

The Empty Vessel

The Journal of Taoist Philosophy and Practice

Winter 2016



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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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Creating the Eternal Elixir: The Elixir of Alchemy

By: Master Yun Xiang Tseng (Chen)

The goal of cultivating Daoist alchemy is to nurture ones spirit by conditioning the physical body and easing the mind. A student of the Dao follows the way of Daoist living by consuming an alkaline diet,

exercising the physical body with Dao Yin and Tai Chi, gathering and enriching the quantity and quality of Qi with Qi Gong, cultivating "Xing" and "Ming", balancing "fire" and "water", and harmonizing "dragon and tiger" with internal

alchemy, thus having the ability and possibility to formulate the internal elixir.

I wish all of us could be practical, taking disciplined action to unite our physical and spiritual body together going toward immortality and returning home.

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Our cover this month:
A statue of Zhang San Feng,
Daoist Immortal, taken at
Wudang Mountain.

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.

Michael Winn Qigong & Inner Sexual Alchemy

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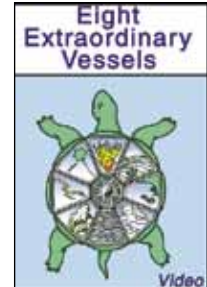
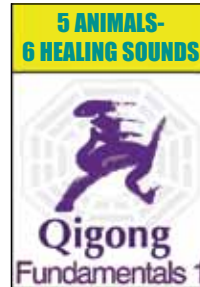
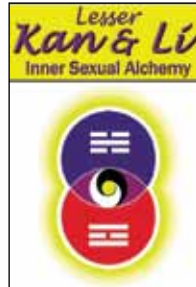
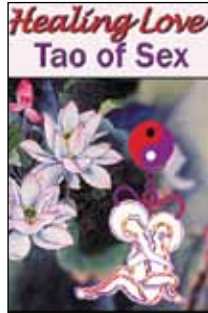


Michael Winn is a 30 year pioneer of qigong and neidangong (inner alchemy) in the West. He co-wrote the classic Taoist Secrets of Love with Mantak Chia and 7 other books. Ex-President, National Qigong Assoc., founder Healing Tao University. His 10 DVD/CD courses brilliantly integrate ancient Tao with modern life. Read his articles, or come on his China Dream Trip!

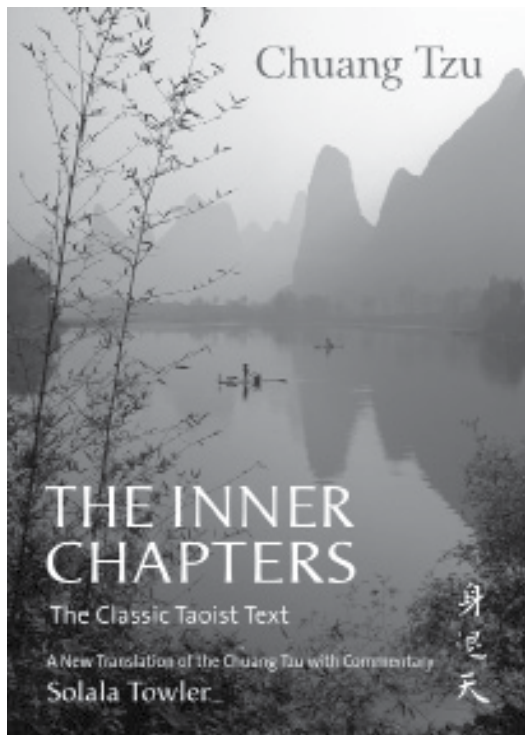


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Along the Way

The days are dark and deeply cloudy this time of year here in the Willamette Valley, Oregon. It can rain for days on end, which drives some people crazy or at least out of the Willamette Valley. But I am used to it and welcome this year's strong rains as we have not had our usual amount of water falling in the last few years and the thirsty plants, rivers and mountains need it!

I am enjoying a new book by Stuart Alve Olson called *Clarity & Tranquility* (see reviews). I loved the story of when he was having great pain in his body when he first started meditating at a Buddhist center. He asked one of the monks for advice on dealing with this pain while sitting and the monk told him that his pain was actually illusory and came from his mind. He was told to look closely for the source of the pain, which would show him how false the pain actually was.

Then he was told that the meditation benches that the Chan Buddhists use to sit on are traditionally called "Cloud Beds." He was told that "if the meditator imagines he or she is sitting on a cloud, their body will become truly relaxed and comfortable." He tried sitting with this in mind and had more breakthrough from his pain.

I love this idea of "sitting on a cloud bed." I've tried it and it does produce a nice relaxed posture and frame of mind.

In the old days, students of the Way traveled from one mountain to another, one teacher to another. They were called "Cloud Wanderers." Actually Taoist students and monks still do this. They travel with the mind frame of what Chuang Tzu called "free and easy wandering," traveling from temple to temple, sacred mountain to sacred mountain.

Today is the Winter Solstice, the "returning of the light," which has been celebrated by us humans for thousands of years. (Who knows, perhaps the animals and plants also celebrate in their own way, which makes much sense to me.) The yin or dark time of the year is making way for the yang or bright time of the year, tho I know there will be plenty more dark, cloudy days here.

May we all become Cloud Wanderers in this beautiful and often confusing and challenging world, drifting from one beautiful experience to another, one "sacred moment" to another.

I hope some of you can join me in my qigong travels this spring and summer. I will be in Carpinteria (near Santa Barbara) in May where I will be teaching Wuji Qigong, Sound Healing and Tea and Tao. (See page

In June I will be offering classes in Taoism at the Qigong Summit along with luminaires like Mantak Chi, Li Jun Feng, Lonny Jarret, Michael Winn and more at the fabulous Eastover Retreat Center. (See back cover) Then in July I will be presenting a Tea and Tao class at the National Qigong Association in NJ. (See www.nqa.org).

My new book, *Practicing the Tao Te Ching: 81 Steps on the Way* will be published by Sounds True this May. I will be in Boulder to do a presentation there as well.

I am still putting together my whole schedule. You can go to my website at www.abodetao.com under Qigong Training to see what else I will be up to this spring and summer.

If you would like to host a qigong workshop or a Tea and Tao session let me know.

Solala Towler, editor



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Quietude

Kurt Levins Jr.



Daoism is indeed mysterious just as the Old Boy has told us. And it is mysterious in a myriad of ways, much as the branches of a river converge to the same final source such as the creation of the great deltas.

But remember, these mysterious ways are not strange supernatural events. Though they may be. They are mostly experienced in the commonplace activities of life.

There is no explosion of lightning saying, "Here, here is your enlightenment." But there might be. Ha Ha Ha! Yes the Masters of old and now would laugh at this. My very dear friend Master Erle Montaigue (Master of Tai Chi Chuan awarded in Wudang Province) told me, "The best lessons of Daoism are taught in small pieces of insight while one is just living life." And that, my friends, is one of the consistencies I have found with the Dao.

So do not look for the thunderbolt of inspiration, if it is to come it will come. Rather live and enjoy the flow of the Dao around you. Sometimes the lessons slip past you and you never learn them. Be open, be calm as Lee Jun Fa said, "Be like water."

A few weeks ago, I fell victim to a cold of some sort. Despite immediately treating myself with my personal blend of cold tea I developed a sore throat, a sore throat that made it hurt to talk. As I result, I didn't talk. Unless of course, it was necessary.

My wife would ask questions and I would ignore her which she says I usually do. I think that aspect is a direct tie from male DNA to male hearing; or I would usually give an answer as short as possible.

I basically cut out all unnecessary talk. When I did that something else seemed to happen. Everyone in the house stopped talking to me except when necessary. We were starting to experience living in quietude. Hey, in New Jersey no one is known for being quiet.

But back to quietude. It is not living in silence, it is living with a minimal amount of speech. It is much like a qigong or tai ji movement which should be done with only the amount of energy needed to complete the task. Watch a big cat move and you see the loose fluidness in their muscles, which are never tense.

This is something you can try. Try spending one day only speaking as much as necessary. See if you can do it among your family. Explain it to everyone. It will amaze you at how little speech is really necessary and how much is similar to the monkey chatter of our mind.

Do you clutter your world with useless chatter? Does unnecessary talk surround you all day? You can step back into a world of quietude, speaking when needed.

I will warn you, people will notice. "Are you okay? Is everything alright?" they'll ask. Be prepared. It is different. Unusual. Monastic. But how can we achieve inner quietude of defeating the chattering monkey, if we don't quiet the outside monkeys?

There is an old martial arts fable. A man tries to defeat a Master and finds himself easily defeated. So he goes and practices eight hours a day. He again tries the master and is easily defeated. He asked the Master, "How can I not defeat you? For a year I practiced 8 hours a day" The Master simply answered, "I practice 24 hours a day." The Master meant that he lived his art.

We all do our Qigong or meditations and then go into the crazy chaos of the world. We can all choose to bring our "quietude" with us as we walk into the chaos.

Now with winter upon us, it is the perfect time to experience "quietude."

I am not glad that I got sick. I am glad that I responded as a traveler, and learned a deep lesson from the illness; is that not a spin of yin into yang or reverse?

A serious student of martial arts for 37 years, Kurt Levins holds the rank of Master in the Lu Shan Taoist Lineage. He holds a Masters ranking in Tai Chi Chuang in the lineage of Li I Yu and Internal Kung Fu under master Lein Cheng Chen of Taiwan. Levins has also completed studies at the Philadelphia Institute of Chinese Medicine. As Director of the Pinelands Institute for Taoist Studies he conducts training in the New Jersey Pine Barrens. Mr. Levins teaches several forms of tai ji, qigong and other Taoist arts. He can be reached at intao@hotmail.com or 856.797.5987.

2016 Fire Monkey Year

Susan Levitt

Photos by Annya Ishtara



The year of the Monkey is ideal for a quantum leap in your life! Now is the time to shake things up, create change, and innovate a new path. Join Monkey's enthusiast energy when risks are rewarded and anything can happen. Even the most ambitious plans can succeed. There will be more than enough action and opportunity to keep you busy. In Monkey year, it's fine to just make it up as you go along. Just don't be gullible and trust the wrong people, or wily Monkey will take all the peanuts and leave you only shells.

Those born in Monkey years (1908, 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016) are clever, sharp, mercurial, and entertaining. They are wonderful to be around because they are fun, creative, and bring the sparkling energy that only Monkey can provide. Monkeys embody strong leadership potential and, like their best friend the Dragon, won't allow anyone to tell her what to do. Uninhibited Monkey rarely

gets embarrassed by anything, and is free to express fearlessly in all walks of life.

In addition to acute mental alertness, Monkey also possesses physical stamina. Monkeys are good with their hands, have skills and dexterity with machines, naturally have technological talents, and can easily master new concepts. A superb generalist, Monkey can do anything! In relationships, a Monkey loves romance, and is very sensitive and generous. But Monkey can be fickle, run hot or cold, and treat relationships like a game. But everyone loves the Monkey, and the birth rate skyrockets in Asia during a Monkey year.

Of the five Taoist elements Fire, Earth, Metal, Water, and Wood, this is the year of the red Fire Monkey. Red means go! Fire brings passion, creativity, and joy. Fire types are strong, dynamic, and can overcome illness and obstacles.



Lucky Hours

In Monkey year, activities are more successful when undertaken during hours that are favorable for the Monkey: the Rat, Dragon, Snake, and Monkey hours.

Rat hours are 11 pm – 1 am

Dragon hours are 7 – 9 am

Snake hours are 9 – 11 am

Monkey hours are 3 – 5 pm

New Year Date

Chinese New Year is a spring festival that begins on the second new Moon after Winter Solstice. But in the Solar Terms Chinese agricultural calendar, the Chinese New Year begins on February 4 or 5. This Li Chun date, based on Solar Terms (15 degrees along the ecliptic) is close to February 2nd, a date that's celebrated in many traditions including Candlemas in Christianity and Tu B'Shvat, New Year for trees, in Judaism. Called Imbolc in Gaelic, this is a fire festival of the Celtic Goddess Brigid, and the first stirrings of spring. Animals awaken after winter hibernation, hence Groundhog Day on February 2nd for divination from the movement of animals. February 2nd, close to the Li Chun date, marks the midpoint between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox.

Just be aware to not jump ahead of yourself this year, especially during the heat of summer. And try to calm what is called Monkey mind in Buddhism: jump to a branch, grab a banana, peel it, take a bite, drop it. Then jump to the next branch, grab a banana, peel it, take a bite, and drop it in a useless tail-chasing cycle. As soon as you realize that a path is not fruitful, try a new one instead of staying stuck and trying to analyze the past.

Monkey year is very fortunate for all Monkeys, and for Monkey's friends the Rat, Dragon, and Snake. Monkey energy can, at times, be problematic for the Tiger. Monkey correlates to the western sign Leo.

Your Fortune In The Fire Monkey Year

RAT – You and Monkey are best friends along with Dragon. Now life can be fun and exciting, full of Monkey-inspired treats and surprises. Monkey 2016 is excellent for you to get married or engaged, to launch new endeavors, or have a child. Periodically, take time to stop and regroup or rethink when needed, especially during the 2016 Mercury retrograde cycles Jan 5 – 25, April 28 – May 22, Aug 30 – Sept 21, and Dec 19 – Jan 8 2017. Looking for love in Monkey year? Rat is most compatible with another Rat, a Dragon, or Monkey. Ox is also compatible.

OX – Wily Monkey energy adds some liveliness to Ox's routine, and Monkey year is a great time for you to experience a big change of scenery. But Monkey's fast ways aren't your style. Ox prefers slow, steady, and natural. But Ox respects Monkey, who takes risks, is a good leader, and knows how to succeed. Next year Phoenix (Rooster) 2017 is your lucky year. Looking for love in Monkey year? Ox is most compatible with another Ox, a Serpent, or Phoenix. Rat is also compatible. Sheep is least compatible.

TIGER – Monkey is your opposite. But you still benefit from the action and liveliness of Monkey year. Monkey can stretch the truth, so think before you pounce. Not all ideas are worth pursuing. Looking for love in Monkey year? Tiger is most compatible with another Tiger, Horse, or Dog. Pig is also compatible. Monkey is least compatible.

RABBIT – Monkey brings many opportunities that you will enjoy: travel, social events, fine dining, fairs, and festivals. Enjoy the Monkey fun, and express your creative side. Rest if you feel overwhelmed by too much activity. Feng shui of your home and office is a must for sensitive Rabbit to maintain balance during Monkey year. Looking for love in Monkey year? Rabbit is most compatible with another Rabbit, a Sheep, or a Pig. Dog is also compatible. Phoenix (Rooster) is least compatible.

DRAGON – Your lucky year! Say yes to everything! Monkey is your best friend (along with Rat) so you'll like the vibrant and exciting energy of this Fire Monkey year. There are opportunities for success in business. Just avoid lawsuits or any type of legal entanglement. Looking for love in Monkey year? Dragon is most compatible with another Dragon, a Rat, or a Monkey. Phoenix (Rooster) is also compatible. Dog is least compatible.

SNAKE – You and Monkey are on the same wavelength. Luck is with you this year, especially during summer. And your good luck continues in Phoenix (Rooster) year 2017. But lay low when in doubt because 2016 yang Fire energy can, at times, be too stimulating for yin Snake, even the 1977 Fire Snake. Looking for love in Monkey year? Snake is most compatible with another Snake, an Ox, or Phoenix (Rooster). Monkey is also compatible. Pig is least compatible.

HORSE – Fire Monkey brings lots of active, yang energy that Horse thrives on and finds inspiring. A year for adventure, new journeys, and excitement. Just don't let affairs get out of hand in summer. Looking for love in Monkey year? Horse is most compatible with another Horse, a Dog, or Tiger. Sheep is also compatible. The Rat is least compatible.

SHEEP – Success can continue from the previous Sheep year. But Monkey's fast pace is not always to your liking. Extravagance is popular in a Monkey year, and people want luxuries. So be sure to avoid debt because "Sheep eat paper," meaning that Sheep can really spend. Travel is highlighted, especially in summer, but do it on your own terms. Looking

for love in Monkey year? Sheep is most compatible with another Sheep, a Pig, or Rabbit. Horse is also compatible. Ox is least compatible.

MONKEY – Now is your year for action! All seasons are fortunate but luck is strongest in autumn. You benefit from the strong, fiery, yang energy of your own year. An excellent time to start new endeavors, succeed in business, and make big change happen. Seek new horizons through travel and adventure this year when risks are rewarded, and reticence loses out. Fire Monkey year is not a yin cycle when things come to you, but a yang cycle to go out and get! Looking for love in Monkey year? Monkey is most compatible with another Monkey, a Rat, or Dragon. Snake is also compatible. Tiger is least compatible.

PHOENIX (Rooster) – Rooster, Chicken, Cock, Hen? I call you Phoenix, offering a lifetime of opportunities to be reborn and transformed. Monkey year is a time of excitement, adventure, and new experiences for you. It's fine to take risks and discover new outcomes. Take a chance because you'll discover very quickly what does work, or what's not worth pursuing. You start a new life cycle in Fire Phoenix year 2017. Looking for love in Monkey year? Phoenix is most compatible with another Phoenix (if they don't peck each other), an Ox, or Snake. Dragon is also compatible. Rabbit is least compatible. In Phoenix year 2017 you'll start a new life cycle.

DOG – Monkey year brings yang energy to get things done, and Dog likes accomplishments. There's much activity and personal involvement in this passionate Fire Monkey year. This new energy is inspiring to Dog, but it might encourage you to be overly enthusiastic or unrealistic. So stay vigilant and responsible, natural Dog traits, because projects might not develop as planned. A year to stay balanced and avoid extremes of temperament. You'll start a new life cycle in Earth Dog year 2018. Looking for love in Monkey year? Dog is most compatible with another Dog, a Tiger, or a Horse. Rabbit is also compatible. Dragon is least compatible.

PIG – Monkey year can inspire you to be the life of the party! So join the whirlwind activities in this exciting Fire Monkey year. Accept all social invitations, and travel is highlighted. Just keep a clear perspective and not get carried away. Don't let people take advantage of your generosity, or mistake kindness for weakness. Looking for love in Monkey year? Pig is most compatible with another Pig, a Sheep, or Rabbit. Tiger is also compatible. Snake is least compatible.

Susan Levitt is an astrologer and feng shui consultant in San Francisco CA. She's been a professional astrologer for 30 years, and is the author of 5 books including TAOIST ASTROLOGY. For more Monkey year information visit www.susanlevitt.com.

Dr. & Master Sha Healing with Tao Calligraphy

For millennia, advanced spiritual practitioners from the East have used calligraphy to connect with the divine to flow the most beautiful messages and energy through their brush strokes. This ancient spiritual practice is now being used widely around the world for health and well-being, due to the efforts of Dr. and Master Sha, a Tao grandmaster and healer.

Master Sha has showcased his acclaimed Chinese calligraphy scrolls in numerous cities around the world. Infused with divine power, Master Sha's Tao Calligraphies have attracted thousands of people to experience healing and empowerment in different aspects of life. According to Master Sha, unlimited love, flourishing, peace, abundance and more are available to all of us through this exquisite ancient art.



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What is Tao Calligraphy or Oneness Calligraphy?

I learned Yi Bi Zi from Professor Li Qiu Yun, who is more than 100 years old. She has been recognized by the United Nations as one of the world's top Chinese language experts. She learned Yi Bi Zi from Tai Shi (supreme teacher), who was the teacher of the emperor's and royal family's children during the Qing Dynasty, the last imperial dynasty in China. I am extremely honored to continue to learn Yi Bi Zi from Professor Li and to have become her only lineage holder for Yi Bi Zi. The appreciation from my heart and soul is beyond words and comprehension. Yi Bi Zi is Oneness writing. It uses only one stroke to complete a Chinese character. It does not matter if a Chinese character is normally made of 20 or more individual strokes; any character can be written in one stroke. Yi Bi Zi is one of the most extraordinary and profound Chinese arts in all of Chinese history.

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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How can Tao Calligraphy or Oneness Calligraphy heal?

Everyone and everything is made of shen qi jing (pronounced *shun chee jing*), including human beings and Chinese characters. "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). Tao Calligraphy or Yi Bi Zi is one way.

Yi Bi Zi is Oneness writing because it joins the shen qi jing of a Chinese character as one. This oneness can help heal and rejuvenate the body beyond words. Writing or tracing 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.

What is the nature of Tao?

Lao Zi, author of Tao De Jing, gave the name of the Source as Tao. The nature of water is close to Tao. What is the water of nature? Water stays in the lowest part of the mountain or earth. Water holds all dirty things without complaining. The humility and big heart of the water is just like Tao. In my teachings the 10 highest qualities of Tao are love, forgiveness, compassion, light, harmony, humility, flourishing, gratitude, service and enlightenment. Tao is The Way, the source of all universes. Tao is the universal principles and laws. Tao is the ultimate oneness.

When you learn how to follow the Way of the Tao, you discover how everything in your life suddenly flourishes. There's a Tao path for everything, including healthy living, unconditional love and service to others, and practicing forgiveness to clear life-blockages or shen qi jing blockages.



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Shape Your Destiny

ZhongXian Wu

Introduction

Some people are born with good luck while some people are lucky to be born! The experiential reality of a person's life is deeply ruled by his or her *Ming* 命 (karma). In general, our life patterns reveal the patterns of our destiny. Many people prefer to believe that they alone make choices to shape their future. Yet in large our destiny is designed for us, often times without our conscious awareness.

Please do not mistake me - this does in no way mean that you do not have the power to change the course of your life! For thousands of years, the essence of Chinese philosophy holds that life is not solely controlled by fate:

Wo Ming Zai Wo Bu Zai Tian 我命在我不在天
My life is in my hands
It is not controlled by fate

Through mindfulness and effort, we all have the ability to improve our karma and achieve true autonomy. In Daoism, there are two essential ways to shape your destiny: *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* 干支八字 and *XiuZhen* 修真. In this article, I will introduce both these concepts and provide you with a simple practical *XiuZhen* practice method from the *XinYi Dao Jia Yin Xian Pai* 心意道家隱仙派 (Heart-Mind Daoist Hidden Immortal Lineage.)

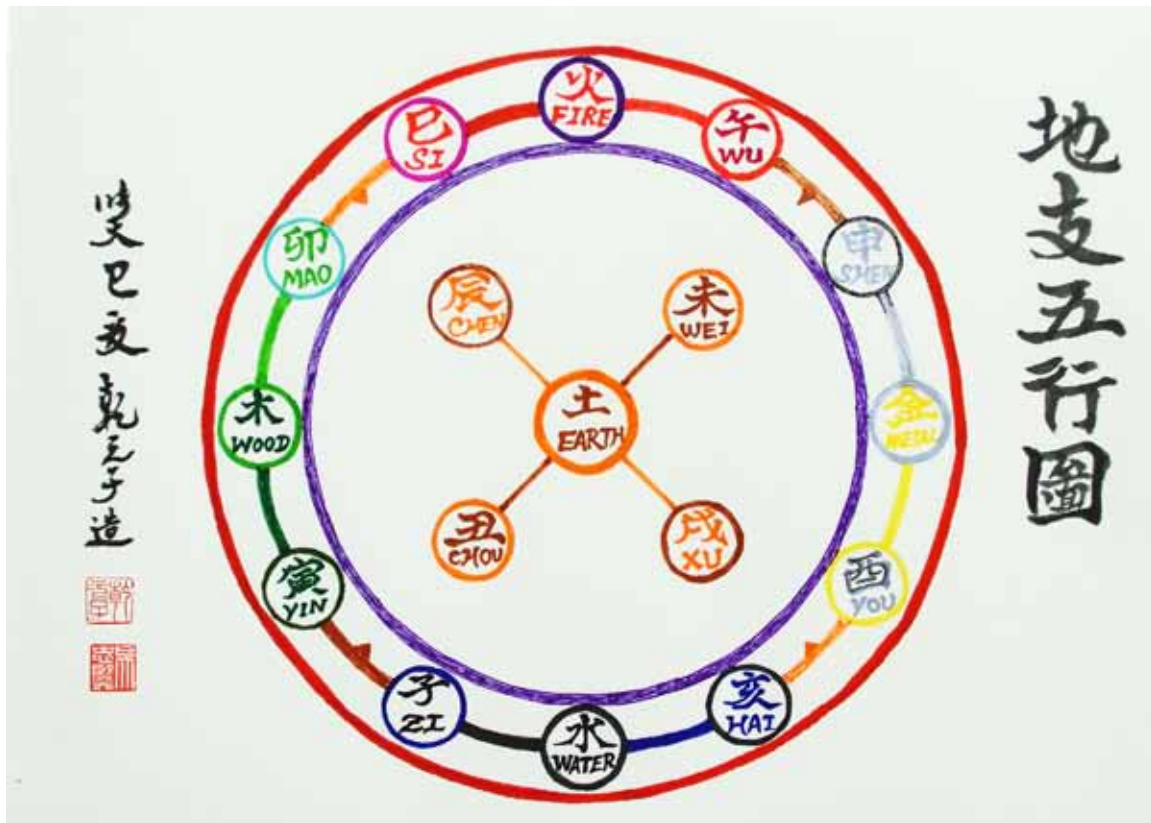
Gan Zhi Ba Zi 干支八字

Gan Zhi Ba Zi 干支八字 is the Daoist principle of *Ming* - your karma or destiny - and understanding its application provides you with precise guidance to improve all aspects of your current and future life. Literally, *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* means, "stem branch eight characters" because the fundamental aspects of each person's destiny are mapped out using a unique combination of eight special Chinese characters. Some practitioners refer to *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* as Stem Branch Chinese Astrology. Decoding the *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* provides the Daoist fast track to change your karma. It is one of the most esoteric and challenging Daoist concepts to learn well. Traditionally, it is quite difficult to find a high level teacher who can clearly and effectively pass this hidden knowledge on to dedicated students.

In China today, this still holds true. Most people, ordinary people as well as cultivation practitioners, seek out an expert to help them interpret their *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* - it is not easy to find someone who is both well qualified and skillful in this endeavor. Although it is pretty easy to find a fortuneteller on almost any street in China, most of these low level practitioners offer inaccurate readings and provide generic guidance. In truth, the Chinese astrological system as it pertains to healing and divination is extremely complicated, the complexities of which are difficult for most people to decipher.

If you feel a strong and serious pull to change your karma, the better choice would be to find someone who can read your karma precisely, provide you with accurate guidance, and for you to show dedication to your own goal through your daily course of action. *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* provides you with a means to truly understand your destiny - it is more than just shedding light on your karma or making predictions about the future. The true purpose of a reading is to guide you to make changes in your life, including changes in your daily lifestyle habits and in your larger life decisions. You may seek direction from your chart during those times when you are seeking healing and a sense of balance in yourself and in your meaningful relationships. Once you have a grasp on the dynamics of the universal energies cycling in your life, you can choose specific Qigong and spiritual cultivation practices that will help you change your karma, to remain centered when something unexpected happens, to steer clear of trauma (or at least have the ability to move through a trauma without being seriously debilitated) and to put you on the path towards health, prosperity, and longevity.

The *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* can be applied in all perspectives of your life. For instance, I grew up in a traditional fishing village in southeast China. For my entire upbringing, I saw that people commonly used this knowledge to help make decisions about important events, like finding a spouse, setting a wedding date, building a house, naming a child, signing a contract, opening a business, to help with health issues, etc. For those of you are interested in ways to improve your life, I strongly suggest that you find a true *GanZhi BaZi* master to help direct you.



Another means of life enhancement is *XiuZhen*, which I will discuss in the following section.

Xiu Zhen 修真

Xiu Zhen 修真 is a traditional Daoist name that refers to all internal cultivation methods. It is a far-reaching term for practices that help improve one's destiny. Literally, *Xiu-Zhen* means "fix reality," as it describes internal cultivation techniques practiced to fix the imbalances we may have and to achieve our real, most pure selves. To be effective, this approach requires absolute dedication to a daily cultivation practice and may take a lot of time to see the improvements in your life, as would a dedicated *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* practice. Finding someone to teach you a *Xiu Zhen* method is often easier than finding someone to help you with your *Gan Zhi Ba Zi*. Some *Xiu Zhen* methods are known widely in the general public as various traditional Daoist Qigong forms. No matter what kind of *Xiu Zhen* form you are choose, to be effective, the practice must have this common principle: working with *Da Yao* 大藥, the Three Great Medicines.

The Three Great Medicines are also called *San Bao* 三寶, the Three Treasures. This refers to the trinity structure of the body: *Jing* 精, *Qi* 氣 and *Shen* 神. *Jing*, *Qi*, and *Shen* are respected as the best medicines in the world. *Jing* means essence and represents both the physical body and the Earth itself. *Qi* means vital energy and it is related to our breath,

our energetic body and to all living beings. *Shen* is your spirit, your spiritual body, and higher consciousness. It also represents Heaven.

Unfortunately, in modern times, most practitioners only pay attention to the *Jing* (physical) level of study, missing the *Qi* (energetic) and *Shen* (spiritual) levels entirely. Traditionally, the Daoist teaching method is known as *Kou Chuan Xin Shou* 口傳心授, or 'passing through the mouth and transmitting through the heart.' In other words, we do not teach only the physical format of an art to students, but we also train them to master the energetic and spiritual layers of the art. These more subtle teachings are passed from teacher to student through the heart and through special visualization techniques. However, I have found though my teaching experience (going on three decades) that many students have a very hard time letting go of the ideas spread in popularized Qigong training. All too many practitioners consider themselves 'advanced' once they can perform a number of forms on the purely physical level.

Awakening the *Shen* component (*Shen* medicine) of an art can be challenging because it is elusive, yet it is the *Shen* that brings the greatest benefits to your healing and cultivation practice. Regardless of the art we are learning, using visualization techniques connects us with *Shen* medicine



(the spirit), thereby deepening the effectiveness of all three medicines.

If you are interested in experiencing an authentic *Xiu Zhen* practice, please read ahead as I share a powerful *Xin Yi* (Heart Mind) internal alchemy method. The following excerpt is taken from my book, *Xin Yi Wu Dao* (Singing Dragon, 2014. London, UK).

Xi Yi Hun Yuan Zhuang 心意混元椿

Jing Medicine (Posture): Bring feet together, bend your knees slightly, tuck in your tailbone and tighten your bottom muscles. Curve your back and close your shoulders by bringing them close together in front of your body and sucking in your chest. Do not stick your bottom out! Bring your forearms and hands together in front of your body (the pinky edge of your hands are together) with your palms facing forward. The back of your hands rest on your thighs (if you can) as you hold your arms as close to your body as your can. Keep your head upright with eyesight in horizontal.

When you hold this posture, align yourself with the six spiritual animals (described below) through your breathing and visualization techniques.

Qi Medicine (Breath): With each breath, breathe with your lungs, your skin, and your navel. With each inhalation, imagine all the pores of your skin are open and allow the universal *Qi*, like sunlight, to enter into your body and gather at your navel. With each exhalation, imagine the *Qi* descending from your navel to your *DanTian* 丹田 (the elixir field in your lower belly).

Shen Medicine (Visualization):

Ji Tui 雞腿 – Rooster Leg: When you are standing in this posture, imagine a rooster standing in the cold on one leg and tucking the other leg all the way up to snug his belly. Feel the power of the one rooster claw that is bearing his entire body weight. The rooster claw is a symbol for martial power. Your toes are your own “rooster claws.” Use force as you grab the floor with your toes, holding the posture as the rooster stands on one leg. Keep your knees and legs together such that your two legs merge into one. It is very important to remember your alignment – *never* bend your knees so much that they extend beyond your toes.

Xiong Yao 熊腰 – Bear Waist: Bring the image of a bear to your mind when you bring your awareness to your waist while maintaining this standing posture. The bear has a sloped bottom and powerful waist. Make sure to tuck in your tailbone and wrap the buttock muscles tightly, holding the energy in and containing it within the *DanTian*.

Hou Bei 猴背 – Monkey Back: During your standing, also picture a monkey sitting on a rock and enjoying the

sunshine as you curve your back. In the internal alchemy tradition, the monkey represents spirituality. When you make the monkey back, you work directly with your spine, the spiritual channel of the body, and awaken your spiritual energy.

Ying Bang 鷹膀 – Eagle Shoulders: Envision an eagle standing on a top of a tree with his wings totally closed and folded in close to his body when you close your shoulders. The eagle represents the spirit of the heart, and in internal alchemy the shoulders are symbolically related to the heart.

Hu Bao Tou 虎豹頭 – Tiger-Leopard Head: See the tiger and leopard stalking their prey as you keep your eyes alert and head upright. These two magnificent and powerful beasts represent your awakened consciousness.

Conclusion

Gan Zhi Ba Zi and Xiu Zhen are two important Daoist techniques to optimize your experience of daily life and your future destiny. From my personal experience as a lifelong practitioner, from teaching Daoist arts for almost 30 years and from having consulted on over a thousand *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* cases, I trust that the most powerful way to shape your destiny is to utilize the arts of *Gan Zhi Ba Zi* and *Xiu Zhen*. I hope this article will inspire you to work with these both of these Daoist traditions.

Master Zhongxian Wu, a lifelong Daoist practitioner, is the lineage holder of four different schools of Qigong and martial arts. Since 1988, Master Wu has instructed thousands of students, both Eastern and Western, in his unique and professionally designed courses and training programs. He has authored 12 books (five in Chinese) on Chinese wisdom traditions. Along with his wife, Dr. Karin Taylor Wu, he founded Blue Willow World Healing Center (Portland, Oregon) and QinJian Akademin (Stockholm, Sweden) to preserve and promote the classical Chinese arts throughout Europe, North America and China. He regularly offers weekend workshops (open to the general public) on the east and west coast of the United States and in various countries in Europe, as well as three different intensive training programs for the more serious practitioner: the Lifelong Training Program, the GanZhi Advanced Daoist Arts Program and the XinYi (Heart Mind) Internal Arts Program. For further details, please visit www.masterwu.net.

Dr. Karin Taylor Wu provided editorial assistance with this article.



Grounding/Rooting

Solala Towler

photo by Cher Mikkola



One of the most important practices in Daoism, especially in qigong practice, is that of grounding or rooting. By grounding ourselves deep into the earth we are able to receive healing yin energy up into our body through our *yong quan* point on the balls of our feet (the beginning of the kidney meridian).

In traditional Chinese thought, we humans (*ren*) are the meeting place between heaven (*tian*) and earth (*di*). It is our job to manifest both the heavenly, star energy as well as the earth energy into our own beings. In this way we will be able to share what we have learned, what we have become, with others.

An old translation for the various organ systems of the body is "heavenly orbs." This is because Daoists believe that we are made up of stardust. Our chemical compounds are the same as those from deep space. Not only that but our entire energy system is a microcosm of the great macrocosm of space. If we are able to connect our own energy with the heavenly star energy as well as

the deep earth energy we will not only be better balanced energetically but our emotions (in Daoist thought, energetic states) will also come into balance.

When we think of an image of a tree most of us see the trunk growing up into the sky, with its branches and leaves and perhaps fruit. It is also important to remember that there is a whole other part of the tree, its roots, growing deep and wide and sometimes intermingled with the other trees around it. This root system may even be larger than the above ground part of the tree. In other words, to really picture a tree we need to include the below ground portion as well as the above ground.

So what we want to do is create our own tree, with our trunk, limbs, branches and leaves growing up toward the life-giving sun as well as our root system digging deep into the equally life-giving earth. If our root system is small or weak our energy will be small and weak. We will feel ungrounded and easily knocked off our cen-

ter. But if our root system is strong we will be able to weather the storms of life and, when knocked down, be able to spring back up.

To do this stand or sit on the front of a chair, feet flat on the floor. Feel your mind begin to quiet down and your breathing becoming deeper and slower. With your mind intent send roots from the bottom of your feet, deep down into the earth, at least five times the length of your body. (If you are sitting on a cushion you can send the roots down from the bottom of your tailbone).

Feel/see them burrowing down like the roots of a great tree, through all the layers of dirt, rock and animal burrows, deep into the great mother earth. When you feel you have gotten a good connection draw healing yin energy up those roots, up through the bottom of your feet then up your spine all the way to the top of your head (*bai hui* point). Be sure to send them wide as well as deep. If you are outside you can link your roots up to whatever trees are in your vicinity, which will make the strong earth energy of the trees also available to you.

Feel your whole body filling with the strong yin energy of the earth, as if drinking through a straw. Feel it as a strong grounding force in your energy system. Stand or sit like this for a while then, when you are ready, begin to move or walk around the room or even better, on the earth, while still feeling that grounded, rooted sense. Feel yourself sinking down, energetically, into the earth with all your movements coming from that place of deep connection with the earth. Whether you are doing qigong, taiji, yoga or just walking on the earth, you will be amazed how powerful your practice will become!

As an extra level of practice, stop and open your *bai hui* point, located on the crown of your head, to receive the yang heavenly energy from above. Draw it down through your head and all the way down to your lower dantian in your lower abdomen. Feel it mix there with the earthly energy, filling you up with strong, healing qi.

Doing this practice, even for a short time each day or especially before you start a meditation, qigong, taiji or yoga your practice will become much richer and more powerful. Not only that but your emotions will become more balanced and your sense of your core self will become stronger and more clear.

When we are ungrounded our practice will not be strong and we will be more susceptible to the winds of change and more easily knocked off center. Use this practice to become stronger, more emotionally independent as well as energetically powerful.

Laozi says:

Those who persevere have strong will.
Those who are not separated
from their center
will long endure.

Chapter 33

In Japan you can find Daruma dolls. These are modeled after the great Buddhist teacher Bodhidharma (Da Mo in Chinese). These wooden dolls are weighted in the bottom so that whenever they are knocked over they pop back up again.

By creating a strong sense of being rooted and centered in our being we will become like those Daruma dolls. Then, whenever life knocks us down, instead of lying there whining, we will bounce back up again.

If we plant our roots deeply into the earth we will also experience ourselves as being firmly planted in Dao as well. Laozi tells us that whoever is firmly planted in Dao cannot be uprooted. Most martial arts as well as taji and qigong teach us to always move from our center. If we are deeply rooted we can always move from this solid center. If we are not then any little breeze will knock us down and it will be difficult to get back up again.

Again, Laozi tells us:

If one is connected to the Great Mother
one can live a long life.
This is called "having deep roots
and a solid foundation."
This is the Dao of long life
and deep vision (understanding).

Chapter 59

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Nourishing Destiny

The Empty Vessel Interview with Lonny Jarrett



Lonny: Yes.

EV: So you're in practice back there in Massachusetts?

Lonny: Yes, I've been in Stockbridge since 1986. Thirty years I've been practicing here.

EV: Stockbridge is not a very big place is it?

Lonny: Yes, that's where Alice's Restaurant was. My office is right upstairs over that. Alice herself moved out 40 years ago but there is still a restaurant downstairs.

EV: So was your training in Chinese medicine in England through the Worsley school?

Lonny: When I was in high school in 1975 I actually wrote my college essay on the difference between Chinese and Western philosophy and talked about acupuncture. I went to college at Hampshire College and studied neurobiology. But right after my last year in college in 1980 I took a ten-week course in Chinese medicine. I went to grad school in Ann Arbor, MI, and left with a master's degree in neuroscience. I had actually given my doctoral presentation to the medical faculty proposing to study the innervation of the back *shu* points using imaging technologies and radioimmunoassays. This was controversial to say the least and was not well received. I had a tough choice, but gave up a full scholarship to follow the *dao*!

I studied acupuncture at the Traditional Acupuncture Institute, which is no longer open, down in Columbia Maryland, which was run by some of Worsley's students. There I learned Worsley Five Element acupuncture. As part of that program I was fortunate to live in England and study with him in his clinic for a month. I also got to spend time with Manfred Porkert, Father Claude Larre, and his protégé, the now well known and loved Elisabeth Rochat. Porkert and Larre were two of the great sinologists of the 20th century and Father Larre was quite an enlightened man; for him the heart of the medicine was not a bit abstract.

Empty Vessel: I've been a fan of your work since your *Nourishing Destiny* book came out. How long ago was that?

Lonny Jarrett: 1999.

EV: Wow. That's like 16 years ago?

I also met Leon Hammer when I was in acupuncture school and when I moved up to Western Massachusetts I began apprenticing with Leon. I ran his weekend courses out of my office for ten years and spent time following him in his clinic.

EV: A lot of people, when they think of Chinese medicine, at least in this country, they think of TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine). Yet there is a big difference between TCM, which can be thought of as modern communist medicine, and Classical Chinese Medicine.

Lonny: Well we can make several distinctions here. TCM is a phrase that was coined by Chairman Mao. Chinese medicine had fallen into a sad state of disrepair by the time of the communist revolution and really hadn't been endorsed by the state for a hundred years. The state funded schools had closed while China was moving to embrace the West and modernize. Mao, I think in 1949, made this statement that Chinese medicine was a great storehouse and it needed to be restored under the principles of dialectic materialism, i.e. Marxism.

The characters, the iconography of the language, had been reduced; the iconography of the medicine and the martial arts had all been reduced under the auspices of the State. The State was faced with reformulating the traditions in the context of official Marxist doctrine, i.e., atheism and materialism. On one hand they were faced with modernizing the nation and on the other hand they really threw the baby out with the bath water. They did the same thing with literature, music, and art.

TCM is sometimes used as a generic catch-all phrase for all Chinese medicine. But when you talk about "Classical Chinese medicine," the term "Classical" can have several uses. I don't refer to what I do as "Classical." Now on the one hand, we can be aware, as people with an interest in Taoism and generally in Chinese culture and mind, that books such as the *Nei Jing*, *Nanjing*, the *Ling Shu*, as well as the *Tao Te Ching*, *Chuang Tzu*, and the *I Ching* — these texts reflect a living intelligence. And they're going to reflect back to the reader the quality of the reader's own mind and value system.

There's an outer dimension to the texts and an inner dimension, and the inner dimension is only really accessible through rigorous cultivation and contemplation and meditation — an authentic spiritual awakening and realization, cultivation of one's life to actually strive to live in the world with what one has awoken to. One also needs to cultivate humility and compassion and a knowledge of the relationship between the absolute poles of heaven and

earth that we awaken to as they exist in our actual human condition.

There's an internal and external of Classical medicine and people who consider themselves as practitioners of Classical medicine usually just mean that they have learned to read Chinese really well and they spend their lives learning to translate and they imagine that the classical texts are really the foundation and the heart and soul of the medicine. I would say that is the outer aspect of it.

I think that when we refer to the inner dimension of the classical practice we are referring not so much to merely the language, though I would suggest that some knowledge of the language is important. In regard to translating the classical texts I like to make the point that the nine Supreme Court judges are all fluent in English and are charged with interpreting the practical meaning of a document written in their own native tongue only 250 years ago, and they rarely agree! I have studied the language for many years so I think some knowledge (of

the language) is important but I think there is a living spirit that we can actually awaken to which is what the people who wrote these texts were awakened, to, and we can meet there, in the context of

There's an outer dimension to the texts and an inner dimension, and the inner dimension is only really accessible through rigorous cultivation and contemplation and meditation.

our own time and culture.

I am a 21st century practitioner, who was trained in the end of the 20th century. We live in a global world where all streams of culture are running together and the average person now has a level of freedom that even the emperors of ancient China did not have. The outcome of your life and my life are shaped more by choices we are free to make than that of the aristocracy in China at the time that the classics were written.

So I think the classics were the first word in Chinese medicine though not the last. They set a beautiful foundation but one also needs to have access to the inner dimension and be able to read them critically. There is so much more that has been discovered about the human condition in the last 150 years.

Our capacity to embrace both the Buddha's awakening and the awakening of Jesus... I mean I have no idea what actually happened, but if you look at a picture of Buddha meditating under a tree and a picture of Christ carrying the cross you realize that they both awoke to the same underlying one reality but their response to that, their interpretation of it in the context of their cultures, were complementary and quite radically different.

EV: Not to mention Lao Tzu and his understanding of Tao.

Lonny: Right, and I would say that Lao Tzu and Buddhism...the Eastern awakening, we could say is based on "freedom from" and the awakening in the West, based on the wakening of Jesus is "freedom to."

EV: Interesting, what do you mean by that?

Lonny: Well, if we look at Lao Tzu as an example we're looking at "freedom from" the world. Lao Tzu admonishes us that the sage can sit in front of his hut and can hear the dogs barking and roosters crowing in the next town and never endeavors to meet their owners.

EV: Yes, he never feels the need to go over there.

Lonny: Yes because everything you need is right in front of you. That's a perspective and like all perspectives, it's "true but partial." Now when we look at the human body and we look at the biosphere and we look at the universe through the eyes of that perspective what we see is "nothing." We see a thin façade stretched over an infinite ocean of emptiness.

We can say that Buddha had nowhere to go and nothing to do yet Jesus had somewhere to go and everything to do. So Jesus is on the path and someone comes up and says, "I've recognized you and I want to follow you but first I have to bury my father, according to Hebrew law."

EV: And Jesus says to drop that and just follow him.

Lonny: Yes he says, "Let the dead bury their dead and everyone else, let's go. We've got somewhere to go and something to do." So these are complementary awakenings. And I think we have the capacity now to awaken to both of these in ourselves and to actually embrace an awakening that transcends the limitations of either.

EV: Also, even though we are modern people we still have the same *qi* system, the same organ system as they did in ancient times although we are dealing with environmental and mental stresses that are way beyond anything that Lao Tzu or Chuang Tzu or any of those folks had to deal with.

Lonny: Yes, they had blood vessels and nerves and they had bones and they had teeth but if we take the position, which I would take, which is that consciousness is primary...In other words, a materialistic view would be that consciousness arises from the mind and the mind arises

from the body and that consciousness is a byproduct of the physiology.

I can say that I have seen, unequivocally, that consciousness is primary. It exists prior to matter. Consciousness exists prior to becoming. If we meditate then we awaken to emptiness and luminosity. There's a dual aspect because we are divided human beings so we experience emptiness and luminosity, which are really two halves of the same thing; they're two sides of the same equation. The luminosity is consciousness. And within emptiness there's that potential seed for all of creation.

And, when something comes from nothing, meaning the body, the biosphere, the universe.....when this something came from nothing, it was a choice. There was intelligence, a consciousness, an awareness prior to emergence, and that's expressed in the big bang. I would see the Eastern idea of awakening as being about transcendence, which is about a return to the source, of seeing through the mind and the ego to discover the self as one with emptiness. I would understand the Western awakening to be more about immanence, which means discovering one's self one's mind and body, as the vehicle through which the future arrives in the present. Humans seems to have the

novel capacity to imagine a better future and live like it's already here.

When I teach, I often ask my students to do a thought experiment. Was the "Big Bang," when something came from nothing, a "yes," a "no," or a "maybe"? It's pretty clear it wasn't a "no"

because we wouldn't be having this conversation 14 billion years later if it was. I also think sustaining an explosion for that long is enough evidence that it wasn't a "maybe." So if it was a "yes!" then WHO said yes? I find that to be an interesting contemplation along with the implications of the answer that arises.

EV: So how does this relate to Chinese medicine then and now and how has Chinese medicine evolved?

Lonny: The point I want to make here is that it is not fair to call it Chinese medicine. We may have to call it East Asian medicine. I have been told that there's some evidence that where the *Nei Jing* was actually written was in what we now call Korea.

EV: Well that makes sense in that it was a part of the Chinese empire back then.

Lonny: Right, parts of the Korean peninsula were part of China in the Han Dynasty. We also have to understand that Chinese medicine went to Vietnam and Thailand and Korea and Japan and really developed there. So there's a movement now to call it East Asian medicine. But I would make

I can say that I have seen, unequivocally, that consciousness is primary. It exists prior to matter. Consciousness exists prior to becoming.

the case that it's been in the West since around the time of Descartes, around 1650.

EV: Really?

Lonny: Sure. The Jesuits brought it back.

EV: Right, they were pretty embedded in China back then weren't they?

Lonny: Yes, and (there was) Wilhelm Leibniz, who discovered integral and differential calculus prior to Newton and wrote a text called "*monadologie*" on the first holographic theory in the West as well as discovering binary math while reading the *I Ching* with Jesuit scholars.

Basically, calculus is the mathematics of change. Binary math is the kind that all computers run on. He invented that by looking at the *I Ching*, with its solid and broken lines changing into each other. So I would make the point that what we call "Chinese medicine," which I call Chinese medicine out of respect for the founders— really is, at this point in history, a world medicine.

We live in a time where the top down view of history, where all currents of culture are running together into the same ocean. We don't have the geographical separation in space and we don't have any separation in time. You and I are talking three thousand miles away from each other. And we could have a hundred people on this conference call from every continent in the world with no problem. So I don't look at it as Chinese medicine anymore. I look at it as really a world medicine.

To get back to what we were talking about a little earlier, this idea of "freedom from" and "freedom to," what does this have to do with the practice of medicine? I would make the case that Chinese medicine is really based, historically, on an awakening to emptiness as the root and the source of the self. And when your spiritual awakening is to emptiness as the source of self then the therapeutic import of medicine is "return."

It's going back to The *Tao Te Ching* is all about return. Lao Tzu means "old infant." How do we, as adults, become a sage who emulates the best qualities of spontaneity of the infant?

EV: Of course Jesus talks about becoming an infant to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Lonny: Right. So, in that context, you're going to conceive of the elimination of stagnation in the body of the vehicle...if we recognize that the human being's body and mind are vehicles for consciousness, they're vehicles for the expression of consciousness...in the context of dis-

covering emptiness as the source and the root of self and the destination of self, then we're going to hold medically that as we eliminate stagnation in the body, reuniting its yin and yang, there will be a spiritual awakening and the person will return to the root of self, to the source of self, to recognize self as emptiness.

EV: What do you mean by "emptiness."

Lonny: By emptiness I mean what we awaken to in Zazen (seedless meditation). Because we are divided humans living in a dualistic universe it has two faces that we may term emptiness and luminosity. Perhaps what the Daoists call Wuji or the *changdao*, that "eternal" *dao* beyond the mind that language fails to describe.

EV: Of course patients are coming to you because they can't sleep or they can't digest food or things like that.

Lonny: And all those signs and symptoms a person comes in with represent the separation of yin and yang and the ultimate separation of yin and yang is forgetting who and what one is, where one comes from, why one is here, and how to live in accordance with that.

EV: So is your treatment plan something to give them relief from symptoms but also about this idea of return so that they return to the state of wholeness?

Lonny: Well you know it's very simple that you can just put a few needles in a patient in their first treatment, leave the room and come back twenty minutes later and all the stress is gone from their face, they don't know where they are, how long they've been there, whether the needles are in or out and they startle when you open the door because they don't know what you're doing in their bedroom.

In other words, they've lost the awareness of self, the awareness of time, lost sensation in the body...the body can turn to light. It's always been my contention that if one is going to have access to the inner dimension of the medicine then one has to literally awaken to that which the writers of the medicine were awakened to, which in the context of Chinese medicine means the wakening to the true self, the authentic self, as rooted in emptiness. And I would make the case that that's only half the picture, that actually, in an evolutionary context, in the context of understanding that time is not just circular.

When the texts were written time was (seen as) circular. But with the discovery of evolution time became (seen as) linear. If one views time as being strictly circular, as the Daoists and the Buddhist did, then everything is seen as going in circles. And in the context of medicine health is going to be going to be defined as being synonymous with

When I say that Chinese medicine is holistic what I mean by that is that it leaves no part of the human being behind.

transcendence, peace, and return.

But in the context of understanding evolution, which means one also identifies oneself not just as emptiness but as the explosion of coming out of emptiness, one identifies one's self as the creative impulse itself, then one will also hold the value that as *qi* is liberated, as *qi* flows in the body and yin and yang interpenetrate and come together, there's also going to be an evolutionary creative dimension and that consciousness will evolve. And I would say that the evolution of consciousness could be measured qualitatively through the evolution of values.

The more evolved a consciousness is as it expresses through an individual, the more inclusive is the definition of the self and the greater the embrace is of other as self. For me medicine has always been a vehicle for the evolution of consciousness. It has never been primarily interesting at a merely physical level.

I didn't go into Chinese medicine because I was interested in making people's sciatica and headaches better. I went into it because, practically speaking, it was my consideration that the five element system in Taoism generally – because it holds an ecological perspective, a cosmological perspective – was the perfect medicine to help heal a broken planet and help instill holistic world-centric values into the culture through the administration of the medicine.

EV: And is that the level that you are able to use in your practice or get to with your patients?

Lonny: I work with patients on every level. When I say that Chinese medicine is holistic what I mean by that is that it leaves no part of the human being behind. And in order for me to access healing in every dimension of my patient I need to have access to every dimension of the self. Which means I have to have an authentic living relationship to emptiness as the ground of my own being, and the creative impulse arising out of emptiness as the driving motivating force of conscious evolution. And I have to have a living relationship to my own soul and I have to understand what it takes to disentangle my own self from conditioning and to transcend that conditioning.

As a practitioner, when I learn what it takes to live up to my own awakening and my own realizations with integrity then I can have compassion for my patients and also have no doubt about their own capacity to do it.

I really strive to live a life with such an integrity, an uncommon level of integrity, a radical integrity, that my patients will find it inspiring even prior to speech, even prior to needles and herbs. I want to be the kind of practitioner that my mere presence will destroy their cynicism.

I want the patient's experience of me to be such that their own cynicism about their own capacity to develop is undermined.

EV: I have this vision of you being such a high level healer that the patients themselves have to be open to working on a high, deep level of healing.

Lonny: Well people come with issues and problems from the mundane to the sublime. I have a reputation now because I have been in practice for thirty years and people know about me and some people come just for the medicine and some people come because they want to do the inner work.

We often hear this sort of humanistic psychological concept of "meeting the patient where they are." But what I endeavor to do is discern "where the patient is"

and always call them a little more forward than they're comfortable going. So there's always a bit of "evolutionary tension." And it's that "evolutionary tension" that activates *qi*!

EV: That must be nice for you too. You are able to meet people at that

level.

Lonny: It's thrilling.

EV: For most people in the West when you say "Chinese medicine" they think acupuncture or maybe that there's some herbs involved. In ancient or Classical Chinese medicine there were things like feng shui, astrology, meditation and qigong type of practices that were also involved, right?

Lonny: It depends on how you want to use the term. The *Nei Jing* and *Nan Jing* don't go into qigong. There were some books that focused explicitly on *feng shui* and some on martial arts and some that were cultivation texts. I've always made the case in my own writing and teaching that the cultivation texts were medical texts.

I've always (enjoyed) the writing of Liu Ming, who is one of my favorite authors. He was a physician, an ophthalmologist I believe, and he really gave us a top down view about Daoism in about 1810. He really looked at the deep tradition and put it out in relatively plain language.

I've always made the case that books like that and the *Bao Pu Tzu*, that these cultivation and spiritual texts are really medical texts. They're really using all the same language—jing, qi shen; ling, hun, po.

EV: So when you say medical texts, do you mean in addition to being cultivation texts?

*I think that the purpose of cultivation is
to make the mind and the body fit
vehicles for the transmission of light—
consciousness as light—into the world.*

Lonny: Well cultivation *is* medicine.

EV: Well if you are using the term medicine as a Native American would use it in the way that anything can be medicine—any kind of experience or plant or animal or relationship.

Lonny: Yes, I agree and I think that the purpose of cultivation is to make the mind and the body fit vehicles for the transmission of light—consciousness as light—into the world. And my understanding is that it's my responsibility to cultivate an authentic relationship to that light. Then, to the degree that I as a practitioner have a relationship to that light of consciousness, then I can look at my patient and I will recognize that all the pathologies that we name in Chinese medicine and all of the syndrome patterns and all of the stagnations of wind, cold, heat damp, stagnation of blood... all these are metaphors for "dust on the mirror." In other words, ways in which light is prevented from coming through the vehicle and into the world.

And I consider that we are using medicine, from the deepest standpoint, to untie these existing existential knots in the root of self so that the mind and the body can be a more fit vehicle for the transmission of light. I expect that over the time that a patient is coming to see me that they will have correspondingly more ease, which means more of an experience of emptiness within themselves, which will mean they have relatively been less identified with the contents of the mind and the body as self. These contents of the mind and body, which are thought, feeling, emotion and sensation are now contextualized in an infinitely bigger sphere of understanding the self as emptiness. The self that had been the *subject* has become an *object* in their awareness.....and what you can see you can operate on.....you can change.

I also expect the patient to have more passion, more creativity and to have a wider embrace of "other" as "self." So there's more ease, showing alignment with emptiness and more passion, which is the evolutionary or creative impulse coming out of emptiness; the entire universe as a collective emergence and the more perspectives we have on it the better.

EV: You have a private practice in Massachusetts and then you travel and teach as well?

Lonny: Yes I teach Chinese medicine all over North America. I've taught a fair amount in Europe, in both Germany and England. I teach about 22 weekends a year. I teach a two-year Clinical Integration class at my office,

which is six weekends a year for two years. Then I travel about 8-10 weekends a year.

EV: The book you are most well known through is *Nourishing Destiny*. Do have other books out besides that?

Lonny: I followed that with a book called *The Clinical Practice of Chinese Medicine*, which is about 830 pages.

EV: Wow, I thought *Nourishing Destiny* was quite a volume.

Lonny: Yes, well *Nourishing Density* was about a core value system. What I did with *Nourishing Destiny* is I went back through Chinese history to understand the historical and textual basis for what I was thinking about what I was doing in the treatment room. *Nourishing Destiny* really conveys a value system and *the Clinical Practice of Chinese Medicine* is how that value system is realized practically, in the treatment room, with acupuncture, herbs, and language.

It is the first book really outlining J.R. Worsley's entire tradition. Part of the book is doing that...literally going through his entire tradition and explicating it. I also give every name for every

acupuncture point from the texts, so some of the points have 12, 13, 14 names. I also give all the etymology of all the characters, how the points map the cosmology on the body, the creation myths and the first use of those characters in history.

EV: That must have been a fascinating book to do but really a lot of work!

Lonny: Yes, I look at it and I can't even relate to the fact that I've done it! I look at both of those books and I think, "yes, I guess I wrote these." But the first book took fifteen years and the second one took six and I'm currently ten years now into the third.

EV: To end, I want to ask you the question of what you think the future of Chinese or East Asian medicine will be in the West.

Lonny: Well, I don't know what it's going to be. I know what it *could* be. I would say that East Asian medicine has the potential to be the leading integral medicine on the planet. And I would say that for Chinese medicine right now in the West, it's the best of times and it's the worst of times.

When I first started studying Chinese medicine in 1980, *The Web that Has No Weaver* had not been published, Porkert's books had not been published. There was basi-

I would say that East Asian medicine has the potential to be the leading integral medicine on the planet.

cally nothing. There were just some very simple-minded, popular textbooks. And now we have, thanks to Paul Unschuld, the *Nei Jing*, the *Nan Jing* and *Ling Shu*. That's like the holy trinity of Chinese medicine. So now we have definitive, excellent quality works as well as hundreds of other good books.

And we have several handfuls of really excellent, beautiful, authoritative books that speak to practicing the medicine in a Western culture in this particular time of history. We have many different traditions of Chinese medicine being practiced. We have the Five Element School, several Japanese traditions, Korean traditions, and Chinese traditions. We have Jeffrey Yuen's tradition. We have teachers like myself, Elizabeth Roach, Jeffery Yuen, Heiner Fruehauf, Zev Rosenberg, Sharon Weizenbaum—brilliant scholars who are working and writing and teaching. In that sense it's the best of times.

We also have the ability now to communicate with each other so Heiner and I can teach together. Z'ev Rosenberg and I will be teaching in a five-day retreat together at Eastover Retreat Center in Western Massachusetts. It's very, very exciting to be able to collaborate with people all over the world.

The downside is that many of the schools are being bought by corporations. Chinese medicine is finally being seen as profitable. The schools are being forced to teach to a test that just has no relevance for certifying practitioners. The profession is being standardized and split off into specialties.

Everyone's concerned with "integrative medicine," with getting jobs in hospitals and medical clinics. There's far too much Western biomedicine being taught, all under the auspices of getting the title "doctor" and being able to bill insurance. What's good for the *profession* is not necessarily good for the *medicine*. As occurred in Marxist China we're seeing a standardization of the medicine according to cultural values that have nothing whatsoever to do with the values that are inherent within it. The schools are charging \$80-100,000 dollars for an education now.

EV: Interesting. So the standardization of Chinese medicine that the communists did is now being followed by a whole other level of standardization.

Lonny: It's a whole other level of standardization. Everyone talks about "integrative medicine" but what's happening is that "integrative" is a code word for "assimilation." Schools are charging students \$80-100,00 for an education but they are not teaching them the Chinese language, how to read and critique the Chinese classics, pulse diagnosis, or how to cultivate—they are failing to put people on a real path to mastery and the profession suffers for this.

What happened is that the people in this country who first learned TCM thought it was "real" Chinese medicine. They wrote tests and founded organizations to protect their own schools and economic interests and TCM is being incorporated, as a standard of care here, and it's just

very empty and very superficial.

EV: A lot of what they are doing is translating Chinese medicine into Western terms so that people can relate it to simple things like pain relief.

Lonny: Well what's worse than that is getting insurance reimbursement and having to tailor one's treatments to CPT codes. Having to tailor your whole treatment in having to put three needles with three different insertions for the course of the treatment with some made-up treatment plan to treat a physical symptom so that some bean counter in an insurance company will reimburse you maximally for it. This as opposed to actually designing a holistic treatment that addresses the root of the issue and is best for your patient.

Not to mention that the physical symptom is only the outmost superficial dimension of what it is you're actually treating. So it forces you to be dishonest about your treatment plan, compromise your scope of practice and lie about why you're actually doing what you're doing.

EV: I think you did begin to touch on where you would like East Asian medicine to be going.

Lonny: The schools are now giving out Doctorate degrees in "integrative medicine." They have nothing to do with Chinese medicine; students learn how to control and design studies and how to run insurance based clinics, how to interact with hospital staff, etc..

What I would like to see is that when people are going into a Chinese medicine school they should learn to read the language, critique the classic texts, learn pulse diagnosis, learn to write detailed case studies; learn to practice medicine in a way that's going to set a foundation for a lifetime of clinical depth.

My main critique is that, for most of the people, even many scholars that I'm aware of, the heart and soul of the medicine seems to be remain significantly abstract. And I think we really need schools that demand that the graduates have a non-abstract relationship to the medicine based on authentic cultivation; more so than merely learning from memorization, although that would certainly be a component of it.

Lonny Jarrett, Has been practicing Chinese Medicine in Stockbridge, Massachusetts since 1986. He is a founding board member of the Ac. Soc. Of Mass. and a Fellow of the National Academy of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. Lonny is author of Nourishing Destiny: The Inner Tradition of Chinese Medicine and, The Clinical Practice of Chinese Medicine. He holds a master's degree in neurobiology and a fourth-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do. He was recently featured in the text, The Great Work of Your Life: A Guide for the Journey to Your True Calling by best selling author Stephen Cope. Lonny hosts NourishingDestiny.com, an online community for 3000 practitioners of Chinese medicine world wide. His teaching schedule is at: www.chinesemedicine.courses

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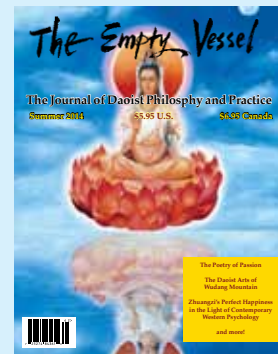
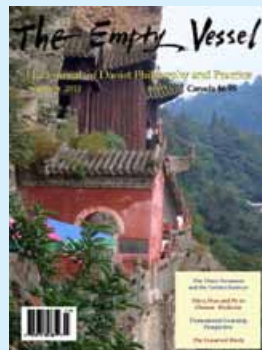
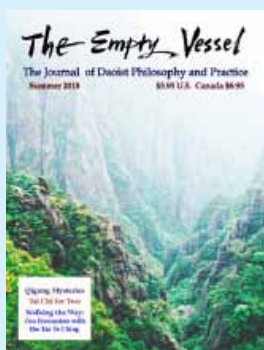
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The Five Shen

David Twicken

photos by Cher Mikkola



Methods that connect a person to their heart shen can provide the opportunity to realize knowledge, inspiration, wisdom and guidance regarding their spirit. Attuning to the heart shen can bring direct experience of spirit and the inseparable nature of the universe. This unity exists for all people.

In Chinese culture, living from this awareness is called Wu Wei, which can be translated as “nothing extra.” It is sometimes translated as “no-thing.”

“Nothing extra” means that we add no extra opinions, thoughts, beliefs and preconceived ideas to our direct experience of our essential nature (spirit).

To live in the Tao is to live from our spirit, and the way to do this is by living in Wu Wei.

From an acupuncture pathway viewpoint, the Chong and kidney pathways connect the kidneys and the heart. The kidneys house Jing and the heart houses the Shen; this unity is called Jing-Shen. The channel flow reveals that there is a circuit of channels that form a pathway to the heart shen. This pathway to the heart shen can be accessed at any time. As healthcare practitioners, we can assist in helping our patients realize their Shen (self-realization) by treating this channel pathway.

The Shen includes the small intestine and heart’s innate

quality of living a natural life. The experiences of this fire system can include experiencing the unity of life, which can be a transcendental experience. With time this awareness of the unity of life becomes normal and part of everyday life.

Stagnation, blockages and repression of this aspect of life can manifest in intense outward expressions, which can be physical or emotional. For example, yelling, screaming, punching or emotional outbursts can occur at any time, reflecting the volatile and explosive nature of fire.

The heart opens to the tongue. Shen imbalances can manifest in the way one speaks. The imbalance can include too much talking or the inability to express oneself clearly. A disconnect from spirit can occur, which can lead to a loss of passion for life. This type of separation can lead to bitterness (the taste and quality of the heart).

Connecting to our heart shen is a primary experience in many spiritual traditions. As practitioners of the healing arts, assisting others in making this connection or realization is one of the most powerful and life-changing experiences for both the practitioner and the patient.

The kidneys (zhi)

The kidneys house the zhi shen, which corresponds to jing and genetics. Ancestral medicine is one of the oldest sources of medicine in China. It originates in the Shang dynasty. During this time the Chinese viewed the living and the deceased as existing simultaneously; most importantly, they influence each other. (A modern interpretation of this influence is genetics.)

It can also include the culture, religion and beliefs of family, caretakers and those with an influence during early life. Transcending any unfavorable effects of those influences is essential to living a fulfilling life. If they are not transcended, they can lead to increased stagnation and rigidity. They can freeze a person.

Zhi relates to willpower. It includes the will and power to follow one's destiny. The kidneys loathe cold, which can freeze water and change its essential nature of adaptability and flexibility. The kidney channel flows up the front of the body to the chest through the heart area. This pathway is one example of zhi seeking shen. It is a built-in energetic system in each person. If there is a freezing or rigidity due to conditioning, we may not be able to have a full life. The freezing can change the flowing and adaptive nature of each person, blocking awareness of his or her Shen.

A goal in life should be to allow expression of the issues related to the freezing of the zhi. Expression allows for freeing up stagnations and blockages. For example, if a person wanted to be an artist but did not pursue it, a part of them is suppressed or repressed. The suppression can lead to a deep polarity. If a person pursues artistic activities, it allows important qualities of the person to be experienced, allowing a free flow of energy. The expression is a type of letting go. Letting go can create a space (awareness) which can be a place of change and transformation. Chapter 11 of the *Tao Teh Ching* expresses this subtle truth:

Thirty spokes together make a wheel for a cart. It is the empty space in the center of the wheel which enables it to be used.

Mold clay in a vessel. It is the emptiness within that creates the usefulness of the vessel.

Cut out doors and windows in a house. It is the empty space

inside that creates the usefulness of the house.

Thus, what we have may be something substantial, But its usefulness lies in the unoccupied, empty space.

The substance of your body is enlivened by maintaining the part of you that is unoccupied. 1

The empty space in us is created when we let go of stagnations and blockages, allowing us to focus (mindfulness) on our present-awareness. This awareness is the empty space described in Chapter 11 of the *Tao Teh Ching*. The empty space is a way of describing the most essential part of every person. The Chinese call this empty space Shen. Awareness of this empty space is Shen realization.

The zhi and jing represent unlimited possibilities. In Chinese philosophy, we call this "chaos" or Wu Ji, which is a state or qi field where anything is possible. And it is awareness or an openness that allows anything to manifest. No limits are placed on it. This space is inside each person. When we live from this space there is no freezing or rigidity placed on the kidneys, jing and the zhi (the organ, substance and shen). If our ancestral influences (genes) or our family postnatal influences freeze or block our ability to be open to all possibilities, our kidneys and zhi will be unfavorably affected, which will require freeing these blockages. Treatment and cultivation to allow expression of this aspect of life can enable a person to live from their Shen.

The kidneys open to the ears. Zhi imbalances can manifest in hearing conditions, not only diminished hearing, but also not hearing or understanding what others are saying.

The liver (hun)

The liver houses the hun, which corresponds to the ethereal shen. The hun relates to the collective consciousness. It is the "we" aspect of consciousness or awareness. A person with a wood/hun imbalance can be driven by the need to be active in working with others for the benefit of the community, society or the collective; the person is compensating for a lack of this area in their life. This activity or expression can include putting oneself in situations that allow concerns for others to manifest, which helps raise awareness of this situation and the opportunity to learn about it and grow.

If a person has been in an environment that blocks this expression, they may act in a way that is contrary to their desired behavior (the person is not able to live in a natural way; a suppressed or repressed blockage is preventing this expression). This might be acting in a selfish way, which is the opposite of unity and community. A treatment plan for this person would be to unblock the areas of stagnation to allow expression related to the hun.

Balance is key in Chinese medicine. Our Shen temperament needs to be balanced. If one's expression is extreme, it is not balanced and can lead to pathological patterns. If hun qualities are expressed to an extreme, one can be too attached to the collective and other people, to the cost of one's own health and well-being. In a way, a person may be rejecting their life and taking on the extreme wood nature of rising and flying away, which can be an escape from their body or their life. Balanced activity is a key to creating an environment for personal development.

The liver and hun relate to planning and thinking of the future and how to achieve goals. If there is an extreme or imbalanced quality within these aspects of a person, we can consider





it a hun imbalance and condition. We can develop a treatment plan to clear the blockages in the channels and the organs and let a normal flow of energy through the liver and the entire body. This normal flow of qi, which includes the psycho-emotional condition, contributes to restoring balance.

The liver opens to the eyes. Hun imbalances can manifest in seeing problems, diminished eyesight or lack of perception. This can be a lack of insight or inner seeing, not just physical vision.

The lungs (po)

The lungs house the po, which corresponds to the corporeal shen. The po relates to the physical body. The correspondences include the senses, desires and pleasure. Imbalances in the po can manifest as over-attachments to those areas of life. The po can be expressed as selfishness. It's the "me, me, me" aspect of self. Selfishness and greediness can be part of a po disharmony.

The large intestine is the only primary channel that crosses the midline of the body. Some refer to it as the channel of polarity. A polarized po is a common condition in modern society. Loneliness is a common condition of the imbalanced po. Part of

this comes from its ability to polarize itself, causing separation from others, society and life itself.

Out of this polarity, isolation, separation and an intensified loneliness can occur. These imbalanced experiences and emotions can prompt a response to the polarization, which can initiate change. Loneliness and unhappiness can lead a person to seek another way to live and experience life; the driving force is the body's innate intelligence to seek balance. The practitioner can develop a treatment plan to release the intensities of an imbalanced po. The treatment can include a Luo Mai treatment to release the emotions, and a divergent channel treatment on the lungs and large intestine channels can assist in the release.

The lungs are connected to the nose. Breathing is a key to bringing the po into the present moment, freeing one from the polarity of the po. There is no polarity or separation in the present moment. Polarity only occurs in thoughts of the past or the future. Polarity creates separation, isolation and loneliness. Breathing practices, including qi gong and tai chi chuan, are traditional ways to regulate the breath, calm the po and promote balance.

The spleen (yi)

The spleen houses the yi shen. The yi corresponds to intellect, thoughts, concepts, ideas and beliefs. The element of the spleen is earth. Grounding, organizing and digestion are qualities of the earth, the spleen and the stomach. The spleen corresponds to the mouth, which processes food and drink and transforms them into nutritive substances. The condition of the spleen and the stomach directly influences that transformation process.

Transforming food and drink is the physical transformation. The earth organs, the spleen and stomach, are also involved in the psycho-emotional transformation process. Similar to how food and drink go into the mouth to be processed and transformed, all experiences in life are processed by the yi. The yi processes our life experiences; it organizes, categorizes, filters and makes sense of experiences. In the same way that the condition of the spleen and the stomach determines the quality of the nutrition processed from digesting food, the condition of the yi is instrumental in the processing of our experiences in life, as well as our emotional well-being.

The condition of our yi, which includes the way we perceive, experience and process life, influences the hun, po, zhi and shen. The yi includes our thinking and opinions about people and life. If the yi is in an imbalanced or unhealthy state, all the five shen and their correspondences are influenced.

The yi, as the transformer, processes our experiences. The yi includes the intellect and thoughts. When these qualities are over-developed, the other aspects of our body, mind and spirit become imbalanced. When the yi is imbalanced, we become rigid and narrow and respond to life in a conditioned way. We often respond to life based on our past experiences. However, often the past understanding is rooted in fear, anger, misconceptions and prejudice; these influences create a conditioned response.

The yi is susceptible to fixed, rigid and repetitive patterns and reactions based on past experiences. One reason is that the spleen, and therefore the yi, has a function of holding. The spleen holds blood in the vessels; the yi holds as well. It holds emotions and thoughts in the mind and in the blood.

This holding function explains how the yi holds onto experiences and how we can live in these held experiences; this is living in the past.

The yi includes mindfulness. What we place attention on and retain in our mind is mindfulness. The yi can be overwhelmed by experiences, especially when we are at a young age and not capable of dealing with them. The yi can go into survival mode and create patterns of behavior that can become constitutional—reactive ways of responding to life. These imprints need to be understood so that we can be released from their influence. When we do that we can be open to the spontaneity of life. Becoming open to life as it is, not what it should be, not what it must be and not as we desire it to be, allows us to live from our Shen. Living from our Shen allows us to live in the present moment and in a spontaneous way.

The yi can be imbalanced when one is too attached to thoughts and emotions. A person can become trapped in them. Then they are living in past experiences. They can also be worrying about the future; in this case they are living in the future. A person will tend to suffer from repetitive and obsessive thoughts and thinking due to the inability to let go. Not being

able to let go prevents one from living in the present moment. Feelings can be viewed as normal, natural aspects of life. And they are spontaneous. An imbalanced yi can try to hold onto these feelings, trying to artificially retain something that should be experienced and allowed to leave, like the way the sun and the moon flow through endless cycles of waxing and waning. This *trying* creates a separation that blocks us from fully experiencing the present moment.

The imbalanced yi will hold and maintain past experiences, keeping them alive by continual thinking. Viewing these feelings as *wei* or superficial energetics is Yang. This energetic quality includes the natural flow of appearing and leaving. To keep these feelings alive takes Yin, which has the quality to store and maintain. The spleen and the yi's Yin quality is blood. Through continual thinking about feelings or experiences, the spleen's energetics transform them into emotions, which are then stored in the blood. This process illustrates how we keep emotions alive. What we hold is not the real experience, it is a thought or memory. This holding process becomes part of conditioning and eventually it can become part of the constitution. It can lead to the inability to live in a spontaneous way.

The yi corresponds to earth, which has the qualities of being rooted and grounded. The yi also includes the stomach and spleen's innate quality of being grounded in one's thoughts. Being stuck in one's thoughts can prevent a person from being open to new viewpoints, understandings, choices and actions. This stagnation prevents us from letting go of the past, preventing the ability to experience life in a spontaneous way. Dampness and phlegm can manifest from these stagnations, creating blockages and a rigidity against seeing new things in life. Damp and phlegm can be viewed as the physical manifestation of concepts and thoughts that slow us down and stagnate us.

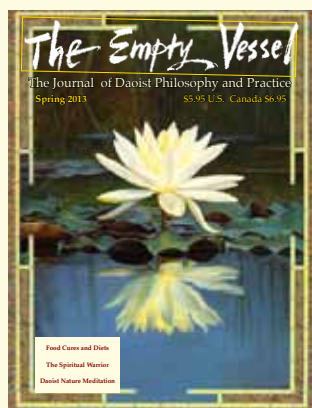
The spleen opens to the mouth. Yi imbalances can manifest in eating disorders because imbalances of the spleen/stomach and the yi/mouth can be expressed in the mouth and eating. In my experience, the yi is the main cause of emotional conditions.

1. Ni, H.C. (1979) *The Complete Works of Lao Tzu*. Chapter 11. Malkiby, CA; The Shrine of the Eternal Breath of Tao.

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