

Daoist Internal Alchemy: A Deep Language for Communicating with Nature's Intelligence

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When qi returns, Elixir spontaneously crystallizes
in the cauldron pairing water and fire.
Ying and yang arise, alternating endlessly,
the sound of thunder everywhere.
White clouds gather on the summit,
Sweet dew bathes the polar mountain.
Having drunk the wine of long life,
You wander freely; who can know you?
You sit and listen to the stringless tune,
You clearly grasp the mechanism of creation.

-Hundred Character Tablet of Ancestor Lu Dongbin (1)

Daoist internal alchemy is one of the most difficult aspects of Daoism for westerners to penetrate. This is partly because few Chinese themselves can grasp its essence. The alchemical literature is fascinating but maddeningly obscure. It wears two masks simultaneously, one promising mystical illumination and immortality, the other promising

a spiritual science, a systematic approach to bridge the dark gulf between a fragile human mind in a mortal body and the vast eternal life of the cosmos. My thesis will necessarily wear both of these masks, veering between intimate accounts of my experience with alchemy and my attempt to find an objective ground for understanding daoist alchemy as a deep language available to anyone willing to learn to speak its silent patterns.

May the Dao Immortals smile within the hearts of all who read this.

Alchemy Formulas, Qi Field & Language Theory

When I was first initiated into daoist qigong and internal alchemy (nei dan) practice twenty years ago, I began having exciting and profound experiences. Mysterious hidden inner worlds were suddenly revealed to me. The interior dimensions of my body became a vast playground that I had somehow overlooked in my previous spiritual explorations. As I progressed through "Seven Alchemical Formulas for Attaining Immortality", I gradually came to recognize the nei dan formulas themselves reveal a deep language by which Nature communicates with the different dimensions of its own intelligence. This universal field of intelligence in alchemical terms is the mind of the Dao. Physical nature would be the body of the Dao.

These seven formulas were transmitted to my first daoist teacher Mantak Chia by One Cloud, a daoist monk who searched with limited success in various monasteries for thirty years for the secrets of internal alchemy. An abbot finally told him to "go into the mountains to find a teacher". On Long White Mountain in northern China near Manchuria One Cloud met another daoist who had left his monastery, and who HAD found a true teacher of internal alchemy. He transmitted to One Cloud these nei dan formulas. One Cloud practiced these methods and entered into the breatharian state (bigu) for some years, meaning he fed his body on qi alone. (2)

During the Japanese invasion One Cloud left his mountain, and migrated on foot to the mountains behind Hong Kong. He healed local people and taught neidan to a few students. He was a simple man who constantly smiled; his only complaint was that eating some bad food after he came down the mountain would cause his early death. He died at age 96 in the 1970's. His formulas resonate with writings attributed to Lu Dongbin, one of the semi-legendary "Eight Immortals", around which the "Zhong-Lu" neidan tradition first flourished in the 10 and 11th centuries. Some of his formulas also resemble the teachings on nei dan of the Complete Perfection (Quanzhen) tradition. Historically, it is not clear if the practice of internal alchemy adopted by temple schools of daoism like Quanzhen originally came from scattered "mountain dao" practitioners like One Cloud's teacher. One Cloud told Chia that he had "given him the best from all his teachers". The seven formulas by title and brief summary of their practice are found in appendix A.

Today in China there are thousands of qigong forms and many different neigong and nei dan systems of internal mind training. At first this is bewildering, as if it were a spiritual labyrinth with too many paths. But now, looking back after 20 years, it is easy to see all methods as expression of a single common deep energetic language. Whether the life force, qi, is moved using body language or is shaped by the intention or

imagination of a particular aspect of mind/spirit (shen), it is still the same language of qi. Just as one can produce many different word combinations in English, all comprehensible because of a common grammar and vocabulary, so one can create many qigong and neigong forms, each movement pattern having a unique effect on the body-mind's qi field.

Nei dan ("inner elixir") is a special class of neigong ("inner skill") that trains one to "speak" the deep language that silently pulses through the medium of a universal qi field. One of the meanings of the chinese character for "Dao" is "to speak, to tell". (3) Hence in the famous first line of the Dao dejing (Tao Te Ching), "The Dao that can be spoken is not the true Dao", the word "spoken" is the same character as that used for "Dao". The line could even be translated, "The speaking that is spoken is not the true speaking". So the idea that the Dao exists as an unspoken, or silent language, is emphasized in the very first line of this classic.

Linguists generally agree there must exist a "deep language" structure that allows every child born to speak "natural languages" such as English or Chinese, or to create "formal languages" such as computer programs or symbol languages such as the I Ching or mathematics. Noam Chomsky posits a "universal grammar" that is deeper even than the "transformational grammar" he thinks underlies each natural spoken language. But no linguist has been able to describe the structure of this deep language other than to say that it is what defines intelligence itself, and all power of thinking and organized perception. Some linguists admit this deep language may best be explored by religion.(4)

Neurobiologists, unable to locate a deep language structure in the brain, have theorized that memory and intelligence are held in some kind of holographic field. Physicists like David Bohm, Erwin Lazlo and Mae Wan Ho posit a holographic quantum field filled with self-creating organisms that communicate via energy fields with a super-conscious universal organism. (5) This organic quantum field theory (not accepted by most physicists, who view space/time as mechanistic) bears some similarity to ancient daoist alchemical ideas. One major difference is the daoist ideas have gone through several millennia of practical testing and application to the evolution of humans.

My thesis is that a deep language ability is stored in the qi field, and that One Cloud's nei dan formulas are a good example of how it is possible to train oneself to directly perceive and communicate with Nature's intelligence in a mostly non-verbal and non-ordinary language. Daoist alchemy allows us to approach closely the Mystery of our Inner Voice. Whether we hear these voices inside our head as audible voices or as silent thoughts, or instinctual feelings from our gut, who is speaking to us? Alchemy answers the question: where do intuition and inner guidance arise from? By learning the alchemical process of communicating through resonance with different dimensions of the qi field, we can systematically get in touch with the origin of those voices.

I define qigong ("skill with energy") as a natural body language arising to the "surface" from neigong's deeper grammar of qi patterns. (6) Practicing qigong (in which I include taiji, bagua, and xingyi internal arts) is like learning the strokes of the qi alphabet and their "meaning" or expression in physical reality. By calming the mind, regulating the breath, and moving one's body in particular patterns, the qi field governing the

meridians and energetic centers of the physical body is activated and "speaks back" to one initially as different feelings of energy. Qigong and neigong are not something that one "does" in the ordinary sense of action; rather they are methods of shaping how one communicates. The shape of the qi patterns being communicated then shape one's reality.

The qi field is the field of all possible relationships. Every relationship involves communication; communication requires a language, and as Ludwig Wittgenstein demonstrated in his famed treatise on "private language"-- every language by definition is public and accessible. The seven neidan formulas I learned give a coherent public structure and sequence to a human language process for speaking with and listening to the deepest levels of Nature's intelligence. I believe alchemy is a process of learning to speak with this universal intelligence using the entirety of one's personal being -- body, qi, and spirit fused into one.

Personal Account - Learning the Language of Alchemy

It may be useful to note alchemy was not my first spiritual path. I had previously spent four years of 4-8 hours of intensive daily practice of tantric yoga and kundalini meditation. I briefly describe these tantric experiences as they offer an interesting contrast with the effect of daoist neidan, and offer a window into how different spiritual practices shape what is communicated to and from humans through the qi field of nature.

The tantric practices were designed to raise the kundalini by activating the "ojas", an essence perhaps equivalent to daoist term "jing". This yoga focused almost exclusively on using breath, asana (postures) and mantras to move energy thru my spine and out the crown of my head, beyond my my physical body into some unknown Higher and hopefully Ultimate Self. Rigorous daily practice put me into a state of near hallucinogenic ecstasy. But I was not on drugs. I was celibate, yet could feel my testicles pulsing continuously with a sexual, electrical like energy up my spine, day and night, with my pineal & pituitary glands pulsing on the other end. I would exit my "cave" (apartment) and walk around the streets of New York feeling I was ten foot tall, looking down on everything, as if floating above my body. But I noticed that as my head got more expanded, my body grew weaker. I was less able to stand the cold, one reason I grew curious about the more body centered daoist approach. I was also attracted to the language of the daoists, poetic and mystical yet embodying truth with scientific precision.

When I started practicing daoist qigong and nei dan, the energy field shifted deeper inside my body. I got grounded, less spacy, and my body grew strong again. Rather than looking down from above my head, and I felt myself deep inside my body looking out. As I began learning the first formulas, my vital organs began pulsing with new life, currents of energy began flowing in different meridians and in my limbs. Buried emotional patterns I thought were long gone surfaced and released. This opened up more space inside my body. Later there was a progression of strange symbols and images - cauldrons floated deep within the inner spaces of my body, bagua shapes

made of light suddenly flashed. I felt sexual-like orgasms in different vital organs, and once my spine ecstatically dissolved, as if some invisible being were making love inside my body.

I had entered some new mythopoeic world, seemingly crafted with amazing elegance and subtlety in advance of my arrival into it. It was a unique feeling of satisfaction, like I had been allowed a glimpse inside my real body. These experiences arose from practicing only the second alchemy formula of "Lesser Water and Fire", long before I understood anything about original qi or communication with deeper levels of Nature's qi field. Later, I came to recognize the progressive levels of "emptiness" in the cauldrons used in each formula were actually "filled" with this elusive original qi; that "sitting in forgetfulness" was actually remembering my original energy. At this time I was still at a low level, but didn't know it and didn't care. I felt I was going home, and was willing to start over completely to get to the heart of the Dao.

Oddly, shifting from tantra to daoist alchemy reminded me of my experiences in learning new foreign languages, which I did often in the course of travelling to 90 countries over my lifetime. I had immersed myself in Russian language and travel in college, taught myself French living on the Riviera after graduation, and learned Amharic (Ethiopian) and enough Arabic to get by while working as a free lance war correspondent in Africa. Learning each language had given me the thrill of being able to communicate with a secret set of sound-symbols unknown to non-initiates of that language. Each language unlocked a new culture. When local people heard me speak in their tongue, their hearts opened. I was recognized as belonging to their world and invited inside their lives and homes. Each culture was a private microcosm, holding its own intimate conversation within the macrocosm of a planet with billions of people chattering away in thousands of different dialects and tongues. (7)

As I was inexorably drawn deeper into daoist alchemy, each succeeding alchemical formula resembled gaining fluency in an exotic foreign language. When first learning a formula I would feel awkward, like I didn't know how to get around or ask for anything. I would gradually get comfortable "speaking" through a new subtle qi channel or "talking" with the local qi field of a vital organ, a mountain, the ocean, or the sun using the language of resonance. As each formula gave me confidence to communicate with a new aspect of the collective mind reasonably well, I got invited into a deeper and more intimate level dialog with "Nature". This meant learning to listen to both self-nature (microcosmos) and environment-nature (macrocosmos). Where was this conversation going? It felt like I was entering a series of rooms or nested cauldrons within myself, leading into some unseen inner sanctum.

Learning to speak in the deep language of each formula meant learning to shape my personal qi field into a recognizable alphabet of energy patterns within myself that matched some invisible inner faculty of intelligence in Nature. The repeated alchemical cookings of the main "ingredients" - body-mind-spirit-emptiness (jing-qi-shen-wu) - were octaves of the same inner conversation, taken a little deeper in each formula. The increasingly subtle nature of nei dan's deep language made the stream of thoughts chattering within my mind seem increasingly secondary.

Is Chinese Language Essential to Learning Alchemy?

At one point a crisis was ignited within me: did I need to learn Chinese in order to truly plumb the depths of daoist alchemy? Was this alchemical world of transmuting elements and pulsating currents of energy, at its deepest levels, an exclusive club for the Chinese speaking, as some Chinese claim? Was daoist alchemy a product of Chinese culture? Or was it the other way around, that Chinese language and culture were somehow shaped by an alchemical process imbedded within the deep language of Nature? I chose to spend my time practicing alchemy rather than learning classical Chinese; better to rely on scholars fully dedicated to translation. But would it lessen my mastery of alchemy?

I learned enough Chinese to see their pictographs are visually richer in association than western alphabets and thus facilitate grasping the multiple meanings of obscure daoist terms. But they are still intermediary written images, interpreted by the mind's visual functions, and don't by themselves open communication with the deep language patterns underlying them. If speaking Chinese did this automatically, everyone in China would be enlightened. Alchemy also uses an intermediary language, but it is mostly not spoken nor written. This language consists of qi channels in the body and in nature, resonating spheres of sensation, feeling, and perceived spiritual qualities. It requires observation of natural processes within one's body and in physical nature, and sometimes employs these natural images as language symbols. Together these evoke and shape silent language patterns within an omnipresent qi field. The written symbols of the I Ching are used by many adepts as a concise shorthand for describing alchemical processes, but it is not necessary to study the I Ching to practice the seven formulas of One Cloud.

A separate, but related question: is Chinese a sacred or initiatic language, with its four tonal inflections suggesting a resonance to the four elements (fire, water, metal, wood) and the central fifth element earth, the tone or voice of the speaker giving it mind intent (yi)? Speaking such an initiatic language in Five Phase (wu xing) tones might in ancient times have been viewed as a way to shape shift the local qi field or energetically manage the forces of human culture. For nei dan initiates speech can be a shortcut to activating directional qi flow or summoning ancestral spirits. But could not English be used for such a purpose if imbued with correct intent?

Biology is a factor in language, both spoken and deep. A fascinating study suggests one's spoken language may control brain hemisphere dominance. This study, conducted in Japan, showed that Japanese speakers processed vowel sounds and intuitive feelings in their left brain, the opposite of westerners. But westerners raised from an early age with Japanese language shifted to left brain intuition. (8) This raises the question whether Chinese speaking nei dan adepts might also have a different pattern of resonance with nature than westerners, reflected in the dominant qualities they resonate with, i.e. sun vs. moon, water vs. fire. Daoism is described as the "watercourse way". Daoist cultures appear more intuitive than western culture, which may facilitate introspection and sensing inner body space. This may be an example of how one's surface language biologically "wires" one into the deep language.

I finally concluded that the only language I needed to learn daoist alchemy would arise spontaneously through my heartfelt and sincere meditation practice of the seven alchemical formulas of Immortality. Due to the organized teaching of One Cloud's formulas in the west since 1981, many tens of thousands of non chinese speaking westerners have learned to practice some part of these nei dan formulas, perhaps more than are practicing similar meditations in China (due to communist policies). This is not to imply that One Cloud's nei dan formulas are the definitive description of Nature's deep language. To the contrary, I see the numerous expressions of nei dan in China, which often vary from mountain to mountain, as different formulations of the same deep language. Each may use different meditation methods, or vary in the use of language, myth, deities or images. But they all seem to share a common underlying deep grammar of a jing-qi-shen-wu (essence-energy-spirit-emptiness) continuum on a pulsating yin-yang-yuan (negative-positive-neutral) energy grid extending to five cardinal sacred directions or spiritual qualities.

Computer Language vs. Alchemical Language

How does the language of alchemical patterns, structured as a series of formulas or evolutionary stages, allow one to communicate with Nature's intelligence? It might be useful to first consider a more familiar artificial language, that of software programming. You sit at your computer, your fingers nimbly type commands and send emails in English, your native surface language. Your typed commands in English trigger a layer of formal language installed by the software programmer, which "talks" to the silicon chip. The chip itself speaks an even simpler deep language -- one of "on-off" binary code impulses. The intermediary software language captures these yin-yang impulse patterns and projects it onto your monitor screen, where it forms a visual virtual reality. (9)

Each of One Cloud's alchemical formulas is a kind of symbolic programming in a "daoist software language". The alchemical symbols are not fixed words or pictures within the adept's mind, but rather are always moving. Their movements define a kind of living geometry that creates its own time, space, and intelligence. The alchemical meditator shapes his internal qi field, and this is instantaneously uploaded into the greater qi field of Nature, which in turn responds. The alchemist's qi language can be described as by pulsing (yin-yang-yuan) energy pathways on which felt qualities or values move in dynamic patterns that are in resonance with larger patterns in nature.

The patterns of this symbolic language may be experienced internally as yin-yang qi flow in the micro-cosmic orbit up the spine and down the chest or in the other eight extraordinary vessels; as cycling movement of the 5 phases (elements) qi through the vital organs, or as all pervading spiritual qualities (de). These energetic pathways help the adept's ordinary mind translate its mind intent (yi) into the impulses of his/her vital organ spirits (jingshen). The daoist name each of these five body-mind spirits: yi, shen, zhi, hun, and po. They are considered the intelligences that regulate the spleen, heart, kidney, liver and lung functions. These spirits are the deepest personal inner voices. The seven formulas train these body-mind intelligences to speak to and activate a

response from the vast multitude of planetary and stellar intelligences shaping the impersonal cosmic qi field.

The response from the cosmic qi field to the adept's communication appears to be at core a very simple binary code of yin-yang pulsations. Like a computer chip, these cosmic impulses can instantly transmit a huge quantity of "living information" from a more universal field of awareness than the adept's ordinary senses can perceive. This information is transmitted back to the adept, who interprets this "message" as specific energy patterns or qualities of spirit that are felt. The filter for the incoming information from the universal qi field are the adepts own vital organ spirits, which daoists believe also shape (together with other bodily spirits) one's worldly personality and behavior. These spirits govern our body's biological intelligence, and collectively transmute the incoming yin-yang impulses into the human powers of discrimination, feeling, sensation, speech, and movement. This information is not filtered by the biological senses or by conscious thinking, but rather by the "subtle senses" that the adept develops, called the subtle or chi body.

The alchemical meditations activate progressively more subtle energetic fields that allow the adept to communicate instantly across vast distances. Take for example the pattern of the Five Elements/Phases. The five phase intelligences within the human body can be trained to resonate with the five great spirits (North, South, East, West, and Center) within the Earth, which in turn can talk to the vast intelligences of the five phases within Heaven (sun, moon, planets, or stars). All three levels of intelligence - man, earth, and heaven - are "of the same blood", i.e. are born and function in the same qi field of Nature. Once you learn to listen to one pattern within the body, it is only a matter of training to "listen" to the same pattern in other parts of the qi field, even if it is physically far away. Qi patterns are not limited by physical time/space. These impulses travel at the speed of consciousness, which is much faster than the speed of light. This is because the qi patterns don't need to travel across space, the living qi field IS the matrix of space/time. (10)

What are differences between the artificial software language used to speak to the computer and the deep resonant patterns chosen by the alchemist to speak with nature? The level of human will involved and the energetic engagement of the speaker of the language are central. The keyboard operator is usually unconscious of the formal software language, and is also separated from both the deep language of the computer chip and the electrical power source needed to run it. The computer screen, hardware and software are commanded by the "outer" will of the keyboard operator, meaning the person must direct his energy into an activity or thing seen as separate from himself, which eventually tires him out.

Daoist alchemical language is an embodied experience, a merging of the adept's intelligence (shen), energy (qi), and body essence (jing) with no intermediate object. It's possible to view the alchemical language speaker (shen), the language/words being silently spoken (qi), the recorded form of the speech (jing), and the total field of possible expression (wu) as all contained within the alchemist and communicated by resonance to the macrocosm of Nature, which mirrors the same jing-qi-shen-wu components in another dimension..

This continuum of jing-qi-shen-wu is focused into a single intent (yi) in order to authentically "speak" to other beings or deeper energy patterns within Nature. The adept's own physical body (jing) functions like the hardware, his/her qi channels like the software, the five inner spirits fuse into an inner vision-computer screen whose subtle senses create an internally perceived virtual reality. The power source is the Dao or its manifestation as the qi flowing in Nature, which is alive and inexhaustible. The qi field flows through Nature's "wires" whether or not the adept plugs into it. Communicating with the mind of the Dao through alchemical meditation recharges and heals the adept. The adept's "inner" will must be active and focused inwardly on a pattern of resonance within Nature, such as yin-yang-yuan, five elements, eight forces to speak silently to other humans or natural entities such as the sun, moon, stars used in One Cloud's formulas.

The computer software language could conceivably be memorized from a book. To learn daoist alchemical language requires a live transmission from skilled alchemist to activate one's energy body/qi flow. This is the traditional function of lineage. Lineage is just a communication pathway with Nature that is taught to someone to make it easier for them to communicate beyond the dark clouds of ego resistance that seem to deter most people from talking with the cosmic aspects of their self. All lineage originated at some point with someone who spontaneously developed a deep way to speak with Nature, and decided to share it. One can also receive initiation into alchemical process by an inner plane guide or by simply deeply observing Nature.

But why reinvent the wheel? Few people will learn alchemy without a teacher. It is faster and easier to tune into someone who introduces you to the alchemical language patterns embedded in your own energy field. The transmission is simple; your qi field simply resonates and re-shapes itself to match your teacher. You instantly experience the energy pattern which allows you to talk directly to Nature's mind. This normally opens a deeper ability to communicate with other human minds. Sometimes a book or object whose qi field has been intentionally imprinted can act as the initiator. Like any language, the more you hear it spoken, the easier it is to speak it. Some teachers who initiate claim that they somehow "own" the qi or spirits being transmitted. According to deep language theory, this is untrue. The qi field belongs to the Dao. We could say that ultimately there is only one lineage, the direct lineage to the original teacher, Nature's qi field.

Daoist Cosmology as Nature's Deep Grammar

Dao gives birth to unity,
Unity gives birth to polarity,
Polarity gives birth to trinity.
Trinity gives birth to the myriad creatures.

Dao dejing, v. 42 (11)

If alchemical meditation is the actual practice of speaking a deep cosmic language, daoist cosmology should reveal the foundational grammar of that language. All religions have a deep language structure buried within their cosmologies, but the priesthood may keep it secret, and teach out only the surface language to the religious followers as

beliefs, sacred images and statues, or holy writings of some deity. This level of language can be acquired by anyone, i.e. a Jew can convert to Catholicism and immerse themselves in Catholic religious language/imagery/belief. The surface religious language may spontaneously trigger a "mystical" communication with Nature, as it arises from a deep language structure. The experience is likely to be shaped by the surface language of the believer as that religion has patterned it (a Christian will see Jesus, a Buddhist will receive proof of Buddhist doctrine, etc.).

Daoist teachings typically have no dogma or theology; aligning with the cosmological cycles of nature is its salvational process. In One Cloud's alchemy formulas, there are no deities named. Instead you are given a map of personal "deity hood" (immortality) and the energetic language skills that allow one to converse intelligently with all deities/entities, whether invisible or in natural form as humans, planets, stars, etc. The alchemy adept is not asked to believe anything other than to accept the possibility of regrowing their Original Self in the physical plane by deep communication with the Dao. The assumption is that all deities must communicate through the same qi field of Nature; if you merge with that qi field, you know what those deities know. What follows is my interpretation of Daoist cosmology, shaped by study with many teachers and texts, but mostly clarified by practice of the first six of One Cloud's seven alchemical formulas for immortality.

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

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

With the hatching of the cosmic egg/gourd, the unified ocean of awareness holding this trinity increasingly polarizes itself into yin and yang forces as it steps its universal qualities down into the second heaven, an intermediate dimension called Early Heaven (xian tian). This act of original trinity-in-one dividing itself while maintaining unity requires a deep level of self-communication. In Early Heaven vectors of yin - yang polarity exist, but they communicate a pattern of perfect harmony and balance by virtue of the yuan qi in the center of its spherical container. (Yuan qi is invisible, thus is not

symbolized in the I Ching's eight trigrams of Early Heaven). Yuan qi sits silently in the middle of the bagua and in the space between the yin-yang pulses of the eight polar forces. Original Qi holds the presence of the Origin as the 9th and central mediating force within creation.

Early Heaven acts as a cosmic pre-natal womb, where the seed virtues/creative powers of yuan shen are gestated before being shaped in the human realm into more defined spiritual qualities of kindness, trust, love, etc. Since yuan qi is the "unconditioned energy" of the universe, all "unconditional virtues" of the Original Spirit such as unconditional love, unconditional truth, unconditional acceptance, etc. are communicated through yuan qi. Early Heaven divides the triune unity of yuan qi into the five phases/elements (wu xing) of cosmic time. (See Illustration) This five phase intelligence shapes the matrix of cosmic space as it unfolds rhythmically on a web of eight yin-yang forces. These sacred directions and time cycles, imbued with their "de" (inner powers or spiritual qualities) are symbolically mapped on the ancient Ho Tu and Lo Shu diagrams, the precursors to the I Ching and cornerstones of Chinese spiritual culture. But even the symbolic relationships of the Ho Tu and Lo Shu can be seen as deep language communications from the qi field, as simple numeric expression of the eight channels and 5 elemental cycles through which Nature communicates with itself.

Yuan Qi and the Problem of Communication with Later Heaven

The process of stepping down of Early Heaven qi into the third heaven, Later Heaven (hou tian), is described by Lao Tzu as giving birth to "the ten thousand things". Later Heaven includes the planet Earth on which humans live. This stepping down is where communication problems within the Dao seems to first arise. The qi field of the physical realm has evolved to embody great extremes of polarity. Hatred, suffering, disease, and death co-exist with love, pleasure, health, and creative life. In humans the jing manifests itself as the reproductive power (gene code, in modern terms) within the sperm/ovum, the qi as breath, and spirit degenerates into ordinary mind/imagination. (13)

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

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

But Humans, who in Early Heaven are androgynous or internally bi-sexed etheric beings, at physical birth are split into male and female sexes, causing them an

unforeseen and severe loss of yuan qi. Mythically, this is a "fall" into physicality. Humans have further exhausted their parentally inherited yuan jing (original essence that becomes sexual power) over eons of procreation and division into 6 billion people. So humans today might be born with only 1% original qi, and 99% yin-yang qi. This dwindling middle ground accounts for the battle of the sexes. Lack of yuan qi may explain why so many humans feel cut off from "God", the jing-qi-shen trinity of their own original nature. They feel alienated from nature and each other, and easily believe their limited, dense physical body (from lack of yuan qi) is all that exists of their self. Lack of yuan qi is synonymous with the experience of life as struggle.

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

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

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

Currents of AC electricity wrap the globe with a polarized electrical field. AC electricity has positive/negative flow with no neutral ground, disturbing and weakening the DC current flowing through the liquid crystalline cells and tissues of humans. (14) This electronic pollution is amplified by tv, radio and microwaves that constantly bombard living creatures and further polarize the planetary qi field, disturbing human ability to communicate with the universal qi field.

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

imbalance on Earth is triggering a spontaneous awakening to counterbalance it, both within humans and within the collective planetary consciousness of the Earth's spirit (in Chinese myth, Pangu).

This may trigger severe climate changes as Earth purges itself of the psychic and physical pollutants choking it. The need to maintain harmony between humanity and the earth's qi field, was emphasized in the oldest Daoist alchemical text, the second century *Triplex Unity* (Cantongqi). It warns that lack of human virtue may cause disturbances: heat in winter and cold in summer, sheep running madly about, followed by floods, droughts, and earthquakes. (15) Coming one of the world's oldest traditions that advocates a deep earth ecology, modern Daoists face a daunting challenge to integrate the global worship of technology into the harmonious flow of life. Does internal alchemy, as a deep language for communicating with nature, have a role to play in this? I will examine the broader process of alchemical communication with the qi field, and then show how nei dan restores yuan qi within human nature by offering a practical process of balancing yin and yang qi at a deep level.

How the Alchemist Shapes the Qi Field

My thesis on alchemy as a deep language relies on the premise that the very act of shaping any aspect of the qi field, in any dimension/heaven, by human or non-human intelligence, is best understood as a spontaneous yet recognizable expression of language. The patterns of qi flow or "wave forms" vibrating between the continuum of shen and jing (intelligence-matter) constitute the deep grammar of this universal language. This qi wave language is how the infinite field of spirit/intelligence talks to the finite bodies/particles formed by essence (jing).

The deep structure of these qi language patterns are embedded in One Cloud's nei dan formulas as the empty force of wuji, Original unity (jing-qi-shen) and the three primordial forces (yin-yang-yuan). All other "numbers" are generated by the interaction of the original trinity, including the often used yin-yang patterns of the micro-cosmic orbit, the five phases or eight manifesting forces. The qi field is how the universe both expresses its many functions and remembers its countless experiences. In traditional Daoist cosmology, the qi field defines every possible relationship within both the form and formless worlds. Its coherence allows the movement between chaos and order without losing balance and harmony. (16)

Qigong is the language process of using ritual body movement, breath, and mind intent to shape the qi in order to communicate mostly with the "horizontal" (as humans see it looking forward) or exterior manifest qi field of Earth.. Nei dan deals more with the "vertical" (as one looks up to sky and down to earth) and interior communications between Primordial, Early, and Later Heavens. One doesn't practice qigong or alchemy to GET qi. Rather one already IS part of nature's infinite qi field, and is just learning to recognize the unconscious communication patterns that are always flowing between one's micro-cosmic (personal) qi field and the impersonal macrocosmic qi field.

At its simplest level, all human sensing, thought, speech, feeling, body movement, breathing rhythm, and visualized image are attempts to "speak to" or shape this qi field.

Whether you scratch your nose or do higher math, both elicit a response from the qi field. The totality of these shapes, the sum of the conversation between Heaven and Earth that is passing through us, is one's experience of physical reality. Our personalities, our bodies, and even our environment are the moment to moment shape of the fluctuations in this superintelligent qi field.

Within the natural physical world, the movement of the qi field is the hidden language by which the intelligence within atoms, molecules, cells, rocks, plants, animals, young children, mountains, oceans, sun, moon, planets and stars communicate and maintain their rhythm and harmony. Everything, without exception, is alive and communicating something by virtue of the physical and energetic shape given to it by Nature's intelligence. The internal alchemist eavesdrops on this conversation within the qi field, and then from a human perspective performs alchemical operations to shape the qi field in order to accelerate the unfolding of life's inherent simplicity, wholeness, and aliveness.

All paranormal abilities in humans - esp, channelling, clairvoyance, etc are also communications by human body-spirits (jingshen) shaping the qi field, but most are unconscious faculties and thus differ from nei dan. Alchemy is not the unconscious channeling of Nature's intelligence. Rather the alchemist attempts to accelerate the CONSCIOUS unfoldment of Nature's macro-cosmic intelligence through resonance with the adept's personal micro-cosmos.

How does the nei dan adept communicate between heavens, i.e. between Heaven and Earth? It depends on what level of heaven they are communicating with, and the skill level/formula they have achieved in resonating with the qi field. There are many different practices, but all may be categorized as yang practice, yin practice, or wu wei practice. All three practices require the adept interiorize the outer universe within the adept's body. In yang practice the adept uses his yi "mind intent" or "creative imagination", the Later Heaven shen ruling the earth element/spleen/center direction, to actively communicate with or "speak to" the qi field in cooperation with the other four elements/body spirits. This effectively involves the use of projection, guiding or shaping the qi field according to the adept's inner will.

The yang methods work by cultivating an ability to move qi in the eight extraordinary channels or by opening a relationship between the yi and the other internal body spirits (jing shen) through the five phases of the creation or control cycles in the body. The guidance of qi should not be confused with western concepts of mental visualization, although there is some overlap. In shaping the qi field the five colors, five tones, internalized bagua shapes (as symbol of eight original forces) or spinning vortices are activated within the adept's personal qi field, or "energy body". The term "actualization" is more accurate than "visualization". Without the adept first activating the movement of qi in her qi channels or dan tien (elixir fields), the alchemical operation will not produce the desired results. Visualization of this type will simply produce an empty picture in the practitioner's mind, and little qi.

In yin practice the adept "listens" to the qi field, and concentrates on receiving energy patterns or absorbing spiritual qualities from the qi field. This is akin to one's ego will surrendering to one's higher will or a more collective level of the self. In this case the

five body spirits or eight extraordinary channels act as internal antennae for decoding the qi wave patterns being communicated from the outer qi field to the adept. Any given alchemical meditative operation may involve both yin and yang practices, the choice depending on the season, time of day, the situation in the individual life of the adept. The type of alchemical method may reflect the cycle of events in the life of the greater cosmos, its geomantic and astrological forces.

The wu wei practice involves the adept cultivating a shift from outer will to inner will, from the struggle amongst the desires of various body spirits (jing shen) to the unity of the original spirit (yuan shen). Wu wei is translated variously as "spontaneous action" or "effortless non-action", but the practical accomplishment of this requires the cultivation of yuan qi, which is the superconductive non-resistant energy of Primordial Heaven. Essentially wu wei is the fruit of mastering yin and yang practices; the adept evolves to a level of conscious and simultaneous sending and receiving qi, i.e. two way communication between the adept and the mind of nature. Wu wei requires a state of total trust between the adept and the Dao; their yi, or will, is gradually aligned as the adept develops trust in the lifeforce and his ability to manage it. The adept grows to receive the full power of the dao needed in any given moment, and the dao trusts the adept to create or express its reality in harmony with the life force.

This cooperation is possible because the communications network of qi channels and spirit relations inside a human being are essentially the same patterns as those inside a planetary being or galactic being, the main difference being in scale and specific qualities embodied. This ancient daoist idea is expressed in modern theory by fractals repeating themselves on vastly different scales, i.e. from starscape to mountain shape to internal landscape. The adept is not giving up all individual will to an outside agency that is more spiritually powerful and more intelligent. Rather the adept learns from the macro-cosm of Nature how the lifeforce behaves, and internalizes that within their personal process. Likewise, human babies learn from their parents how to navigate this reality, but then ideally use that learning to create a life according to their own nature. All communications between shen, qi, and jing are ultimately dissolved into the adept's interior cauldron of pre-natal emptiness. Thus the details of the often elaborate alchemical process are frequently abbreviated to simply "jing-qi-shen-wu". The more one practices nei dan, the greater one's facility with the qi field becomes, and the more the qi field of Nature recognizes one as a sensitive and available location within the physical plane for expressing itself. The ultimate act of communication with the mind of the Dao is to crystallize the yuan qi into conscious form on earth, known as the Immortal body, discussed next.

Cauldron as Portal for Communicating with Original Qi

The central purpose of nei dan is to regrow the spark of Original Energy (yuan qi) that is buried deep within each human being. If this tiny but powerful spark of original qi can be birthed into consciousness on Earth, it will gradually dissolve one's suffering and struggle, and restore life to its innate state of grace and effortless communication (wu wei) between Heaven, Earth, and Beings. Cultivating yuan qi is growing Heaven on

Earth. The type of immortality sought in neidan is not eternal physical life in Later Heaven, but rather a spiritual immortality achieved by completing one's destiny in Later Heaven and integrating one's refined Later Heaven essence with Early Heaven, Primordial Heaven, to ultimately merge that refined personal essence with the unknowable Dao..

This alchemical theory of cultivating yuan qi as one's personal essence contradicts the modern TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) theories promulgated by communists since the 1950's. TCM usually identifies yuan qi as "source qi" or genetic energy acquired from one's parents, and posits that a human being has only a finite amount of yuan qi available during one's lifetime. When it is expended, one dies. TCM theory upholds a false separation between Humans, (Early) Heaven and Earth (Later Heaven), a boundary that is frequently crossed during alchemical meditation. This is why a successful adept may be able to prolong their lifespan far beyond ordinary men or at least beyond what they inherited from their parents. Daoist theory is that one's true parents/ancestors are Heaven and Earth, and they constantly offer their qi to humans to nourish their development.

The TCM theory unfortunately helps to perpetuate the mind state of people into thinking that their essence is limited, which thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In most people Original Energy is reduced to a faint conviction of being somehow connected to the rest of nature. The Original Spirit functions as the mostly deep unconscious inner heart that silently witnesses, without judgement, the personality/ego/body spirit fragments in their reactive struggles with surface life. In daoist depth psychology, the most important ego fragments are the five yin vital organ spirits -- jing shen of heart, kidneys, liver, spleen, lungs. These five connect to the inner realms of Early Heaven; the "yang" body spirits are linked with the six bowels (gall bladder, small intestine, stomach, etc.) and communication with the outside physical world.

In One Cloud's formulas, original shen can be cultivated by fusing these ordinarily polarized and divided yin "vital organ gods" of the human mind into a singular pure awareness. When this awareness (yuan shen) is impregnated into post-natal body essence (jing), the pre-natal (Early Heaven) field of jing opens and an "immortal embryo" (sheng tai) is formed. This embryo is a seed of conscious Original Essence (yuan jing) that will vibrate and enliven the body. It may be perceived by the adept as a kind of body-centered, continuous spiritual orgasm, a feeling of spiritual pregnancy that may last for months. It is slowly nurtured to maturity, fed an "immortal baby food diet" of unconditional qualities (de) from Early Heaven spirits. It is protected and nourished by the worldly post-natal body spirits if they have awakened to their spiritual destiny; otherwise they may resist this profound inner shift. The embryo, if properly cultivated, births an Immortal Child that is fed refined levels of yuan qi, obtained by alchemical meditations that "cook" increasingly powerful yin-yang forces absorbed from Nature (male-female, sun-moon, star-earth). This Immortal Child, one's original essence that is growing in purity and substance, may mature to become one's true soul (ling).

The increased unity of original jing, qi, and shen within a human makes possible a very long and healthy physical life and a true and lasting spiritual rebirth. This alchemical rebirth is not to be confused with the modern experience of being suddenly "born

again", arising from religious acceptance of some new belief (which may indicate a real shift in emotional or mental functions of the believer's five jing shen). The formulas are a ladder on which the nei dan adept climbs gradually INWARD, refining the polarized and corrupted qi of Later Heaven into the balanced and purified qi of Early Heaven, and finally penetrating to the pure field of original qi in the Primordial Origin. These higher heavens spatially are not above the adepts head, as in a pyramidal type of spiritual hierarchy.

These heavens are hidden within the adept, in layered fields, within the center of an interiorized cosmic egg, whose outer boundary is defined energetically by the well known microcosmic orbit (also found in One Cloud's first nei dan formula). Each succeeding formula gradually awakens and enlivens the egg's deeper dimensions. The adept's power of communication with deep levels of the qi field eventually signals the latent Original Self (a pearl-like embryo inside the energy egg) to birth its immortal body of light, which then flies freely between all Heavens. There can be no rigid hierarchy in this cosmic process of regeneration, as every level needs the others to complete the process. A grandparent may be wiser than its grandchild, but it needs the child's vigor as a receptacle for its wisdom.

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

The dan tien is an interdimensional portal into an inner space where all qi completes itself. by returning to its original state of primordial unity. The dan tien has no physical location within the body, although it has nexus points in the belly, heart, and head connecting it to personal physical, mental, and spiritual functions. The shape of the alchemical cauldron is a cube within a sphere. This cube touches the sphere at eight points, suggesting the eight forces of the qi field of Heaven and Earth (symbolized by eight trigrams of I Ching) finding a common meeting place. The dimensional opening into the pre-natal space of the dan tien is known by various alchemical code names, such as the Mysterious Female or Mysterious Pass. In One Cloud's formulas, this opening is energetically symbolized by a vesica piscis, the eye formed by two intersecting circles or spheres of yin-yang qi. (17)

This vesica holds open a portal into Early Heaven (alchemical code: "true earth") between the "water and fire" spheres that control Later Heaven. From this portal within the cauldron arise neutral clouds of "steam", yuan qi birthing within the body.. The internally generated vapors of yuan qi are circulated in various energy channels of the adepts body and in the three dan tiens, dissolving any Later Heaven patterns of false yin or false yang within the adept and replacing them with the harmony of True Yang and True Yin qi. These patterns could take the form of physical, sexual, emotional,

mental or spiritual imbalances in the adept, which have been acquired this life or inherited from ancestors.

The vesica acts as a doorway of communication between the five post natal vital organ spirits (jing shen) and the one prenatal original spirit (yuan shen). Multiple refinings of the post natal yin-yang qi can cause the yuan jing to crystallize into a pearl of golden radiant light within the refining vessel of the adept's cauldron. This pearl stabilizes the vibrational communication between one's physical self and the deep intelligence of nature, and may be experienced as calmness, a sublime peace, or an unconditionally accepting presence. It is the ground that has the potential for maturing into a golden light body of the Immortal self. The benefit of neidan is not only for personal evolution. When the adept shape shifts their qi field through deep communication with the mind of the Dao, it shifts the entire qi field of Heaven and Earth.

Through the portal of the Mysterious Female opened by the adept opened in the dan tien, hungry ghosts may pass to freedom and other ancestral spirits may speed their progress to completion. (18) The very presence of the alchemical adept as a living, deeply integrated body-spirit shifts the paradigm for the family and community: internal harmony precedes external harmony. (19) On a simpler level, my experience of daoist internal alchemy it that opens up an internal space in the meditator that is so deeply embodied that it's process continues undisturbed even when one returns to worldly activities.

Where does this alchemical process take the adept? After working through all seven formulas, having achieved clear and effortless communication with all of the many levels of collective intelligence embodied within Nature, the adept stands at the doorway to the Supreme Unknown. Having lived virtuously and transformed one's personal essences into original essence, one re-enters the primordial chaos-unity in order to merge with the profound and paradoxically unknowable Dao as oneself. This is not the end, but rather marks a new beginning of conscious creation. The adept may now function simultaneously within all three heavens, the ultimate form of his free will immortalized by its multi-dimensional manifestation. All dimensions of creation, both form and formless, are collapsed into a single eternal present moment.

Nei Dan Formulas as Stages of Cultivating Original Qi

In my experience as an adept and alchemy teacher, I find that terms like yuan jing, qi, and shen as well as most of the poetic and arcane alchemical terminology found in the dao canon, are virtually impossible for humans to grasp from reading books. Reading about alchemical formulas may be intellectually stimulating and allow a grasp of its principles, but is essentially useless in actually learning to speak the deep language of alchemy. Intellectuals will find it very challenging to shift from their skill in manipulating concepts and words about alchemy to direct, full-body (physical and subtle bodies) experience of the silent language of the qi field. A structured framework of embodied experience is required. Perhaps because most westerners are left-brain dominant, this experience can arise most easily from qigong movement, breathing, and posture, later

refined to a deeper level by initiation into sitting nei dan meditation. In this second phase the body is still but the qi field moves.

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

As humans have different natures, it explains why different forms of nei dan practice arise. My own practice of these nei dan formulas has unfolded quite differently from that of my first Dao teacher (Mantak Chia) for this reason. Experience has taught me these formulas are best learned slowly, allowing a minimum of one year practice of each to digest and stabilize the energetic shifts they initiate before "eating" the qi of the next level. Students who attempt to rush through them, stuffing their heads with information about them, invariably cannot hold onto anything and drop the alchemical practice completely.

Foundation Practice: Inner Smile. Internal alchemy begins with a wu-wei practice, the **Inner Smile**. The ordinary outer smile is reactive to one environment. The inner smile is an method of effortlessly opening the inner heart (yuan shen) and penetrating its gentle radiance into one's biology (and its underlying jing). The Inner Smile is the simplest and most basic practice, yet is found at the end of each level of alchemical cultivation as well. At the end of all the formulas, it becomes the most advanced practice - the adept merges into the mind of the Dao, effortlessly smiling into all dimensions of Nature. This merger of the adept smiling with the mind of the Dao implies that humanity's presence (as one of the three treasures) can elevate the Dao with its purity of heart.

Formula 1: Open the Orbit, Five Phases of Spirit and Eight Extraordinary Qi Vessels. How to communicate harmoniously with the qi field inside the human body. These foundational energetic practices encapsulate the entirety of classical Chinese medicine, and are the main practices used for self-healing. Students often spend several years learning them. The **Six Healing Sounds** clear the stuck qi cycling through the five phases and three burners (head/upper chest, solar plexus, belly). The **Microcosmic Orbit** balances yin-yang flow of the spine and front chest and alchemically mixes the adept's qi and blood. **Fusion of the Five Elements** (Phases) I, II, and III is emotional and psychic alchemy. It helps one to absorb innate virtue and dissolve negative emotional qi, which is then crystallized into a pearl made of post natal yuan qi (source qi in TCM). The **Macrocosmic Orbit** circulates the clarity of this pearl in the **Eight Extraordinary Vessels**, which opens communication between the trunk (spine, waist & core channel) to all limbs/directions.

Formulas 2, 3, and 4 are the **Lesser, Greater, and Greatest Enlightenment of Water and Fire** (kan & li). This division of enlightenment into three levels is traditional. (20) These are three levels of the reversal (ni) phase, where the adept begins the internal sexual coupling of fire (yang body spirits) with water (yin body spirits), then progresses to internally coupling sun with moon, and finally to a fusion of planetary spirits and coupling of inner earth with inner sun (yang within the yin and yin within the yang). Reversal means the adept's desires to pursue outer physical life in Later Heaven is reversed and all one's desires begin dissolving and flowing back into Early Heaven and the Origin. The Lesser formula completes the 5 phases of human qi (vital organ spirits), the Greater completes the 5 phases of earth qi (geomantic forces), and the Greatest completes the 5 phases of planetary qi (astrological forces that shape human destiny). The net effect of completing all three levels is to fulfill one's soul purpose, which dissolves fear of death and the unconscious drive to incarnate. This enlightenment of completing the qi of the individual's post-natal self is thus the requisite to attaining immortality in the following three formulas.

This alchemical "coupling" or "cooking" process reunites post natal jing-qi-shen and allows the adept's Later Heaven self to open a portal for communication with her Early Heaven self. These three formulas focus on opening an inner space where the adept can talk to core body intelligences (jingshen), the intelligences within the Earth, and the Sun/planetary intelligences. This allows the adept to absorb progressively greater powers of yin and yang qi. The second formula, sexual inner alchemy, is essentially an advanced practice of the Microcosmic Orbit. It involves self-intercourse within the adept of yin (inner female) and yang (inner male) body spirits, and variants of this nei dan practice are described in a number of Dao canon texts translated into English.

Formula 5 is **Sealing of the Senses**. it seals the Later Heaven senses/mind of the adept inside the crown to open up and refine communication between the adept's personal soul (ling) and the Great Spirit (da shen) of the star intelligences. Thus it is also called Star alchemy. This engages the collective stellar level of nature's intelligence, defined by the Big Dipper and Polestar, and opens the portal of the central axis (chong qi, or cosmic yuan qi) of Later Heaven into Early Heaven. **Formula 6** is the **Congress of Heaven and Earth**. It couples, as an act of cosmic sexual self-intercourse, the adept's Later Heaven soul essence with his formless androgynous Early Heaven essence. This final coupling opens communications with the chaos/original unity of Primordial Heaven. The circulation of qi between the three heavens is the True Macrocosmic Orbit. **Formula 7** the **Union of Man and Dao**, has not yet unfolded for me. One Cloud did not claim to master it or teach it. He described it as the cosmicized human's jing-qi-shen merging spontaneously into the wuji, the Supreme Unknown, portal to the unknowable Dao.

The seven formulas offer a progressive experience of yuan qi as the mover behind all cosmic cycles of change. But what exactly is yuan qi? It is paradoxical, the very definition of undefinable energy. In learning to speak the deep language of qi, the ordinary mind can easily grasp the notion of yin & yang through its many tangible polarities in nature (light & dark, hot & cold, etc.) This is reinforced by spoken language,

which uses words to describe these polar distinctions. By habit we fix these polarities into rigid dualistic concepts of black & white, right & wrong, self & other, etc. But beyond the tangible bi-poles of yin & yang, in nei dan practice the third force of yuan qi is ALWAYS present as an invisible monopole dissolving any fixity. As a simple metaphor for the mind to grasp, yang qi is white light (photons that refract into 7 prismatic rays), yin qi is dark light (gravity approximates this), and yuan qi is clear light that can be polarized into both white and dark light without losing its innate neutral property. Between the yin-yang (north and south) poles of our planet is a monopole of yuan qi at the earth's center. In humans, the heart center functions as a monopole balancing messages from the head (heaven) and belly (earth) poles. In the emotional field between two lovers, there is neutral pole that holds the essence of their love beyond the time and space fluctuations of their emotional relationship. Even if they divorce, the neutral qi field created by their earlier love cannot be destroyed by their subsequent hatred for each other; the yuan qi created from their emotionally polarized qi simply ceases to be active as their personal field of communication. This is why the innate virtue of love (as neutral acceptance or unity) ultimately triumphs over the learned force of hate (as separating impulse). Forced separation does not build any yuan qi, while unification of opposites grows yuan qi.

We fail to recognize original energy even when we are communicating through its matrix. Our brain, polarized into left-right hemispheres, physically reflects the nature of our ordinary mind's polarized sensory perception. Thus we see with two eyes, hear with two ears, breathe through two nostrils. But yuan qi exists and is further generated at the crossing point of the corpus collosum at the center between the left and right brain hemispheres. Yuan qi is generated by the protons and electrons orbiting the nucleus in each of our atoms. It is in the neutrinos that go whizzing past us without stopping because there is no "neutral force container" on the polarized surface of our earth that can hold them.

Original qi is the invisible monopole around which DNA spirals, serpent-like, in yin-yang pairs. DNA is the modern equivalent of jing, the essence that holds our shape. As qi converts into jing, the latent DNA patterns are activated. Thus the original trinity of jing-qi-shen is able to communicate with its human form and shape it moment to moment. The subtle qi field of a human being controls the timing of the unfoldment of these genetic patterns, whose encodings at the jing level form an unimaginably complex text three billion characters long. Some microbiologists admit that the gene code is best described as a "language text" of nature, even though their scientific paradigm prevents them from admitting that Nature is intelligent and thus able to "speak" or write a text in any language. (21)

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

polarities of one's qi field from this neutral point of eternally balanced qi is to speak the deep language of Nature's intelligence. If you can find and stay centered in the awareness of this neutral balance point at every moment of your life, you have stabilized the effortless state of wu wei and the door is open to realize your immortality. If you can create a vessel - an energy body - that holds the yuan qi in later heaven, you have produced the elixir.

This seems simple, and yet is unimaginably difficult because of polarized language patterns of perception programmed into our mind and senses by generations of everyday life. The missing link is understanding the Original Spirit (yuan shen) as Nature's inner voice. Whenever the door between dimensions (early & later heaven) is opened, especially at moments of human birth, death and sexual copulation, our Original Spirit is actively present to assist us in communicating our inner will. These moments of grace allow our Early Heaven self to express its unconditional nature within the physical plane as unconditional love, acceptance, or trust of the qi field. Nei dan internalizes these processes of birth, death, and sexual self-intercourse in meditation. They occur within the body-mind-spirit of the adept, who uses them to keep open the Mysterious Pass in each moment.

Alchemists, Shamans, Mediums & the Empty Mind State

Yuan qi is not a substance or a thing, although it generates and dissolves both. When any yin-yang field is reversed and held in a steady balanced waveform, yuan qi arises and physical reality appears to dissolve or at least lose some of its density. This can occur in any expanded state of consciousness where our bodies feel light, as if our molecules had moved farther apart. We describe this state as "more empty", because we have temporarily emptied out the rigid patterns of perception. The term "hsu" in early Daoist texts is often translated as "emptiness". But it is a relative, not an absolute state, meaning "empty of objects" but not "empty of qi". Yuan qi thus "fills" or rather IS the actual matrix of all "empty" or pure space and time. An open or pure mind might be a more accurate translation than "empty" mind to describe human processes engaging yuan qi. The ordinary polarized mind (xin) abhors the apparent vacuum created by yuan qi, and unconsciously converts it into yin or yang qi. In neidan this yuan qi is seen as unshaped energy available to create a new level of health and spiritual freedom in our lives if we are aware enough to grasp it.

Yuan qi is also often present whenever someone "blanks out" or has "missing time", during a meditative activity such as reading a book. Single pointed concentration can cause your your five jingshen to fuse and thus temporarily shift dimensions into the boundary zone of Early Heaven. It can happen by simple resonance; just reading these thoughts on yuan chi might cause you to drift off for a few moments into your own more core field of neutral qi. Daoist alchemy offers a method for making these shifts consciously, and for including the whole body in the shift, not just the mind. Daoist folklore is filled with stories of adepts who disappear and reappear at will, sometimes bringing back an item from far away as proof of their journey.

Between the Supreme Unknown (wuji), which can never be known, and Later Heaven where everything can be named and thus known, there is a continuous qi field. But there are empty spaces within and between the qi patterns, like silent spaces between musical notes. They are not heard as one listens to music, but without silent spaces there could be no distinguishing of the harmonic relationship between the notes. So silence itself must become part of the deep language spoken by the adept. Traditionally, there are three levels of increasingly empty or pure silence: kong, xu, and wu. In the oral tradition of nei dan, "kong" denotes the tangible empty physical space within matter (Later Heaven), described as the empty space inside a pot. "Xu" is the empty or pure mind space where the true human soul (ling) forms (Early Heaven). "Wu" denotes wuji, the empty boundaryless pure space/time of chaos-unity (Primordial Heaven). (22)

The adept must enter into and pass through these three "voids" or "open mind" states in order to receive deeper communications from the three levels of heaven. These are not true voids, but are in fact filled with the yuan qi holding the silent space between the pulsations of yin and yang. Entry into these purer mind states requires the adept to absorb an increasingly higher power of yin-yang force to alchemically open up a purer, more empty quality of yuan qi. Sitting passively in an "empty mind" meditation may leave a meditator in a relaxed but superficial level of "kong" emptiness, in which little communication with the deeper "xu" or "wu" mind states occurs.

Traditionally the simple practice of emptying the ordinary mind of thoughts was to weaken the desires and conflicting wills of the body spirits. The daoist practice of zuowang, "sitting and forgetting", was first made famous by Zhuangzi (Chuang-tzu). As Livia Kohn notes in her translation of the Zuowanglun, in later alchemical classics emptying the mind was a beginning practice that laid a foundation for succeeding phases of alchemical refinement of original qi. (23) Yet it is also an advanced practice. After alchemically refining the male-female, sun-moon, etc. forces, the adepts again empty the mind of alchemical symbols before merging with the dao. One Cloud's formulas follow this pattern., where Inner Smile is used by the beginner to empty his mind of tension, and also as the advanced practice of simplicity by an adept merged with the Dao, smiling simultaneously through all three heavens.

The difficulty and fear of entering even the first level of emptiness may be why modern humans, whose body, mind and soul are born from and sustained by original qi, sit on earth and complain, "Since I can't hear God talking to me, how do I know He exists?". Not having cultivated their ears to listen to the subtle voice of Heaven flowing as qi within their very own body, they fall into despair and alienation. Their qi fails to circulate, which leads to disease and premature death, and confirms their cynical view. This strengthens the negative thought forms trapped in the dark side, as they feast on despair. This cycle of suffering and death could be bypassed if man had the language skills to both talk to Nature and to listen to Nature's Intelligence.

Prayer, of course, is the spoken language form used by many religions to cross these dimensional boundaries in order to talk to their Deity. From the perspective of daoist nei dan, many religionists are simply praying in the wrong direction, i.e. they are looking above their heads to a Deity when its far more effective to look within to reshape the polarized forces that make life a struggle. It is the inner shape of the praying person's qi

field, not his outer words, that elicits a response from the universal qi field. Alchemy could thus be viewed as a more scientific form of prayer that uses the principles of the life force to achieve its purpose.

Another question is whether channeling can be considered a deep language expression of Nature. Many medieval daoist scriptures were received by channeling, which is a fast way for Nature to bypass human ego resistance in order to open up new communication pathways between Heaven and Earth. In my observation of modern mediums, the act of channelling occurs by suppressing the medium's po soul (yin, lung spirit) while in trance or semi-trance, to allow another entity to speak through the medium's hun soul (yang, liver spirit). The entity may be a hungry ghost posing as a high spiritual being, which may be why many mediums look drained, are overweight (weak kidney spirit retains excess water) and in poor health. The process of channeling can widen the split between the medium's hun and po souls, even though the channelled revelations may come from a higher being and benefit others.

Legend has it the nei dan teachings received by Lu Dongbin were delivered directly by an immortal materializing and teaching him. This kind of conscious revelation by an immortal spirit taking human form temporarily might allow for a very high level of information from the qi field. In any case, One Cloud's nei dan formulas teach conscious resonance with deep levels of Nature, they do not promote unconscious channeling. The adept must communicate consciously with Nature's macrocosmic qi field (lunar, solar, and stellar beings) until its essences are internalized and "digested" by alchemical refining within the adept's body. Alchemical operations require the integrated inner will of the adept, the joining of hun and po souls (alchemical code: dragon and tiger), the agents of Heaven and Earth to cement the alchemical marriage of shen and jing, the heart and kidney spirits, which must find a common yi, or creative intention. The result is good physical health and growing spiritual self-reliance. The opposite can occur with trance channelling - the yi of the channeler remains unconscious.

Is internal alchemy a form of shamanic communication with Nature? Some shamanic elements can be found in the formulas. I believe that generations of nei dan practitioners have over the millenium refined the shamanic journey out of the body and interiorized it so it all happens within deep levels of the adept's "energy body" or cosmicized personal qi field. This may have evolved to allow communication between Heaven and Earth to be more continuous and deeper. In my own nei dan practice, I rarely "leave" my physical body on journeys. It is easier to simply expand my qi field out to embrace by resonance whatever level of Nature I wish to communicate with, and allow the vibrational information to silently flow back inside me. Once it is downloaded it becomes part of a library of cosmic essences available for refining in my ongoing alchemical process.

Once digested, these essences open up continuous pathways of communication. I offer a few of my experiences that correlate my inner perceptions with objective physical events. The cycles of the moon, solstices and equinoxes, all impact strongly on my energy field as spontaneous communications. When there are major sun spots, my heart beat accelerates and my body grows very warm. Major astrological configurations will sometimes force me to stop all other activities to listen to them. The most dramatic

case came in 1994, when I suddenly felt my liver get hugely inflamed, despite perfect health and no changes in diet or lifestyle. I was very puzzled. It was only when I saw TV pictures of Jupiter being hit 22 times by a comet that I realized my experiences were caused by the cosmic resonance between my liver/hun spirit and Jupiter. Each vital organ spirit learns to communicate with its planetary spirit "cousin" in the Greatest Kan & Li Formula, and there is no shutting Nature out once it knows you can listen to it. Interesting objective confirmation of alchemy as a deep language spoken by one's whole being came from recent tests on Mantak Chia by an Austrian scientist using modern equipment to measure brainwave patterns and hemispheric balance. This scientist had for years been testing monks and meditators from different traditions to try to map their bodily response to meditation. He was very surprised to find that alchemical meditation was totally unique. Chia produced on demand (by practice of the first formula Inner Smile and sexual recycling of jing in the microcosmic orbit) a SIMULTANEOUS rise in alpha, beta, and theta brain waves. This meant as the mind was relaxing more deeply, the body's physical energy field was becoming more active. Also unique was that the measured rise was equal in both brain hemispheres and lasted for a much longer duration than seen with other types of meditation -- three days vs. several hours for other types of meditation. (24)

Most adults lose their innate ability to communicate directly with nature, or they suppress it into the dream state where their shen/ego fragments, repressed by day, can play and talk freely at night. Dreaming is thus an unconscious method of communicating with Nature's qi field, and accounts for sleep being rejuvenating. If we had no ego resistance to communicating with the qi field by day, the need to go unconscious at night would disappear. A whole branch of nei dan developed around daoist dream practice, made famous by the adept Chen Tuan of Mt. Huashan. He reportedly stayed in conscious meditative dream states for months or years on end. Nei dan uses the dream realm as a natural communication vehicle with more subtle realms.

Death itself can be considered as a kind of permanent dream practice, if one can die consciously, without panicking and scattering your five body spirits. Many adults unconsciously accelerate disease and their own death so they can reopen communication with the qi field of Heaven once out of the body. But death may not solve their problem of needing soul completion. If their five shen have not integrated before death, their spirit fragments (hun, po, shen, zhi, and yi) are separated and returned to the pool of Heaven and Earth consciousness for recycling into a new soul pattern. This is the opposite of what occurs with an Immortal, who is said to be able to choose his moment of death as a voluntary shift into another dimension of life.

What Language Do Immortals Speak?

Although I initially had great trouble believing Immortals even existed, my perspective changed after several visionary encounters with them. (25 I now believe that an Immortal is someone who has learned to speak the deep language of nature itself. They have mastered to varying degree the art of speaking with one's entire being, a process that in its deepest language level requires one to surrender one's life to a process of effortless communication (wu wei). Wu wei is thus the spontaneous expression of the

two way conversation between Origin and Creation. Octaves of this communication are going on between Nature's different poles -- the interweaving waves of qi between the myriad manifestations of yin and yang, between human heart essence (xing) and destiny (ming), early heaven and earth (later heaven), jing and shen, fire and water, man and woman.

The level of deep language mastery, one's capacity to speak consciously through the qi field to the inner heart of Humans, to the heart of Earth's spirit, or the heart of Heaven's solar and stellar beings -- determines the kind of immortal awareness expressed. I don't believe that Immortals are flying around like angels in an etheric human form after their departure from earth. They may shape themselves into human form to communicate with humans, but it is no longer their innate shape. My experience in alchemical meditation is they are merged into the formless qi field of Nature, where they serve its evolution. To speak with them we must ourselves learn to communicate with the formless, immortal consciousness watching us from the center of each body, planet, star, galaxy or black hole.

Inner Tones of Heaven and the I Ching

The internal alchemist learns to directly SPEAK to Nature using the qi field. The same faculty used to listen to the inner voices of the five body-spirits is used by the adept to LISTEN to voices from inner heavens. Chuang Tzu defined a sage as "one who hears". At deep levels the qi language is sung as the inner music of the spheres, what Immortal Lu Dongbin called "listening to the stringless tune". At this stage one is beyond the images of the physical or astral planes of Later Heaven, and merged in Early Heaven, which is vibrating too quickly for the human mind to shape its qi field into recognizable physical images. It is experienced as pure sound, light, and vibration -- the building blocks of Early Heaven before they are assembled into physical form. This inner sound meditation cuts through and vertically links all time-space zones and the empty spaces within them: the eternal present moment of the Origin, the cyclical time spirals of Early Heaven, and the linear time of Later Heaven.

The I Ching trigrams, apparently adapted from the black and white dots of the ancient Ho Tu and Lo Shu diagrams, is a symbolic language that has been used to express the changing patterns of nature. Because the patterns of nature are multi-dimensional communications, the I Ching trigrams have also been interpreted as matching the stages of alchemy. This makes the I Ching useful but not necessary for the practice of internal alchemy, which speaks directly to nature without any mediation by external symbols/trigrams. Its trigrams constitute a formal or artificial language, but one that accurately reflects the deep patterns of the qi field flowing just below its symbolic images.

The Yi Jing (I Ching) does not really predict the future, but rather merely reflects the field of all possibilities arising in the present moment. of the adept As such, it is a useful symbol (artificial) language for communicating with Nature, a kind of mathematical system whose systematic correspondences are attuned to cosmic rhythms of change.

But the Yi Jing doesn't read these patterns; it is that humans use it to connect to the same patterns within their own deep intelligence.

Past and future are just Later Heaven human concepts of linear time that in the deeper heavens don't actually exist. Past and future in Early Heaven are probable patterns cycling into the present moment as possible parallel realities. In Primordial Heaven there are no time cycles, only the potential created by the original trinity in an eternal present moment. Humans have the ability to simultaneously communicate with the qi field of these different realities in the physical present moment. The advanced alchemist doesn't need to use the Yi Jing, because their body-mind has become a living Yi Jing by virtue of its deep resonance with Nature's yin-yang pulsations.

In nei dan meditation where I've attuned to the Yi Jing's yin-yang trigrams, I experience them not as binary mathematical symbols, but as 8 tones or chords, with original jing-qi-shen as the fundamental tone/chord radiating out from the center. The 8 Early Heaven tonal-trigrams rotate counter-clockwise, the 8 Later Heaven tonal trigrams spiral clockwise away from the Origin. These multiply themselves into 64 tones, as found in ancient Chinese bronze sets of 64 bells set to a pentatonic (5 Phase) scale.

The Yi Jing becomes a musical-chemical coda of how Nature "sings" itself into the repeating qi patterns (64 tone-hexagrams) of Later Heaven existence. The song of existence then falls back into silence at the center before repeating itself. What is missing from the I Ching symbols, and cannot be symbolized, is the Original spirit shaping and choosing the configuration of "qi music" (hexagram). In Later Heaven humans have the free will to choose what energy pattern they wish to create in response to the condition of their life. But deep cultivation is required to realize that freedom.

Alchemy, Reincarnation, & the Spirit-Matter Dialog

The effect of learning alchemical language is to speed the evolution of the dialogue within the spirit-matter continuum. By this means a single adept can affect all dimensions of being. There are many beneficial kinds of meditation (neigong) that lead to enlightenment, but most of these do not completely resolve the relationship between awareness (shen) and the challenge of being in a body (jing). This is the central tension of physical life, mirroring the central tension of Heaven-Earth. Enlightenment schools tend to focus on activating a higher level of spirit in the head/upper dan tien. Daoist immortality practices work from the opposite direction, by opening the lower cauldron in the belly and gradually clearing the core channel in the center of the body until it opens up the upper cauldron in the head.

Excessive head-centered meditation can unfortunately lead to the desire to "escape" the difficulties of living in body/matter under the guise of transcending the body. Escapism is caused when the yin (po) and yang (hun) spirits within a human have difficulty communicating. The sexual essence (jing) of the body, however badly corrupted or diseased, is part of the primal matrix of yuan jing.. If one discards the crude physical body without first grasping this jing essence, the illusory act of transcendence (by yang heart shen and liver hun spirits prematurely returning to Heaven) is

experienced by the yin spirits of the lungs (po) and kidney orb (zhi) as abandonment or failed love, so they return to Earth. Death is termination of the yin-yang dialog of these spirits within the human form and dissolution of the Yi's intent (spleen/earth spirit) to continue imagining its human form. Nei dan seeks to prolong this dialog between spirit and body to allow the adept time to reach soul completion. The goal is not permanent physical immortality, just to achieve a life long enough to complete one's destiny and attain to full realization of the Dao. Most people die at age 75 but are still spiritual children.

One Cloud's nei dan formulas and teachings do not contain a single reference to reincarnation. Neither am I able to find references to reincarnation in any early daoist texts, although a few of the later schools influenced by or competing with Buddhism may incorporate it. There is no need for a linear, past life reincarnation theory according to daoist cosmology. The incarnation process is controlled by the collective intelligence of Heaven and Earth, not by human will. Each human vital organ spirit may have its own line of incarnation, and this may account for so-called past life memories. They are actually "other life" impressions occurring in the present moment qi field, which simultaneously holds all past and future life possibilities and ancestral timelines.(26) In my deep language theory of Daoist cosmology, one never completely transcends the wheel of incarnation. To do so would imply a separation between the three Heavens that does not exist; they are a single continuum of communication. In the metaphor of the Dao as a wheel of life, the still, empty space inside the turning axle is the Supreme Unknown (wuji). The outer rim of the wheel is physical life of Later Heaven. The nei dan adept aspires to gradually shift the focus of his/her identity from outer rim to the center axle of the wheel (Origin) by opening communication through the revolving eight "spokes" or yin-yang forces of Early Heaven. The wheel of physical creation never stops turning, the assemblage point of one's perceptual focus and experience of physicality simply shifts to the center of the wheel. This is what defines immortality: how close can we shift our human center to resonate with the center of the mind of the Dao? Immortals never truly leave Later Heaven; they embrace the entirety of the physical plane's turning wheel from within a deeper center of multi-dimensional awareness.

Humans living on the outer rim of the wheel are driven, consciously or not, to fulfill their destiny and complete themselves by opening communication with with their original self in the wheel's center. This process can be as simple as shifting attention from the surface of one's skin and smiling into the core of one's being within the body. All incarnation occurs from the center and moves out towards the rim. Reincarnation does not occur in a linear time line sequence from past life to current life as one moves around the outer rim, the popular Buddhist - Hindu conception of reincarnation or transmigration of souls from animal to human. The pure daoist view I believe is that all lives are the interaction of Earth (outer wheel rim) and Heaven (center wheel), who birth the 10,000. things from their yin-yang pools of jing-qi-shen patterns.

The Seven Formulas of Immortality tackle the difficulty of having a body. This is a core issue common to all humans and to the intelligence hidden or "locked" within all matter. The body and the mind (xin) identification with the body is what makes us feel trapped on the outer wheel of evolution. Nei dan liberates the adept from this illusion by giving

us the in depth experience of re-creating our body in each moment as our qi pulses through the three heavens. The adept learns this by mediating the dialog between Heaven and Earth within the microcosm of his/her own body. The nei dan formulas are a map for awakening communication between the shen and the most dense levels of body (jing), starting in the lower belly/lower dan tien and moving it progressively up the core channel (chong mo) in the center of the body.

Each formula resonates with a progressively expanded level of the collective intelligence within the body of Nature. The essence of the three primal forces, three treasures, five elements/collective mind and eight trigram forces within the human body -- the Earth, planets, Sun, Pole Star and constellations are interiorized within one's personal microcosm. The cauldron/dan tien shifts its location and size within the inner space of the adept's body, depending on what aspect of nature is being communicated with.

To interiorize the vast powers of the outer universe within the adept's body-mind requires a matching expansion of the adept's inner space/internal qi field. The formulas guide the adept in opening a dialog between the microcosm and macrocosm, using the eight deep subtle body channels (Eight Extraordinary Vessels) and the principle of resonant rapport between yin and yang within the 5 Phases/Elements. This allows the growing awareness of one's original, immortal self while still living within a mortal physical body. The adept's process is to embody the alchemical maxim: "As above, so below; as without, so within". I have found that the depth and elegance of daoist nei dan's explorations into the spiritual mystery of the body is unparalleled in the world's esoteric systems. Studying daoist nei dan is like going for a PhD in Mystical Body studies. (27)

Humans can practice internal alchemy only because Nature is an alchemist. Alchemical formulas could not express Nature's deep intelligence unless Nature itself embodied an alchemical process. Nature divides itself into three levels, Original, Early and Later Heavens. Like an ever repeating fractal, the third heaven holds within its microcosm the three treasures of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, and Humanity holds within itself the three treasures of jing, qi, and shen. These dimensional divisions in nature reflect the universal process of alchemy: separate into three, refine, then reunite into one purified whole. Why does the Dao create this alchemical process? One can only speculate: alchemy allows it to grasp and refine its own essence, to transform itself endlessly as it shapes and re-shapes the original qi field.

Benefits of Learning Alchemy as Deep Language

"The Dao is very close, but everyone looks far away.

Life is very simple, but everyone seeks difficulty."

--Daoist Sage, 200 B.C

To view Nature's qi field as a deep language that one speaks with one's entire being is very liberating and fun. Nature comes alive, you bathe in its intelligence and love each moment. It's a refreshing change from spoken languages using head-centered concepts or symbols to manipulate things. Qi can only be spoken in the present tense, an

interactive dialogue between one's personal qi field and the subtle levels of Nature's mind. One can have mental thoughts about qi experiences in the past or future, but those in reality are only memories, sustained as a standing wave form in the present moment qi field. By reminding ourselves that the qi field of the present moment is alive and continually re-shaping or re-expressing itself as our body-mind process, it's easier to keep our perceptions fresh and transform habitual ego patterns or disease states. In learning to engage in the simultaneous two way conversation between Origin and Creation, one can fully commit to living in the physical world without feeling one's inner journey to the Origin must take one away from physicality. This two way communication is expressed in daoist alchemical teachings as the simultaneous cultivation of one's inner essence (xing) and one's worldly destiny (ming). Ultimately, it seems the very reason Original Spirit continues to incarnate into human form is in the hope of retrieving something valuable from our life experience that was lost at the moment our original androgynous self was split into male and female. It doesn't want to wait until our physical death to get that information or essence, it wants a report every moment if possible. That continuous conscious mutual exchange is wu wei, the ultimate state of grace marked by open communication, surrender and trust between Dao and humans. The other benefits of approaching both qigong and neidan as part of an ongoing natural language process are many fold. It breaks down the rigidity of cosmological or religious belief systems, and may encourage an open exchange between different daoist traditions. It opens the possibility that as the Dao unfolds itself as Heaven, Earth, and Beings that a wholly new cosmology may birth as the polarized tension within the physical plane resolves itself.

I see the potential for nei dan to be recognized globally as a deep language offering a practical way to experience Nature's aliveness. Acceptance of internal alchemy will parallel Chinese medicine's becoming globally recognized as having the most sophisticated language in the emerging field of energy medicine. The west is still acquiring the surface level of TCM language in accepting acupuncture needles and herbs. As the meridian and vital organ systems become more accepted, the influence the Eight Extraordinary Vessels and three core channels (the left, right, and center pathways of the thrusting vessel or chong mo) that cannot be needled with acupuncture will grow. The reality of subtle bodies of layered qi and direct communication with and healing of body spirits will be next in line. Deep language theory also allows a feng shui practitioner to talk to an acupuncturist, because both speak the language of qi. They can cooperate and work together on improving patient health from different angles using the same language.

A surface spoken language like Chinese or English evolves and adapts to the changes of culture over time. The Daoists' grasp of deep language has allowed neidan to evolve and spontaneously absorb new and useful surface language expressions from Confucianism and Buddhism without threatening their integrity. The deep language approach offers neutral ground for different streams of Daoist expression to recognize each other as sharing core principles, even though the lineage or organization of groups may appear very different. Focus on the Dao as a deep language process may diffuse

tendencies of religious groups to grow rigid and for their leaders to become self-important.

With the transmission of Daoist internal alchemy formulas to the west, a new phase of integrating western scientific, cultural, and spiritual ideas into the cosmological language of Daoism will inevitably occur. Daoist alchemy could radically alter the psychological understanding that humans have of themselves, and help alchemically inclined schools, i.e. Jungian psychologists, to more deeply embody their process. The surface languaging of alchemy in English may evolve somewhat differently than neidan has in China. But the deep language structure of yin-yang-yuan unity, 3 Treasures, 5 Phases, 8 Forces should remain recognizable and endure these changes, as they are built into Nature's mind.

Modern people have been led to believe by science that the best way to communicate with the deep workings of nature is through the microscope, the telescope, the stethoscope, the chemical spectrometer, the superfast computer and the super-collider. This has weakened people's power of direct communication with nature. The ruling religion of modern science is stuck in its exploration of nature because its mechanistic paradigm of empirical materialism does not permit the presence of an unmeasurable field of intelligent energy such as Original Spirit connotes.. Nonetheless, scientists recognize in their theories of neutrinos and cold dark matter that some binding or original force must exist.

Physicists acknowledge a desperate need to unite theories of the microcosm (quantum mechanics) and the macrocosm (general relativity), as these theories do not currently mesh with each other. It is essentially the same problems faced by the ancient daoists: "how does a tiny human communicate with the stars?" Now it is "how do subatomic particles simultaneously influence each other across time and space?" Physicists have invented superstring theory with a multi-dimensional super-conducting medium to solve this problem. This is bringing them perilously close to Daoist theory of yuan qi as the "fifth" force that will unite the other four forces.

I love the human spirit of adventure and search for cosmic origin hidden within the drive to advance technology. But how can we prevent this powerful deity Technos from destroying the balance of Nature on earth? Consider the greatest of modern scientists, staring at their computer screen, waiting for the "right" numbers to be spit out. Are they more accomplished than an uneducated simple daoist adept of internal alchemy sitting in a mountain hut, unafraid to peer deep into the heart of Nature with her naked inner vision? The odds against the adept finding their original self in the immensity of the cosmos may seem overwhelming, but that does not erase the strangely radiant smile on her face.

Appendix A: One Cloud's Seven Formulas of Immortality.

One Cloud studied with different masters, and said he kept the most essential from each, especially his final teacher on Long White Mtn. One Cloud's teaching was strictly oral, except his writing down the formulas for Mantak Chia. He stressed practice, cautioned against reading old alchemy texts as the difficult language might confuse. He

had a windowless dark room for meditation at the back of his Hong Kong mountain house. For more details on the practice of each formula, audiotape guides for each level are available. (See www.healingtaousa.com/mkl1_guide.html)

A. Foundation: Inner Smile.

- Inner Smile to cultivate presence of yuan shen, link it to brain, spine, organs.
- Six Healing Sounds to clear 5 vital organ qi and awaken 5 vital organ spirits.

1. Micro-Cosmic Orbit & Fusion of the 5 Phases (Elements) & 8 Extra Channels.

Stage: Develop energy body of adept, preparation for spiritual pregnancy.

Cauldron: lower dan tien

Method:

- Micro-cosmic Orbit to harmonize yin-yang qi flow, mix qi and blood. This "womb breathing" creates an energetic "egg" as subtle body container pure enough to later birth immortal embryo.

Circulate sexual essence in orbit to seal leakage of jing and rejuvenate brain and all organs.

- Move qi in 5 Elements Creation (sheng) cycle to nurture virtues of 5 shen, and Control (ke) cycle to transform negative emotional qi.
- Macro-cosmic Orbit: form pearl of post natal yuan qi. Circulate this pearl through 8 Extraordinary Vessels. Governor & conception vessel (ren mo & du mo), thrusting & belt channels (chung mo & dai mo), arm and heel channels (yin & yang wei mo, yin & yang qiao mo)..

2. Lesser Enlightenment of Water & Fire : Inner Sexual Alchemy

Stage: coupling body's inner male & female spirits, conception of Immortal Embryo.

Reversal (ni) of post natal qi into pre-natal qi to produce Lesser Elixir.

Cauldron: lower dan tien

Method:

- Sexual self-intercourse via counter-creation cycle (reverse sheng). 5 Elements revert to 3 primal forces (water/metal to yin, fire/wood to yang, earth to yuan). Reverse & couple water/fire, inner male & female shen (Hun & Po), cook 3 forces in cauldron, produce pre-natal yuan qi to nourish organs, nerve, lymph, circulatory system, 3 dan tiens & all qi channels.
- Opening the Inner eye, Cracking the crown.
- Turning Wheel of Law. Simultaneous turning of microcosmic orbit & creation (sheng) cycle to accelerate unfolding of destiny (one orbit in meditation = one year in life).

3. Greater Enlightenment of Kan & Li: Sun - Moon Alchemy

Stage: birth immortal child, nourish with Greater Elixir.

Cauldron: Solar plexus, inner earth is center of gravity.

Method:

- Absorb higher power yin-yang force of Moon & Sun, interiorize within body.
- Open communication between 5 Human vital organ spirits & 5 Earth Spirits of Directions (North, South, East, West, Center). Interiorize 5 sacred animal protectors, flowers, mountains, & oceans.
- Reverse & couple Sun below Moon, cook in Earth cauldron to generate greater yuan qi,
to dissolve sick qi in community or environment.
- yin body travel in dream practice.

4. Greatest Enlightenment of Kan & Li: Planetary Alchemy

Stage: Immortal Child matures, is fed True Elixir refined from Sun & planets.

Adept overcomes death/karma (ancestral incompletions).

Cauldron: Heart/middle dan tien, inner sun as center of gravity

Method:

- Absorb & fuse yin-yang power from 5 Planetary Spirits. Saturn as higher earth, interiorize sun & planets in body. Soul travels in solar system.
- Open relationship with Spirit of Sun, develop yang body. Meditation shifts to inner sound.
- Reverse & coupling yin within Yang (water hidden in Solar fire), Yang within Yin, (fire hidden within Earth water).

5. Sealing of the 5 Senses: Star Alchemy

Stage: Personal Shen and Great Shen couple, Original Spirit crystallizes.

Cauldron: Head/upper dan tien, inner pole star is center of gravity.

Method:

- 5 Shen seal the sensory openings, leave their palaces in vital organs, fuse in center of head.
- Absorb & interiorize qi field of Polestar, Big Dipper's 4 Great Star quadrants..
- Yang body roams freely in heavens, communicates with starry beings.
- Yuan qi of stars penetrates jing of body (nucleus of cells).

6. Congress of Heaven & Earth

Stage: Early Heaven and Later Heaven copulate, open portal to Primordial Origin

Cauldron: all three cauldrons as one. Inner void is center of gravity.

Method:

- Poles of Heaven and Earth reverse and couple within, True Macrocosmic Orbit.
- Original innocence of Humanity crystallizes in middle dan tien: Cosmic Inner Smile.
- Physical sea of jing/body wisdom dissolves into universal field of yuan qi.
- Hun dun, dark primal chaos-unity is interiorized.

7. Union of Man with Dao

Stage: Eternal present moment realized, the three Heavens & Treasures merge into wuji.

Cauldron: Wuji, the Supreme Unknown.

Method: Unknown. Arises spontaneously when virtue, destiny, and cultivation are complete.

FOOTNOTES:

(1) adapted from Vitality, Energy, Spirit (Shamballa, 1991) T. Cleary, ed., pg. 185.

(2) The bigu ("without food") phenomenon has left the realm of legend. For conference of western scientists studying students of modern nei dan teacher Yan Xin who stopped eating for months or years without undue weight loss, see www.yanxingqigong/bigu.html. For account by one of my western students that entered bigu using One Cloud's formulas, "Healing Tao Goes Breatharian" by Eve Adesso, at www.healingdao.com/library_index.html

(3) Tao Te Ching, Addiss & Lombardo (Hackett Publishing, Indiana) pg. xviii.

(4) Raphael Gamaroff surveys the confusion and disagreements amongst linguists over what "deep language" means at www.und.ac.za/und/ling/archive/gama-01.html

(5) Organism and Psyche in a Participatory Universe, by Mae-Won Ho.
www.i-sis.org/organis.htm

(6) The line between qigong and neigong is necessarily fuzzy, depending on subtle mind intent and skill of each practitioner. "Wuji qigong" is a term often used to denote a "superclass of qigong" that is also a neigong form focused on opening a connection to the Origin. I learned an 800 year old lineage wuji qigong form that came from a 106 year old daoist monk on Wudang Mtn. Based on daoist cosmology and alchemy, it feels qualitatively very different from other qigong forms. Available as video, www.healingdao.com

(7) U.N. reports there are 6-7,000. spoken languages on the planet; nearly 5,000. of them tribal, disappearing at a fast rate. lycos.com/ens

(8) from abstract of study by Prof. Tadanobu Tsunoda, Tokyo Medical and Dental University, unknown where it was published.

(9) By odd synchronicity the 16th cen. mathematician Leibnitz developed the binary number theory at the same time he was exposed to the I Ching's yin-yang patterns, undoubtedly brought back by Jesuit priests.

(10) Disputers of the Tao, A.C. Graham (open Court, 1989), p. 350 notes that correlative thinking in resonant patterns is much faster than analytical systems of psychology, politics, sociology, and thus approximates more closely the "pure" science of physics.

(11) Adepted from Tao Te Ching, Victor Mair (Bantam, 1990), pg. 9.

(12) Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism, Norman Girardot (UC Press, 1983)

(13) "yuan" terms are found in much nei dan literature, here referenced in Joseph Needham's Science and Civilization, vol. V:5 on physiological alchemy, pg. 26.

(14) Organism and Psyche in a Participatory Universe, by Mae-Won Ho.
www.i-sis.org/organis.htm

(15) Secret of Everlasting Life, R. Bertschinger (Element Books, 1994), pg. 38 .

(16) The division of Song dynasty dao canon texts into "Three Open Channels" of Reality, Peace, and Spirits reflect a traditional daoist emphasis on clarity of subtle field communication. These channels, also translated as "caverns" or "vaults" within the

adept, have a vast inner sky and connect the adept to different inner heavens. cf. Book of Balance and Harmony, pg xix.)

(17) The "squaring of the circle" and vesica piscis are nearly universal icons in eastern and western alchemical systems, suggesting that the symmetries of sacred geometry are an important part of the grammar of Nature's deep language. The "egg" formed by the microcosmic orbit and the vortices inside the egg's axis created by spiralling internal ba gua shapes are another yin-yang pair. In nei dan, these shapes are always moving volumetric geometries found within the adept's interior cosmos.

(18) Hungry ghosts ("po"), the earthbound soul fragments of deceased humans, are the unintegrated body spirits that lack the will and the yuan qi to bind them to the celestial aspect of human souls ("hun") normally absorbed back into Early Heaven at death. These people have often died of trauma or with deep psychic conflict. During my neidan retreats, the group yuan qi field seems to attract them. I often witness (by inner vision) a steady parade of faces passing through the vesica opening which I believe are hungry ghosts. They range in number from dozens to hundreds, and most appear around age 20 -25, the ideal healthy age the dead soul fragments see themselves at even if they died much older. The kinds of faces and their dress varies with geographical location. This occurs spontaneously, without any invocation or visualization on my part.

(19) Kristofer Schipper's The Taoist Body (UC Press, 1993) pg. 195, and entire final chapter.

(20) The Book of Balance and Harmony (North Point, S.F. 1989), trans. Thomas Cleary, pg. 37. has description of similar structure of Lesser, Greater and Greatest alchemical cauldrons. Also see Taoism: Growth of a Religion, Isabelle Robinet (Stanford, 1997), pg. 254.

(21) The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge, Jeremy Narby, (Putnam, 1998), pg. 144.

(22) For discussion of the written chinese characters, cf. Survey of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Larre & Schatz (Traditional Acupuncture Institute, 1986) p. 79

(23) Seven Steps to the Tao: Sima Chengzhen's Zuowanglun, Livia Kohn (Styler Verlag, 1987)

(24) unpublished study by Gerhard Eggetsberger, Director Institute for Applied Biocybernetics and Feedbaack Research, Viena Austria.

(25) cf Empty Vessel interview on Taoist Internal Alchemy with Winn, posted at www.healingdao.com/library_index.html

(26) Interestingly, the western mystic Rudolf Steiner held a similar view of individual organ evolution. Cf. Reincarnation as a Phenomonon of Metamorphosis, Guenther Wachsmuth (Anthroposophic Press, 1937) p.254. The Egyptians also posited multiple souls within a single human and thus embalmed the vital organs separately in canopic jars.

(27) Esoteric practices of many mystery schools has become available in recent decades, permitting cross school comparisons at a much deeper level. I personally explored a number of these schools, including kriya yoga's 6 stages of samadhi (cf. The Bhagavad Gita in the Light of Kriya Yoga, by Swami Hariharnanda, edited by Michael Winn, published in India, available at kriya.org), the Tibetan bonpo teachings of

dzogchen, Celtic underworld ceremonies and pre-egyptian kaballistic alchemy (cf. my work in progress, Stellar Mind Speaks: Shape Your Life Energy). All of these schools had esoteric teachings with principles similar to Daoist trinities of yin-yang-yuan and 5 Elements theory.

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Taoist Secrets of Love: Cultivating Male Sexual Energy (1984, with Mantak Chia)

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Daoist Internal Alchemy, Woodcuts from Xingming Guizhi (Pointers on Spiritual Nature and Bodily Life). 1615. magictransistor. Follow. Unfollow. yi zhenren daoist adept chinese woodcuts daoist internal alchemy illustrations diagrammatic 17th century the way daoism chinese art ming dynasty wellcome library magictransistor alejandromerola 1615. 358 notes.