no possibility of a medicine that is 'rooted in spirit'³ because, from a spiritual perspective, Spirit, or *Shen* capital 'S', is always what is Higher.

Having authentic experience with the absolute dimension of the self is a necessity for the emergence of an authentic integral medicine that takes full advantage of our knowledge and capacities in the 21st century. Comprehending the absolute dimensions of the self (the ground of being, authentic self, and ego) is the authentic ground for having an objective relationship to any of the complex diagnostic systems, such as the five elements or eight-principles, that differentiate the complexity of manifestation.

While many of us talk about 'non-duality', this remains

largely an intellectual construct for most. We tend to discuss the 'one' only from the position of the many. We consider the centre of the cycle from our own unique position within it. We define 'reality' with a culturally given psychological perspective based on our conditioned relationship to thought, feeling, fear, and desire. In this way we create the illusion of a self that in some mysterious way appears to be separate from everyone and everything else. Such a relative and isolated view is explicitly stated in the pluralistic cliché, 'You have your truth, I have my truth, and nobody knows the truth.' Individuation cannot proceed any further than the fantasy that the universe is a manifestation of the individual.⁴

What would it mean, and what would it take, to consider the 'many' from the perspective of the 'One'? For to do so would be to look through the eyes and heart of simplicity straight through the illusion of complexity. This is the authentic basis of diagnosis in the enlightened practice of medicine where it is recognized that all knowledge, technique, and intellectual capacity are vehicles for the expression of the pure motive inherent in the life force and consciousness itself.

Catering to the Ever So Sensitive Self

A consideration of how the 5E cycle is generally taught and understood can serve as a perfect metaphor for how postmodern relativism has conditioned our understanding of CM.⁵ Consider the 5E wheel [Fig. 1] depicting each element divided into the 12 officials and each official containing its five element points.

This yields a picture of a hologram where the whole is contained in each of its parts. From a relative point of view the function of every one of these 60 points 'out in the circle' is equally important. Each position represents a relationship between elements and officials that have implications across all levels of human functioning. Constitutional 5E medicine is based on the ability to diagnose which element and official and, more specifically, which relationships, as symbolized by a specific element point, represent the 'weakest link' in the delicate web of physiological relationships.⁶

Dysfunction in any one of these points (wood 'within' metal or earth 'within' fire, for example) has the potential to compromise the entire circle. Therefore the conclusion is readily drawn that every point and every constitution is equal. And, from the relative perspective symbolized by the wheel (the *sheng* cycle) itself, they are. This is exactly how I was taught the 5E model when every teacher would delight in informing the class that the 'official' he was teaching was 'the most important' as the point was made that the integrity of the *sheng* cycle is holistically dependent on the health and contribution of every official.

Here holism is expressed through a pluralistic lens to express the culturally given sentiment that 'every perspective and all truth is relative, every person is special and unique, hierarchy is merely a human construct and in nature, in ultimate reality, all is equal.'

This construct denies the hierarchy implicit in the rec-

ognition that, while everyone makes his or her contribution, the emperor, or heart, represents the embodiment of that absolute recognition of spirit that must always be held as highest and humbly submitted to. It is only in the awareness of the absolute dimension of self that spirit even begins to emerge as a possibility in the practice of medicine.

Cultural Stagnation: When Homeostasis, Consensus, and Peace are the goal

'If the goal is peace and not evolution then we will have neither. If the goal is evolution then we'll have both.' Michael Nagler⁷ The egalitarian view of the 5E circle is metaphorically present in the popular notion of 'consensus'. The culturally accepted pluralistic norm when facing a challenge that needs to be met is for everyone involved to sit in a circle implying that each person's perspective is equivalent. Everyone is allowed to express their view, ranging from the least competent to the most competent, and then a solution

is sought that takes each person's point of view and feelings into account so that each person feels he or she 'has been heard'. This approach is very different from actually being concerned with finding the best solution to any given challenge. It is the hierarchical discernment needed to find the best solution that introduces a vertical dimension to any inquiry.

And, in the life circumstances that face humanity today, we only have the time left to be concerned with finding best solutions. Best solutions in this relative world are only ever rooted in the absolute perspective.

This same model of 'consensus' is invoked in the treatment room when the perceived therapeutic goal is a sort of homeostatic 'peace' achieved by continually moving excess to deficiency around the *sheng* and *ke* cycles under the auspices of creating 'harmony'. If the patient is fearful we move *qi* to wood to give perspective, if tension appears we move *qi* to fire to 'open the heart', if the patient is too controlling we tonify earth to 'ground' them, and if they feel 'burdened' we tonify metal to help him 'let go' and so on around the cycle for another 100,000 incarnations.

Such an approach just keeps patients comfortably identified with the goings on out in the 'circle' and does little to liberate them from it. It reinforces the notion that any felt discomfort signifies a fundamental problem to be rectified and the expectation that positive change should be easy and feel good.

When the cultural goal of 'peace' is synonymous with our notions of physiological 'homeostasis', then evolution is an unlikely consequence of treatment and patients are likely to become increasingly more comfortable at whatever stage of development they are already at. Too often, the goal of individuals practicing or partaking in any of the new age 'energetic' healing modalities is the manipulation of feeling states. People learn *tai chi*, yoga, meditation, and utilize herbs

and CM, in order to make continual and nuanced adjustments to their experience, always endeavoring to be happier, look and feel better, and ease their own suffering in the face of their personally created existential dilemma: a dilemma that is always imbued with an illusory sense of uniqueness and often indulged in with morbid fascination. Such an orientation in any practice reinforces self-involvement and narcissism because it is predicated on the notion that, 'If I'm having an unpleasant experience, then there must be a problem and it is going to take time to solve'. How much time? From the ego's perspective, 'forever'. On the other hand the spirit / *shen*, who the patient really is, is always fine and ready to move ahead 'right now'.

Significant metabolic resources (*jing*, *qi*, and *shen*) are usurped in a vain attempt to overcome the past, as the ego creates the illusion that 'things will somehow be better in the future'. But, that future never comes and life is lived, sadly, 'in the meantime'. Hence, the most fortunate people who have ever lived spend their lives trapped and suffocating in a survival mode of consciousness.⁸

Most 'energetic healing' seems to be more akin to helping people decorate their prison cells and to live ever more comfortably within their inherent sense of limitation, than they are focused on helping individuals transcend their condition entirely. From an evolutionary perspective, if a person isn't evolving, he or she is ill. The perspective that 'everything is relative' is a self-negating absolute statement.

In light of this recognition, any thoughtful person is left having to discern between what actually is absolute and what is relative. To what degree are we as practitioners identified with that best part of ourselves, which has never been wounded, traumatized, or victimized? To what degree do we speak to and address that part of the patient? To what degree do we hold ourselves and our patients to be accountable for the absolute dimension of the self? This recognition was a central foundation of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism and its presence today in our medicine, both in the East and West, is insignificant.

Top-Down v. Bottom-Up: Spirit v. the Humanistic Psychological Perspective

For lack of an absolute reference point, practitioners who came of age in the 20th and 21st centuries tend to adopt a relative and psychological perspective on life and medicine in lieu of having an authentic spirit-based relationship to practice. The psychological perspective reinforces the ego's illusion of separation, of being special, and having a special problem that requires time to overcome. Psychological approaches try to console the ego about its own miserable predicament by providing it comfort while never insisting on its transcendence. There is no such thing as that which is implied by the term 'psycho-spiritual'.⁹ The psychological and the spiritual realms are two parallel lines that never meet and do not recognize each other's values. Most of

new age healing culture is characterized by a conflation of the psychological and spiritual. When one is awake to consciousness as the source of self the mind is purified and becomes a vehicle for the emergence of spirit. Ego still exists, but only as an internally experienced structure and not as a motivating force substantially present in personality. The mind becomes a vehicle for the emergence of a pure motive (virtue) into the world through good deeds (karma).

When the absolute perspective of the centre is eliminated, we are left with only a relative psychological perspective focused on the thoughts, feelings, and life circumstances of each of the individual dots out in the wheel who now lack a central reference point.

This is a 'bottom-up' perspective that imagines enlightenment, wholeness, and health at some point in an imagined future but never 'right now'. From this bottom-up view there is always more work to be done, more experience to be consumed, and more to understand before reaching clarity,

before taking responsibility for the degree of enlightenment one already does possess. The ego loves this approach as it allows for the consuming of endless experience without obligation under the auspices of 'cultivating virtue' while always delaying having to change now. A basic spiritual principle is that, 'the path and the goal are one'. The only way to 'cultivate virtue' is to act

virtuously and the only time ever to do that is 'right now'.

Far too much time is spent clinically trying to put things 'just right' and 'find the perfect key for the patient's lock' rather than simply and effectively speaking the truth directly to the part of the person that already knows it. Practising in this way reinforces the patient's view of himself as being 'very sensitive'. Nearly every patient I've ever treated has in some way entertained the thesis that, 'If what happened to me had happened to others they would have done much better handling it. It affected me as significantly as it did because I'm very sensitive.' The sensitive self *IS* the post-modern ego and the 'holistic' healing modalities cater to it by striving to help it feel more comfortable.

We practitioners avoid making and revealing distinctions about the higher and lower impulses within our patients, and choices made by them, to the exact degree we avoid doing so within ourselves. Our own lack of depth prevents us from treating patients in the most significant of ways.

Initially in clinical practice I was struck by how unique every individual seemed and was amazed by the ability of CM to generate a highly nuanced diagnosis for everyone. In time, however, the illusion of uniqueness disappeared as I awoke to the singular mechanism of separation at the core of all dysfunction. Certainly the details of each patient's story were different as to places, dates, and names and this necessitated moving stagnation, dispersion, or tonification of different organ systems. But the underlying mechanism generating pathology was revealed to be the same in all.

Just as it's the same distance back to the centre of the circle for every dot in the *sheng* cycle, so too was the jump back to the one true self, and the price paid for making it, the same for every individual.

Defining 'compassion' as 'honouring' each patient as being a 'unique individual' and 'celebrating' that 'uniqueness' by 'giving the gift of the elements'¹⁰ just reinforces culturally conditioned narcissism and the illusion of a separate, sensitive, and ever so 'special' self that is 'lost and suffering out in the wheel'. And it is this very self that is suffocating in the confines of its own mind and requiring, despite its privileged and fortunate position, endless 'therapy', sedatives, and special treatment just to cope.

Even worse than the unnecessary suffering a patient or practitioner might experience is the perpetuation of karma by causing others to suffer through our own self-involvement. The degree to which a person feels victimized is the exact degree to which he will victimize others. The most regrettable fact is the sin of how much human potential at the leading edge of culture is wasted in self-indulgence, often under the auspices of 'healing'.

The top-down view is the spiritual view. The human vehicle, our mind and body, has perhaps over one hundred thousand years of conditioning. It is imperative that we look at this conditioning, not from the psychological perspective of the conditioning itself, but rather through the illuminated eyes of spirit that never has any investment in turning from the truth.

The true, autonomous individual is that One to be found at the centre of the circle. For this is the position of the awakened heart. Stripped of conditioned history there is the same one fire arising out of emptiness in us all. Through serious effort, any human will discover that he or she is, in fact, that one light. Such an insight has the potential to change everything. No longer are we looking at circumstances of life from out in the wheel, or looking at the one from the position of the many. Instead we see through the illusion of the many from the perspective of the one. And, from a medical perspective what is revealed is that, though individual stories may differ in detail, there is only ever one patient coming for treatment, one mechanism generating illness, and only one step back to the centre for all. In fact, the root of all healing at its greatest depth and highest reach involves nothing more than a simple and instantaneous shift of identification from the relative to the absolute dimension of self.

The practical outcome of authentic holistic and integral treatment is development across all assessable qualities of functioning. Most importantly in the time we live, and demographic of patients that we treat, is the ethical line of development. A patient's entire syndrome pattern and symptom complex is already significantly expressing their current stage of development. Simply put, patients must become the kind of people who don't have their problems.

This means making different, better choices predicated on higher values. When values change, some things that were very important seem suddenly less so and some things that may not have even been on the radar screen may take on a new and significant meaning. When values change relationships change, both internally among our culture of officials and externally toward life. This very real threat to relationships is one of the most significant reasons that the ego, that part of ourselves that endeavors only to preserve the status quo, so violently resists wholesome, integrative change. And yet, from a certain perspective CM is about

nothing but improving the quality of relationships! Chinese medicine is a science of integrity and when the individual evolves, so too does culture. We who hold world-centric values have reached a level of development where the larger context of culture must inform our medicine. What seems to be missing in the profession is the passion, urgency, and moral imperative to rectify 'qi' in such a way that evolution takes place. To awaken the patient's own conscience and activate their will

so that they are fuelled by the felt sense of responsibility of having to get better, right now, for a cause much greater than themselves.¹¹

While physiological process must certainly be 'in balance' it is only an awakened will and conscience informed by the soul that can add a vertical dimension to physiology.¹² It is a practitioner's own soul depth and degree of attention to the best part of himself that has the potential to awaken this awareness and interest in the patient. The minimum goal, which is well within the grasp of almost any practitioner or patient is a 51% shift of identification to spirit, that part of ourselves that is always free and striving toward the highest. Spirit is ready to make, and take, whatever hard choices and actions have to be initiated right now for the sake of wholeness based on whatever degree of truth has already been revealed. Spirit does not wait to arrive at some later point of feeling like doing the right thing. Spirit does not 'try' to exercise, take its herbs three times a day, meditate, or give up sweets. Spirit perceives truth and acts on it Right Now regardless of how the vehicle 'feels' about it.

It only takes a 51% degree of shift to the authentic self, the spirit, *Shen*, with a capital 'S', to 'reverse the wheel' and to operate in the world from a pure motive. Such a shift itself will do as much as can be done to rectify internal physiological relationships from the inside out. What else could be the basis of any authentic holistic or integral model of healing? Simply, we must hold the expectation for ourselves, our colleagues, and our patients that everything possible that can be done, will be done, for the sake of building together the integrity that is the outcome of all true medicine. Only a culture based on such a shared value has any hope of overcoming the significant challenges that face us.

Cultural Evolution: Autonomy and Communion

Our practice of medicine will either blindly reflect the superficial and materialistic values of culture at large or we will strive for it to reflect our deeper comprehension of humanity and its higher potentials. Throughout history, human consciousness has been embedded in culture as a force that has invisibly shaped us for better or worse. We are now at a historical vantage point where we are aware of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in all previous forms of cultural development. Such a top-down perspective provides the opportunity to consciously create culture based on the best of our knowledge and our highest ideals rather than to have our destiny forged by forces we are either unaware of or don't understand.

As we awaken to the reality of a global world facing global challenges, it makes sense that medicine also must make the transition from a solely personal focus on healing individuals' bodies and relaxing their minds, to becoming a significant force of cultural change.¹³ Given the impersonal nature of the greatest challenges that face us, the context for creating functional integrity within the individual can only be meaningfully understood as the foundation for a greater emergence of integrity within culture itself.

Chinese diagnosis requires reference of all observable phenomena to a set of agreed upon qualitative standards.¹⁴ But what better standard of reference for diagnosis is there than reality? Most of us have grown cynical regarding the possibility that humans can recognize truth with a capital 'T' in a cultural context. This makes sense as a reaction to the Holocaust. Still, as the leading edge of culture transcends ethnocentrism and nationalism to embrace world-centric values, this cynicism must fall away if individuals and cultures are ever really going to come together in a more wholesome way.

Historically, autonomy and communion have been at odds with the individual's rights being subsumed by the collective. However, it only makes sense according to *yin/yang* theory that the negative potential fulfilled by collectives in the past can be balanced by the potential of a collective to manifest an even greater good. Chinese medicine has always recognized the inexorable relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. From a Confucian perspective health manifests as a dynamic balance between a culture of organ systems or 'officials'. Chinese medicine predicts that 'health' emerges when each 'official' is giving selflessly for the sake of the whole. Such an ideal balance could only be sustained, however, to the degree that a patient has shifted his own motive in life from the ego's fears and desires to a positive cause greater than himself. There is no sustainable balance of officials that medicine can create independent of the recognition of oneness on the part of the individual and the will to make one's life a living example of that recogni-

tion.

The most direct route out of the postmodern ego's existential dilemma of self concern is in awakening to self as the vehicle for vertical development in the context of a collective that is moving forward together. In a person so liberated, gratitude, ego-less passion, and a visceral sense of both urgency and responsibility for bringing in the new replaces the small, inherently limited, and painfully personal contraction of ego evidenced as victimization focused on past events that patients usually present with.

Healing and development aren't any longer a choice we make to feel better, rather, they are understood to be an obligation the fulfillment of which simply respects who and what we know ourselves to be – vehicles for the evolution of consciousness.

From an integral (non-dual) perspective the practitioner must be the living embodiment of that realization. Cynicism regarding the potential of self and culture to manifest a pure motive renders obsolete the very heart of CM. Why? Because the outward expression of a culture of inner 'officials' that are unified in intention and purpose and expressing 'health' is a culture of individuals who are aligned with each other in the very same way. Thus the most significant manifestation of our understanding of complex system theory will be evidenced in the quality of our relationships as we strive and move forward together. That's integral medicine in an evolutionary context.

Conclusion

We may understand Chinese medicine to be a science of the relationship between the one and the many, the human and the macrocosm. The 5E model may be taken as a metaphor to describe the relationship between unadorned consciousness and creation including physiology, culture, the biosphere, and the cosmos. Creating heaven on earth may serve as a metaphor for the enlightened practice of medicine.

A reasonable, and frequently raised objection I encounter is, "The philosophy is compelling, but how do we do this practically with our patients?" I always tell my students that they only need to be concerned with their own integrity and that there is nothing 'to do' with patients. While the mind wants a technique it can use on Monday morning to earn an income, the ever so simple reality is that the potential for medicine that I'm pointing to can only be attained by a practitioner who has realized the absolute perspective, has given him or herself to it, and has a depth born of the discovery of what it takes to not compromise that metaphorical position 'at the centre of the circle'.

While such an attainment may have been rare historically, it is well within the grasp of those of us in the classes privileged enough to learn and practice CM. From such a vantage point all questions will instantly be answered regarding the nature of our clinical relationships. Of course, none of us is going to be perfect. But it appears to me reasonable that people who are advanced systems thinkers and at

a world-centric stage of development could reach at least a 51% point of identity shift to the core values I'm pointing to if they cared to. 15 Fifty one percent means that spirit is in the driver's seat as the motivating force for speech and action and the values of spirit are the reference point for all experience. Chinese medicine is not a religion or even a form of spirituality. It is a medical science whose strength is as primary care for the inner dimension of the human being. There is only one inner dimension to the cosmos and from this cosmo-centric vantage point, the care we extend to individuals is nothing short of care for the process of creation and cosmic development itself.

Endnotes

1 A detailed discussion of integral theory is beyond the scope of this article. For a brief introduction to integral theory I refer people to Wilber, K. (2000) *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*. Boston: Shambhala.

2 I can remember conferences in the early 80s when practitioners would actually fight over the superiority of the five-element or eight-principle perspective and which constituted 'real' Chinese medicine.

3 Here I reference the opening line of the *Zhen Jiu Jia Yi Jing* affirming that, 'All treatment must be rooted in spirit.' The ground of being and the authentic self constitute the absolute dimension of the self whereas the term 'ego' refers to the relative dimension. I refer to the ego as 'absolute' here because it is 'absolutely relative' and to make the point that, from a spiritual perspective, it is the only impediment to the expression of spirit.

4 Whenever an individual insists to me that the universe is a creation of his own mind I'm inclined to slap him and assert, 'That was an odd thing for you to do!'

5 Much of CM is conditioned by scientific materialism and has not yet evolved to pluralism. The ability to hold multiple perspectives signifies a relatively high state of development. However it is not a final destination and, as such, does not go far enough. The denial of hierarchy based on relativism represents a distortion of pluralistic consciousness.

6 For example, the selection of Liv 2 as being iconographic of a patient's constitution would imply that his constitution is 'fire within wood'.

7 Personal communication.

8 Anyone who can afford \$25 a week for acupuncture is most likely to be living in the top fortunate five percent of all of humanity.

9 I apologize for having added to the confusion by having previously used this term in my own writing.

10 This is standard lingo in segments of the 5E community that reflects a culturally conditioned psychological, 'feel good' perspective that is pervasive in new age healing. In my experience, sentimentality is not an attribute of authentic spiritual expression.

11 I am speaking only from a spiritual perspective. While the body may need time to heal or, may never heal, the spirit is that dimension of the self that is whole right now, never puts time in the picture, and can not relate to healing because nothing ever happened there.

12 For the sake of this discussion I define 'soul' as the deepest part of the relative part of the self. It is the capacity to respond to truth and to evoke response in others. The condition of the soul reflects the sum total of all previous choices. 'Conscience'

may be thought of as the voice of the soul informing us of the gap between what we have seen to be true and the nature of the choices we are actually making.

13 Challenges such as global warming, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the contamination of crops with genetic modification concern all of us and are more significant than an individual's problems.

14 Such as the 'Five-Element' or 'Eight-Principle' systems theories.

15 Of course ego, the accumulated momentum of all past conditioned actions is not likely to go away easily and a 51% degree of attainment will require very hard work for most of us. Such work will be anathema to the postmodern human who feels so entitled, and looks to 'spiritual practice' mostly for psychological relief.

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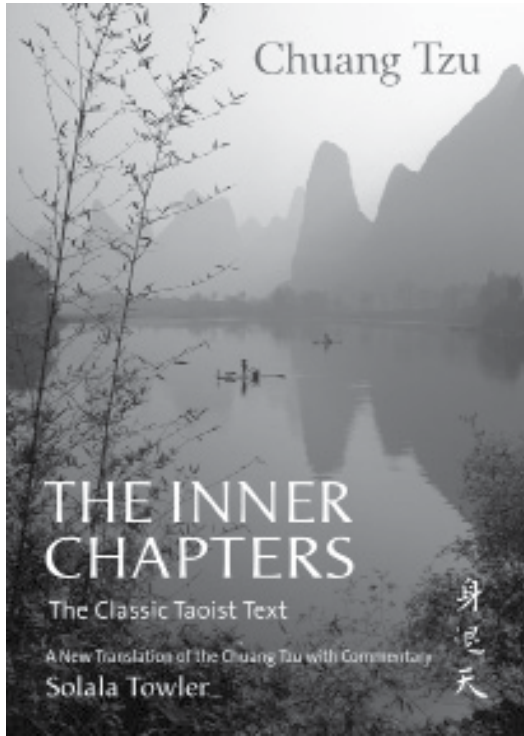
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Universal Consciousness Festival

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This year's festival was the third and the first one for me and I highly recommend it! It is held in a absolutely beautiful setting, Dao House (one of the largest log buildings in the U.S.), high in the mountains of CO (Estes Park). It is the perfect setting for a gathering like this. And the folks at Dao House are the perfect hosts!

This year's featured an array of fascinating lectures, classes and demonstrations. (The friday night martial arts demonstration was totally amazing.) Besides myself and the founder of Dao House, Wu Dang Chen, there was a distinguished doctor of Chinese Medicine William Young and the also distinguished doctor Jeffrey Yuen. The other master there was Amrit Desai, one of the first yoga teachers to come to this country back in the 60's (who did a great job interweaving Taoism and qigong into his lecture on pranayama and yoga).

Just to be in that environment with all the good *qi* and *de* that abides in the mountains, and to share it all with a wonderful group of *qi* and Tao enthusiasts was so rewarding and exciting. (And I got to do a Taoist Gongfu Tea Ceremony for 50 people!)

The level of instruction and lectures was very high, the food was great and the atmosphere at Dao House is so conducive to deep reflection and practice.

Next year's gathering will be held in Sept. I hope to see many of you there! (For information on next year's festival and other on-going trainings and workshops at Dao House see their website at DaoHouse.com.)

As with our spread on the wonderful gathering at Eastover in our last issue, we feel that a picture can tell a thousand words and so here are a few of them to give you a taste of this magical event. Thanks so much to Ken McCray for allowing us to use his wonderful images!



The friday night martial arts demonstrations were incredible.



David Wei's qigong class



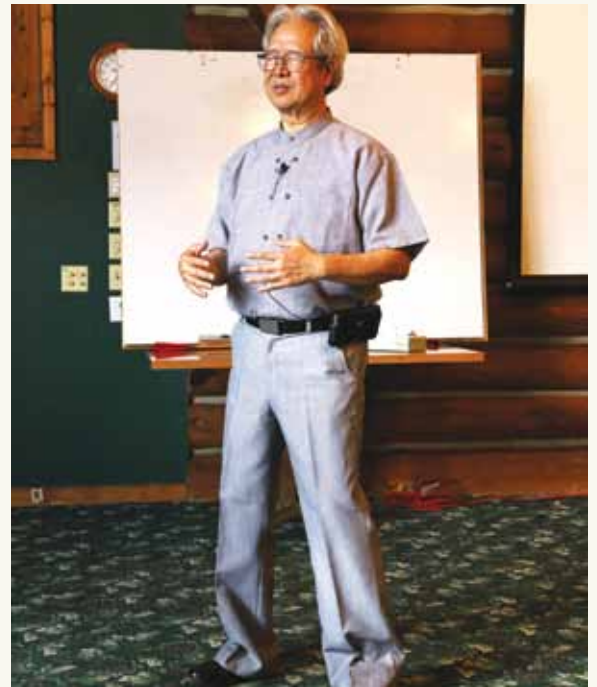
Our wonderful host and teacher Wu Dang Chen



A lecture by Master Chen



An informal gathering in the lobby one evening....



Dr. William Young demonstrating a qigong stance.



Some of this year's instructors: from left, Wu Dang Chen, Solala Towler, Jeffrey Yuen, Amrit Desai and William Young.



Grand Chief Wabiska Mukwa and Chief Dr. Ikway Michine of the Anishinabek Solutrean Metis Indigenous Nation



Leslie Wei, teaching her class on gongfu fan



No that's not a big cookie, it's shou puerh tea....



My lovely assistant Lucinda who helped me serve gongfu tea to 50 people.



An extremely talented young man, Michael Xià, Chóngyì, demonstrating his sword technique.



The amazing Jeffrey Yuen



David Wei performing what I call "snake creeps all the way down".

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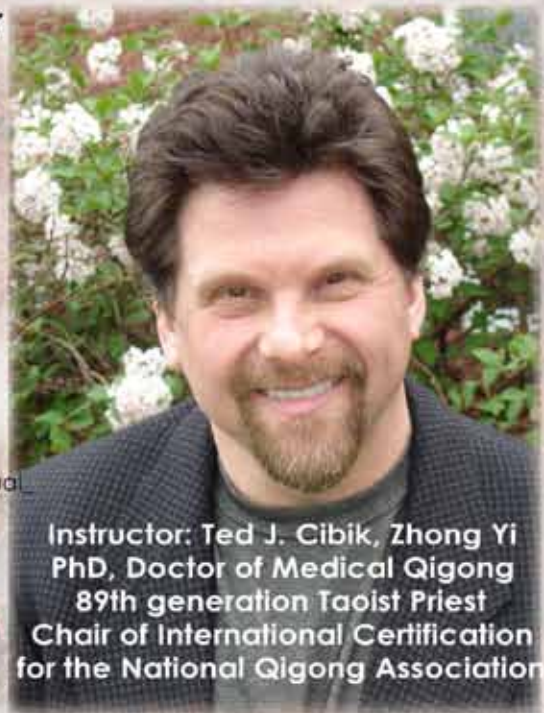
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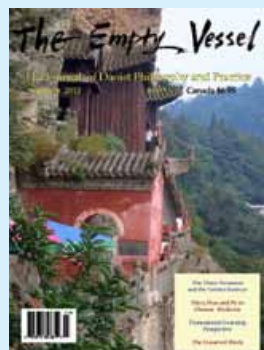
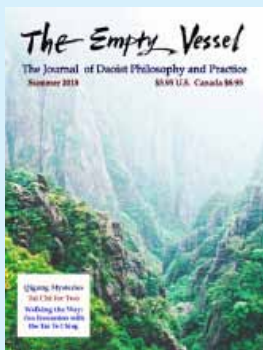
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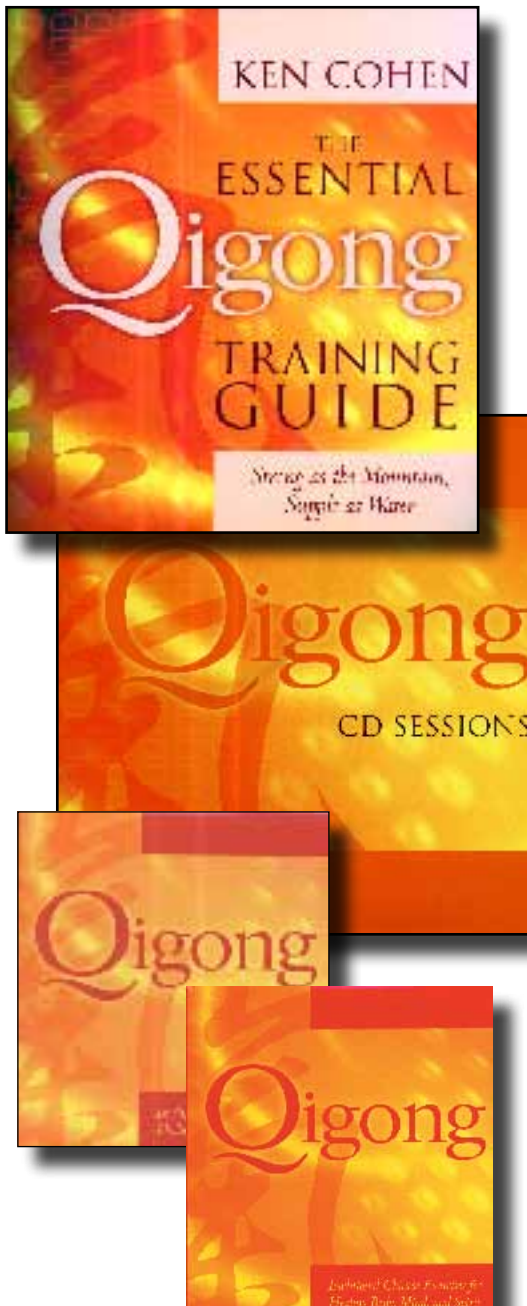
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