

WANG MU

Foundations
of Internal Alchemy
The Taoist Practice of Neidan



Golden Elixir Press

FOUNDATIONS OF INTERNAL ALCHEMY

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The Taoist Practice of Neidan

Translated and edited by
Fabrizio Pregadio

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www.goldenelixir.com/press/tao_01_foundations.html

Originally published as “*Wuzhen pian danfa yaozhi*” 「悟真篇」丹法要旨
in *Wuzhen pian qianjie (wai san zhong)* 「悟真篇」淺解（外三種）
(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990)

© 2011 Golden Elixir Press
ISBN 978-0984308255 (pbk)

Golden Elixir Press, Mountain View, CA
www.goldenelixir.com

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Contents

Foreword, vii

PART 1 INTRODUCTION, 1

The Basis: Essence and Spirit, 3

PART 2 STAGES OF THE ALCHEMICAL PRACTICE IN AWAKENING TO
REALITY, 11

The Four Stages, 13

1: “Laying the Foundations,” 15

1. Main Points in the Practice of “Laying the Foundations,” 20

The Opening, 20

The Vessels, 27

The Three Barriers, 34

2. The Functions of Essence, Breath, and Spirit, 36

Spirit, 37

Breath, 42

Essence, 46

3. Terms Related to the “Coagulation of the Three Treasures,” 52

“*Refining*,” 52

“*Harmonization*,” 55

4. Conclusion of the Stage of “Laying the Foundations,” 63

2: “Refining Essence to Transmute it into Breath,” 65

The Medicine, 66

Transmutation, 69

The River Chariot, 71

The Fire Times, 74

Tripod and Stove, 86

“*Collecting*,” “*Sealing*,” “*Refining*,” and “*Extinguishing*,” 88

Conclusion, 91

3: “Refining Breath to Transmute it into Spirit,” 99

The Great Medicine, 100

The Embryo of Sainthood, 100

“Bathing at the Four Cardinal Points,” 102

The Greater Celestial Circuit, 105

The “True Zi Hour,” 106

4: “Refining Spirit to Return to Emptiness,” 109

PART 3 CONCLUSION, 119

The “Arts of the Way,” 121

Tables, 123

1: Five Agents (Associations), 125

2: Five Agents (Spatial Distribution), 126

3: Eight Trigrams (Associations), 127

4: Eight Trigrams (Spatial Distribution), 128

5: Sixty Hexagrams, 129

6: “Sovereign Hexagrams,” 130

7: Celestial Stems, 131

8: Earthly Branches, 131

Glossary of Chinese Characters, 133

Foreword

This book was originally published in 1982 as a two-part essay in *Zhongguo daojiao* (Chinese Taoism), the official journal of the China Taoist Association. In slightly revised forms, it was republished in 1990 as a lengthy appendix to an annotated edition of the *Wuzhen pian* (Awakening to Reality), entitled *Wuzhen pian qianjie* (A simple explanation of the *Wuzhen pian*); and again in 1990 in the author's collected writings, entitled *Neidan yangsheng gongfa zhiyao* (Foundations of the practices of Internal Alchemy and Nourishing Life), with several later reprints.

The author, Wang Mu 王沐 (1908–92), received the Longmen ordination in his youth. He taught Internal Alchemy (Neidan) and was held in high regard by both practitioners and Taoist scholars. He served as a board member of the China Taoist Association and was for some time in charge of its research activities. He is known outside China mainly for the above-mentioned edition of the *Wuzhen pian*, the text at the basis of the outline of Internal Alchemy that he provides in the present book.

As all readers will notice, Wang Mu writes from the viewpoint of his tradition. He accepts virtually all traditional details concerning such issues as doctrine, lineage, and textual authorship or date. In many cases, he essentially rephrases statements found in the original texts into present-day language. His procedure is also analogous to the one seen in the textual sources of Neidan, which repeatedly quote passages of earlier writings taking them as positive and definitive evidence of the validity of their own assertions. The recurrent articulation of certain basic concepts is another feature shared with the original Neidan texts.

Except for the introduction and the short conclusion, Wang Mu's work is arranged according to the stages of the alchemical practice: a preliminary phase followed by three main stages. For each stage, the focus of Wang Mu's discourse, which makes his work extremely valuable, is the discussion of the main relevant terms and concepts, including such essential notions as Essence, Breath, and Spirit; the "fire times" (*huohou*); and the Embryo. With regard to this point, an additional trait that his discussion shares with the alchemical texts is the progressively shorter

space devoted to each stage. As Li Daochun (ca. 1290) wrote in one of his works, when the alchemical practice comes to the third and last stage, “no words apply.”

As a writer, Wang Mu makes very few concessions to his reader, and none specifically to his Western reader: his work is written for, and addressed to, a Chinese audience. Although he provides an accessible overview of Internal Alchemy, mainly focused on its practices, he does not intend in the first place to popularize, but to transmit. This feature has been preserved in the present English translation: with the exception of a few footnotes that attempt to clarify certain points probably taken for granted by a Chinese reader, but possibly equivocal for a Western reader, the translation tries to reproduce as closely as possible the author’s own writing style and line of reasoning. References to sources, which Wang Mu as a rule does not provide, have been supplied for all quotations that have been identified.

One final point that requires consideration in reading Wang Mu’s work is directly related to its date of publication. In the People’s Republic of China, during the 1980s, Taoism had just begun to recover from the trials endured in the previous decades, making good use of a limited easing of controls by the central government. Several works published in those years present Neidan as a form of Qigong, in an effort to circumvent restraints on what was still official labeled as a “feudal superstition.” This may explain Wang Mu’s frequent stress on the merits of Neidan in relation to medicine and healing, his repeated references to the “scientific” evidence of its benefits, and the value he accords to the practitioner’s “active” attitude, suggesting that the Neidan practice does not necessarily imples a lack of involvement in society. Certain terms and notions occasionally used in the book—e.g., “materialism” and “subjective idealism”—are best seen as the price to pay in order to be entitled to write on more significant subjects.

Fabrizio Pregadio
February 2011

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

The Basis:

Essence and Spirit

The work entitled *Awakening to Reality* (*Wuzhen pian*), written by Zhang Boduan around 1075, has been included in the Taoist Canon, in the Buddhist Canon, and in several collections compiled by Confucian scholars under imperial decree.¹ The *Siku tiyao* (Descriptive Notes on the Books of the Four Repositories) states that, with Wei Boyang's *Cantong qi* (Token for the Joining of the Three), *Awakening to Reality* contains the orthodox transmission of the Taoist alchemical methods. In the table of contents of his *Daozang jinghua lu* (Record of the Essential Splendors of the Taoist Canon), Ding Fubao (1874–1952) praises *Awakening to Reality* saying: “Its words are smooth and fluent, and its meaning is deep and profound. This work contains the golden rule to cultivate the Elixir, the jade principle to give nourishment to life.”

This shows that *Awakening to Reality* has been held in high esteem within all the Three Teachings: Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. With regard to Neidan (Internal Alchemy), Zhang Boduan's work inherits and transmits the principles of self-cultivation of the *Cantong qi*, and provides a synopsis of the doctrines of the period prior to the Song dynasty (960–1279). However, *Awakening to Reality* is addressed to those who have already attained a rather deep level of attainment in the practices of Neidan (Internal Alchemy). Therefore Zhang Boduan's work does not begin from the basic methods, and does not provide a systematic arrangement of the stages of the alchemical practice. In addition, its poems are obscure and do not follow a precise sequence. This is done intentionally, so that those who read the text for the first time may perceive its profundity.

¹ The Buddhist Canon of the Qing period (*Qianlong Dazang jing*) contains the Yongzheng Emperor's *Yuxuan yulu* (Imperial Compilation of Recorded Sayings), which in turn includes a partial version of the “Outer Chapters” of the *Wuzhen pian*. See also below, p. 111.

While *Awakening to Reality* does not deal with the initial stage of the practice, details on this subject are found in three other works by Zhang Boduan. One of them, the *Secret Text of Green Florescence* (*Qinghua biwen*), contains a systematic exposition of oral instructions on the foundations of the practice. The other two, namely the *Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir* (*Jindan sibai zi*) and the *Book of the Eight Vessels* (*Bamai jing*), give concrete details on the initial stage.²

These works supply what is missing in *Awakening to Reality*. The present book will look at the four texts together and present their content in a systematic way. This will make it possible to proceed without ambiguities from the surface to the core, and present an outline of Zhang Boduan's alchemical practice. The broader integration of these notions lies in the hands of the reader: the present book can do no more than providing some clues, and should be used only as a source of information.

Nature (Xing) and Life (Ming). With regard to the alchemical practice, *Awakening to Reality* maintains that the cultivation of Ming (Life) should precede the cultivation of Xing (Nature), and that “doing” (*youwei*) should precede “non-doing” (*wuwei*). Of course, this does not mean that, at the beginning of the practice, one receives only instructions on compounding the Elixir, and that nothing at all is conveyed on the cultivation of the mind: each stage of the practice gives emphasis to one or the other aspect, but neither should be cultivated on its own.

Zhang Boduan's works show that, in his view, the first stage of the alchemical practice (“laying the foundations”) consists of the dual cultivation of Xing (Nature) and Ming (Life). The second stage (“refining Essence to transmute it into Breath”) emphasizes the work on Ming. In the third stage (“refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit”), the work on Xing has priority on the work on Ming. Finally, in the fourth stage (“refining Spirit to return to Emptiness”) one works only on Xing. Whether the cultivation of Xing or of Ming has priority depends, in other words, on the progress of one's practice. However, while the first stage is described in Zhang Boduan's three other works, *Awakening to Reality* begins from the second stage. In this work, therefore, the practice of Ming comes first, and the practice of Xing comes second. Then, in the “Outer

² *Author's note:* The *Secret Text of Green Florescence* was written by Zhang Boduan and edited by his disciple, Wang Bangshu. — The complete title of this work is *Yuqing jinsi Qinghua biwen jinbao neilian danjue* (Alchemical Instructions on the Inner Refinement of the Golden Treasure, a Secret Text from the Golden Casket of the Jade Clarity Transmitted by the Immortal of Green Florescence).

Chapters” (“Waipian”) of *Awakening to Reality*, Zhang Boduan presents a series of poems based on the principles of Chan (Zen) Buddhism. He uses those principles as metaphors for the practice of Xing, in order to assist the students in their comprehension of the ultimate foundation.

Imagery and language. Before we begin, a few remarks are necessary on the approach required to read *Awakening to Reality*. This text cannot be studied on the basis of the superficial meanings of its words. In his *Sizhu Wuzhen pian* (Four Commentaries to *Awakening to Reality*), Fu Jinquan (1765–1844) says:

丹經有微言，有顯言，有正言，有疑似之言，有比喻之言，有影射之言，有旁敲側擊之言，有丹理，有口訣，似神龍隱現，出沒不測，東露一鱗，西露一爪，所以讀者必須細心尋求也。

In the alchemical texts there are subtle words, plain words, clear words, allusive words, metaphoric words, murky words, as well as circuitous and cunning words. There are doctrines on the Elixir, and there are oral instructions. It is as if a divine dragon first hides itself and then emerges, only to vanish and become invisible again, leaving a scale on the eastern road, and a claw on the western road. This requires much attention from the reader.

Awakening to Reality itself says:

卦中設象本儀形，得象忘言意自明，舉世迷徒惟執象，卻行卦氣望飛昇。

The images of the hexagrams are established on the basis of their meanings:
understand the images and forget the words — the idea is clear of itself.

The whole world delusively clings to the images:
they practice the “breaths of the hexagrams” and hope thereby to rise in flight.³

This tells the readers that they should not try to understand the core by looking at the surface, or they would be caught in a maze. They should, instead, look at the front, the back, the cracks, and the edges to

³ *Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem 37. For comments on this poem, see p. 85.

find the true meaning; and they should draw the main gist from the “metaphoric, murky, and allusive words.”

Weng Baoguang (fl. 1173) lists several dozen synonyms of Essence and Spirit.⁴ The synonyms of Essence (*jing*) include the following:

Kan ☵	坎
<i>Geng</i>	庚
4	四
9	九
Metal	金
Po-Soul of the Moon	月魄
Hare's Lard	兔脂
Old Gentleman	老郎
Male Kan ☵	坎男
True Lead	真鉛
White Snow	白雪
Golden Liquor	金液
Water Tiger	水虎
Golden Flower	金華
Black Lead	黑鉛
Mother of the Elixir	丹母
Jade Pistil	玉蕊
Breath of the Tiger's Moon-Quarter	虎弦氣
Lead of the Yellow Sprout	黃芽鉛
Essence of the Black Turtle	黑龜精
Red Sun in the Pool's Bottom	潭底日紅
Gentleman in Plain Silk	素練郎君
White-haired Old Man	白頭老子
White within the Black	黑中有白
Half Pound of Hare's Marrow	兔髓半斤
Born at <i>Ren</i> and <i>Gui</i>	生于壬癸
Gentleman of 9 and 3	九三郎君
Half-pound of Metal in the First Moon-Quarter	上弦金半斤
Moon-Essence of Wu in Kan ☵	坎戊月精

The synonyms of Spirit (*shen*) include the following:

Li ☲	離
------	---

⁴ *Wuzhen zhizhi xiangshuo sansheng biyao*, “Jindan faxiang.”

Mao	卯
Jia	甲
East	東
3	三
8	八
Wood	木
Hun-Soul of the Sun	日魂
Marrow of the Crow	烏髓
Lovely Maiden	姹女
Green Beauty	青娥
True Mercury	真汞
Liquor of Wood	木液
Mercury of Fire	火汞
Fire Dragon	火龍
Metal Crow	金烏
Female Mother	雌母
Flowing Pearls	流珠
Red Lead	紅鉛
Vermilion Sand	朱砂
Joined Peaches	交梨
Jade Mushroom	玉芝
True Fire	真火
Silver in Water	水銀
Crow in the Sun	日中烏
Breath of the Dragon's Moon-Quarter	龍弦氣
Marrow of the Red Phoenix	赤鳳髓
Mercury in the Sand	砂裏汞
Ji within Li ☲	離之己
White Moon on the Mountain's Peak	山頭月白
Woman in Green Attire	青衣女子
Barbarian with Jade-Blue Eyes	碧眼胡兒
Eight Ounces of Crow's Liver	烏肝八兩
Born at <i>Bing</i> and <i>Ding</i>	生于丙丁
Lovely Maiden of the Two Eights	二八姹女
Vermilion Sand in the Tripod	朱砂鼎內
Half-pound of Water in the Last Moon-Quarter	下弦水半斤

In fact, those listed above are only a small part of the code names of Essence and Spirit; but they clearly illustrate the fact that the large variety of terms used in the alchemical texts serves to intentionally

conceal the true teachings. Now, if the main purpose of a religious teaching is drawing people to faith, why are the alchemical texts so obscure? Essentially, the Taoist alchemical methods are kept secret within closed groups; the selection of disciples is severe, and the methods are transmitted under oath. The most important points are not committed to writing: they are handed down in person from master to disciple, and are transmitted by word of mouth. Therefore when the alchemical masters write their books, they are extremely cautious. As the saying goes, they hide the mother and talk of the son, and leave the root to pursue the branches. Their writings are more complex than riddles.

Nevertheless, if a reader effectively understands the points of crucial importance, and discerns the clues that reveal the overall pattern, the alchemical texts are not too hard to comprehend. This is because the metaphors used in the texts consist only of the images of the eight trigrams (*bagua*), the sequences of “generation and conquest” (*shengke*) of the five agents, the numbers of the *Chart of the Yellow River (Hetu)*, and the terminology of Waidan (External Alchemy); they include terms related to the alchemical laboratory and to the vegetal world, borrow from the transformations of Yin and Yang displayed by the Sun and Moon, and refer to the features of the cycle of the four seasons during the year.

Below the surface, when the alchemical texts provide the true instructions, they simply take Essence, Breath, and Spirit as the foundation. By means of the practice, Essence, Breath, and Spirit are transmuted; they gather in the Cinnabar Field, and coagulate and coalesce together. Afterward, by “sitting in quiescence” and “harmonizing the breathing,” and by using the Intention (*yi*) as a guide, one’s practice progressively deepens, and this allows the internal organs and the bones to be filled with energy. Breath and blood flow unobstructed, the natural potential of one’s own life force develops, and this can heal from illnesses and defer decline and aging. Therefore, although the alchemical texts use a large number of metaphors to provide their discourse with a spiritual quality, the discourse itself is not otherworldly. It consists, rather, in a method for Nourishing Life (*yangsheng*) based on a hard practice of inner refining.

Taoist thought is idealistic, but its spirit is positive: it resides in an attempt to regulate the cosmos and control nature. The saying, “inverting the course generates an Immortal” (*nixing chengxian*) does not only apply to one’s own practice, but to the whole view of the cosmos: “inverting the course” means reversing the ordinary patterns, so that all things return under the command of the alchemical master.

The Taoist ideal is calling the wind and summoning the rain, transforming the four seasons, giving commands to the spirits, and returning to life after death. With regard to the human body, Taoism considers that we can use our natural functions to heal from illness, and a self-cultivation practice to defer aging and reach a long life. In the words of the *Yinfu jing* (Scripture of the Hidden Agreement):

宇宙在乎手，萬化生乎身。

The cosmos lies in your hands, the ten thousand transformations are born from yourself.⁵

Awakening to Reality is filled with this religious spirit. While this may be called a fantasy, it is because of that spirit that, in the view of Zhang Boduan's work, one can attain a long life, provided that the alchemical practice is performed in the appropriate way. A poem in *Awakening to Reality* says:

藥逢氣類方成象，道在希夷合自然，一粒靈丹吞入腹，始知我命不由天。

Only when the Medicines meet in breath (*qi*) and kind do they form an image:

the Dao is inaudible and invisible, and is joined to What is so by Itself.

Ingest the one grain of numinous Elixir, let it enter the belly, and for the first time you will know that your destiny does not depend on Heaven.⁶

This poem reflects the positive spirit of the entire text. We cannot deny that this attitude amounts to a form of subjective idealism; but in spite of that, the poem shows that, while the final goal of Taoism is “non-doing” (*wuwei*), the process of self-cultivation involves actual and substantial “doing” (*youwei*). In the alchemical methods of the Southern Lineage (Nanzong), this corresponds to the view that the practice should first use a “gradual method” (*jianfa*), which follows a definite sequence of steps and stages; and then use an “immediate method” (*dunfa*), by which, after a certain stage, it produces instantaneous results. Concerning this point, *Awakening to Reality* says:

⁵ *Yinfu jing*, part 1.

⁶ *Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem 54.

始於有作人難見，及至無為眾始知，但見無為為要妙，豈知有作是根基。

It begins with *doing*, and hardly can one see a thing,
when it comes to *non-doing*, all begin to understand.
But if you only see *non-doing* as the essential marvel,
how can you know that *doing* is the foundation?⁷

The entire alchemical practice is inspired by and revolves around this way of seeing. The practices of *Awakening to Reality* consist in restoring, replenishing, augmenting, and furthering the bodily functions in order to reach a higher state of health.

Among the alchemical texts attributed to Zhang Boduan, *Awakening to Reality* is certainly his own work. Two other texts, namely the *Secret Text of Green Florescence* and the *Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir*, are included in the Taoist Canon, while the *Book of the Eight Vessels* was incorporated by Li Shizhen (1518–93) in his *Bencao gangmu* (Pharmacopoeia Arranged into Headings and Subheadings). The origins of the latter three texts are clear, and their transmission is identical: all of them belong to the Pure Cultivation branch (Qingxiu pai) of the Southern Lineage of Neidan. Yu Yan (1258–1314) was the first to suspect that the *Four Hundred Words* was composed by Bai Yuchan (1194–1229?), and some believe that the *Secret Text of Green Florescence* was actually written by Li Buye during the Ming period. These assumptions, however, are devoid of sufficient testimony and are not supported by adequate evidence.

On the whole, the Taoist alchemical practices constitute one type of methods of Nourishing Life (*yangsheng*). If one not only studies, but also performs those practices, removing the religious coloring and the fantasies of “long life,” then the specific methods of operation are worthy of attention.

⁷ *Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem 42.

Part 2

STAGES OF
THE ALCHEMICAL PRACTICE
IN *AWAKENING TO REALITY*

The Four Stages

In the Zhong-Lü tradition, the description of the alchemical practice is generally divided into four stages: (1) Laying the foundations; (2) Refining Essence to transmute it into Breath; (3) Refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit; (4) Refining Spirit to return to Emptiness.

The main features of the four stages are the following:

- 1 “Laying the foundations” (*zhuji*) is the practice performed to replenish the Three Origins (*sanyuan*, i.e., Original Essence, Original Breath, and Original Spirit) within the body.
- 2 “Refining Essence to transmute it into Breath” (*lianjing huaqi*) is the “initial barrier” (*chuguan*) of inner cultivation. At this stage, Original Essence, Original Breath, and Original Spirit coagulate with one another and form a Breath made of the union of Essence and Breath. This stage is also called Compounding the Great Medicine (*zuo dayao*).
- 3 “Refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit” (*lianqi huashen*) is the “intermediate barrier” (*zhongguan*) of inner cultivation. The Great Medicine coagulates with Original Spirit, and they form a Spirit made of the union of the Three Origins. This stage is also called Compounding the Elixir (*zuodan*).
- 4 “Refining Spirit to return to Emptiness” (*lianshen huanxu*) is the “higher barrier” (*shangguan*) of inner cultivation. By refining Spirit one attains Emptiness and Non-Being (*xuwu*). This is the highest state.

The following chapters describe the four stages in detail.

1 “Laying the Foundations”

The expression “laying the foundations” is a metaphor often used in the alchemical texts. To build a house, one must first lay the foundations. Only when the foundations are stable and firm is it possible to set pillars and beams in place, and arrange bricks and tiles. Refining the Internal Elixir is based on the same principle.

The alchemical practice, however, is concerned with the human body. At the initial stage of the Neidan process, therefore, one should first replenish the basic constituents of the body, so that they conform to the requirements of the practice. Only then is it possible to undertake the stages of alchemical refinement proper. Until the basic constituents do not conform to those requirements, the body’s functions should be restored and augmented by means of inner practices, so that Essence, Breath, and Spirit can reach a state of abundance. All this pertains to the stage of “laying the foundations.”

Taoism deems Essence, Breath, and Spirit to be the major components of life, and the alchemical texts call them the Three Treasures (*sanbao*). If the Three Treasures are healthy and flourishing, the body is strong; if they are drained and depleted, illnesses develop. When the alchemical texts speak of refining the Elixir, they actually mean refining the Three Treasures. Chen Zhixu (1290–ca. 1368) says in his *Jindan dayao* (Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir):

神氣精三物相感，順則成人，逆則生丹。何謂順？一生二，二生三，三生萬物，故虛化神，神化氣，氣化精，精化形，形乃成人。何謂逆？萬物含三，三歸二，二歸一。知此道者，怡神守形，養形鍊精，積精化氣，鍊氣合神，鍊神還虛，金丹乃成。

Essence, Breath, and Spirit affect one another. When they follow the course, they form the human being; when they invert the course, they generate the Elixir.

What is the meaning of “following the course” (*shun*)? “The One generates the Two, the Two generate the Three, the Three generate

the ten thousand things.”¹ Therefore Emptiness transmutes itself into Spirit, Spirit transmutes itself into Breath, Breath transmutes itself into Essence, Essence transmutes itself into form, and form becomes the human being.

What is the meaning of “inverting the course” (*ni*)? The ten thousand things hold the Three, the Three return to the Two, the Two return to the One. Those who know this Way look after their Spirit and guard their corporeal form. They nourish the corporeal form to refine the Essence, accumulate the Essence to transmute it into Breath, refine the Breath to merge it with Spirit, and refine the Spirit to revert to Emptiness. Then the Golden Elixir is achieved.²

In his commentary to *Awakening to Reality*, Weng Baoguang writes:

精能生氣，氣能生神，榮衛一身，莫大於此。養生之士，先寶其精，精滿則氣壯，氣壯則神旺，神旺則身健而少病。內則五藏敷華，外則皮膚潤澤。顏容光彩，耳目聰明。

Essence can generate Breath, and Breath can generate Spirit; to strengthen and protect oneself, nothing is more important than this. Those who devote themselves to Nourishing Life (*yangsheng*) treasure in the first place their Essence. If the Essence is full, Breath is strong; if the Breath is strong, Spirit flourishes; if the Spirit flourishes, the body is healthy and there are few illnesses. Internally, the five viscera bloom; externally, the skin becomes smooth. One’s complexion is luminous, and one’s ears and eyes are sharp and bright.³

In the two passages quoted above, Chen Zhixu explains Essence, Breath, and Spirit in terms of their sequence in “following the course” and “inverting the course.” Weng Baoguang, instead, explains them as the basic components of existence. But beyond these differences, at the stage of “laying the foundations” there are two tasks: the first is preserving the state of Essence and Breath; the second is replenishing their shortage. When Essence is abundant, when Breath is full, and when Spirit is flourishing, this stage of the practice is concluded.

¹ *Daode jing*, 42.

² *Jindan dayao*, chapter 4.

³ Only the first sentence of this passage is found in Weng Baoguang’s *Wuzhen pian zhushu*, chapter 1. The remainder is actually a quotation from Chen Zhixu’s *Jindan dayao*, chapter 3. Both passages are attributed to Weng Baoguang in the Qing-dynasty *Yangsheng sanyao* (The Three Essentials for Nourishing Life).

“Superior virtue” and “inferior virtue.” At the stage of “laying the foundations,” there are differences of initial conditions, age, and physical constitution. The practices, therefore, differ according to each individual. With regard to this point, the alchemical texts distinguish between “superior virtue” (*shangde*) and “inferior virtue” (*xiade*). “Superior virtue” refers to childhood and young age; “inferior virtue” refers to adulthood and old age.

According to the principles of alchemy, at a young age the human body grows like a young sprout. Borrowing a term from the *Daode jing* (Book of the Way and its Virtue), this is called “superior virtue.”⁴ Spirit and Breath are abundant, and there is no need of performing any practice to build the foundations. After growth and maturity, Essence, Breath, and Spirit become consumed and should be replenished. In the alchemical practice, this is referred to as “inferior virtue”: one must provide what is missing.

An alchemical poem says:

上德無為入性功，何須修補調虧盈。

“Superior virtue has no doing,” and you enter the practice of Xing (Nature):
is there any need of repairing or harmonizing what is damaged or full?⁵

The *Cantong qi* says:

上德無為，不以察求，下德為之，其用不休。

“Superior virtue has no doing”:
it does not use examining and seeking.
“Inferior virtue does”:
its operation does not rest.⁶

In his commentary to the *Cantong qi*, Liu Yiming (1734–1821) explains this passage as follows:

⁴ *Daode jing*, 38: “Superior virtue has no doing: there is nothing whereby it does. Inferior virtue does: there is something whereby it does.”

⁵ In a slightly different form, this poem is found in Liu Qiaqiao’s (1839–1933) *Qiaoqiao dongzhang*.

⁶ *Cantong qi*, chapter 7. (References are to Chen Zhixu’s redaction.)

修道有二法。一以道全形之事，一以術延命之事。上德者，以道全其形，抱元守一，行無為之道，即可了事，故曰「上德無為，不以察求」也。下德者，以術延其命，由勉抵安，行有為之道，方能還元，故曰「下德為之，其用不休」也。夫上德之所以不察求者，以其上德之人，天真未傷，客氣未入，若頓悟本性，無修無證 … 。察求之功無所用。下德之所以用不休者，以其天真已虧，知識已開，雖能頓悟本性，不能立即馴順，必用漸修之道，增減之功 … 。此不休之用所由貴也。上德下德，身份不一，故其用亦異 … 。但終同歸一途。

For the cultivation of the Dao there are two methods: one is the pursuit of bringing one's form (*xing*) to completion by means of the Dao, the other is the pursuit of extending one's life (*ming*) by means of a practice.

Superior virtue brings the form to completion by means of the Dao. One embraces the Origin and guards Unity, and performs the way of “non-doing”; thus one can exhaust all pursuits. Therefore the *Cantong qi* says, “Superior virtue has no doing: it does not use examining and seeking.” Inferior virtue extends life by means of a practice. One begins from effort and ends with stability, and performs the way of “doing”; thus one is able to revert to the Origin. Therefore the *Cantong qi* says, “Inferior virtue does: its operation does not rest.”

The reason why superior virtue “does not use examining and seeking” is that in the person of superior virtue, Celestial Reality (*tianzhen*) has never been damaged and extraneous breaths (*keqi*) have never entered. Since one immediately awakens to one's fundamental Nature, there is nothing to cultivate and nothing to verify. . . . The function of examining and seeking does not operate.

The reason why the operation of inferior virtue “does not rest” is that Celestial Reality is lacking and cognition has begun. Although one could immediately awaken to one's fundamental Nature, one cannot follow it as is. One must use the way of gradual cultivation (*jianxiu*) and the function of augmenting and decreasing (*zengjian*).⁷ . . . This is why the unceasing use [of inferior virtue] is valuable.

Pp. 19-64 are omitted from this preview

⁷ “Augmenting and decreasing” refers to the cycles of increase and decrease of Yin and Yang in the Fire Times; see below, pp. 74 ff.

2 Refining Essence

to Transmute it into Breath

In the Taoist alchemical practices of Nourishing Life, the stage of “refining Essence to transmute it into Breath” has a crucial importance, as it represents the first level after “laying the foundations.” Building on the basis established in the previous stage, one advances in the work of refining Essence, Breath, and Spirit.

At this stage, Essence, Breath, and Spirit—the Three Treasures—are said to be the ingredients. The practice of “laying the foundations” is intended to replenish their supply. This initial, preparatory practice is called the stage of the “arts of the Way” (*daoshu*). Only after the Three Treasures have been replenished can one enter the stages of refining the Internal Elixir. These stages are called “arts of Immortality” (*xianshu*).

One of the representative sayings concerning “laying the foundations” is: “When Essence is full, one does not think of desires; when Breath is full, one does not think of food; when Spirit is full, one does not think of sleep.” This, however, is only an abstraction. The alchemical masters give directions to their disciples by examining their eyes, their teeth, and their voice in order to establish the most fruitful procedure. Another saying refers to this by these words: “When Spirit is abundant, it is shown by the light of the eyes; when Breath is abundant, it is shown by the voice; when Essence is abundant, it is shown by the teeth.”

It is said, moreover, that when the Cinnabar Field is as firm as a stone; when one’s pace is as light as flying; and when, each time one begins to practice, the “source of the Medicine” is lively and brisk, the “celestial mechanism” is unobstructed and flourishing, and the “substance of Water” is clear and true—when all this happens, one has begun the work of “refining Essence and transmuting it into Breath.”

“Refining Essence to transmute it into Breath” is also called the Barrier of the Hundred Days (*bairi guan*). This is only a conventional term, and does not mean that this stage necessarily requires one hundred days.

Since this is a higher stage compared to “laying the foundations,” we must explicate several new technical terms in addition to those mentioned in the previous chapter. These explications are meant to provide a general outline of this stage of the practice.



The Medicine (yao 藥)

What the alchemical texts call the Medicine is made of the Essence, the Breath, and the Spirit that have been replenished at the stage of “laying the foundations.” As we have seen, the three ingredients are also called “the three wholes” (*sanquan*). An alchemical text refers to them when it says: “In order for the Great Elixir not to vanish, you need the three wholes. If it requires arduous practice and is hard to achieve, you should blame the evil causes.”¹

According to the different stages of the alchemical practice, the Medicine is divided into three types: the External Medicine (*waiyao*), the Internal Medicine (*neiyao*), and the Great Medicine (*dayao*). This distinction is based on the process of coagulating Essence, Breath, and Spirit with one another. The cyclical refining at the stage of “refining Essence to transmute it into Breath” leads to the formation of the External Medicine. The cyclical refining that follows the completion of the first stage of the practice results in the formation of the Internal Medicine. After the External and the Internal Medicines coagulate with one another, one enters the stage of “refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit,” which is called the Great Medicine. After the Great Medicine goes through the barrier of “entering the enclosure” (*ruhuan*, also known as the “barrier of sitting,” *zuoguan*), it is called the Embryo of the Dao (*daotai*), or the Infant (*ying'er*).²

The “arts of the Way and the “arts of Immortality” differ according to whether, during the circulation along the Celestial Circuit of the

¹ These words seem to be found for the first time in chapter 39 of the *Xiyou ji* (Journey to the West), a novel containing many alchemical allegories.

² On “entering the enclosure” see below, p. 69.

Function and Control vessels, the Medicine has not yet been formed or has already been formed. “Laying the foundations” is the stage in which there is no Medicine, and it only consists in refining Breath. “Refining Essence to transmute it into Breath,” instead, is the state in which the formation of the Medicine occurs.

External Medicine, Internal Medicine, and Great Medicine. The process of attaining the Medicine involves two “births” and two “collections.” The two births are those of the External Medicine and the Internal Medicine. The two collections are those of the External Medicine and the Internal Medicine. The difference between them lies in the fact that for the External Medicine there is a “birth” followed by a “collection,” while for the Internal Medicine there is a “collection” followed by a “birth.”

This point requires a detailed explanation. When the External Medicine is born—i.e., from the “living Zi hour” (*huo zishi*) onward—Essence, Breath, and Spirit begin to move.³ The source is clear, and the Original Essence is full. At that time, by means of the Fire Times of the Lesser Celestial Circuit, the Medicine rises to the Muddy Pellet, descends through the trachea, passes through the Yellow Court, enters the Lower Field of the Elixir, and is stored there. This counts as one cycle of refining the Medicine. Since it comes from outside and enters within, it is called External Medicine. According to the rule, the External Medicine must be submitted to three hundred full cycles in order to be in accord with the “mysterious and wondrous mechanism” (*xuanmiao ji*). Only then is it possible to begin the alchemical practice to generate the Internal Medicine.

After the preliminary coagulation of the External Medicine has been completed, it rapidly gives birth to the Internal Medicine. One first circulates the Original Spirit, and joins it in the lower Cinnabar Field with the Original Breath already accumulated there by means of the three hundred cycles of refining. This generates the Internal Medicine, which is finer and purer than the External Medicine. However, as we have said, for the Internal Medicine there is a “collection” followed by a “birth.” Unlike the External Medicine, the Internal Medicine is not formed by a process of coagulation: this is an immediate method (*dunfa*) belonging to the “arts of Immortality.” After the Internal Medicine is born in the lower Cinnabar Field, it is joined to the External Medicine already produced, and they gradually coalesce with one another. This is why it is said that there is a

³ On the “living Zi hour” see below, pp. 106 ff.

“collection” followed by a “birth.” The Internal Medicine, therefore, does not use the circulation along the Celestial Circuit; after it is born it meets the External Medicine and they coalesce in the “mother of the Elixir” (*danmu*).

An alchemical text says:

外藥所以了命，內藥所以了性。外藥者外奪造化，以復先天；內藥者內保本真，以化後天。．．．先天真陽，從虛無中來，乃屬於彼，故謂外藥。先天既來，歸根復命，即屬於我，故謂內藥。

The External Medicine fulfills Life (*liaoming*); the Internal Medicine fulfills Nature (*liaoxing*). The External Medicine “steals creation and transformation” outside, in order to return to the precelestial; the Internal Medicine protects the fundamental reality within, in order to transform the postcelestial. . . .

The precelestial True Yang comes from Emptiness and Non-Being. As this pertains to the “other” (*bi*), it is called External Medicine. After the precelestial has come, one “reverts to the root and returns to life.” As this pertains to the “self” (*wo*), it is called Internal Medicine.⁴

The External Medicine pertains to “doing” (*youzuo*) and is refined by means of the Lesser Celestial Circuit. The Internal Medicine, instead, pertains to “non-doing” (*wuwei*): after one extinguishes the Fire, Spirit enters the Cinnabar Field, joins the External Medicine stored there, and the Internal Medicine is achieved. The entrance of Spirit in the Cinnabar Field is the so-called “collecting” (*cai*), and is also referred to as “coagulating Spirit and letting it enter the Cavity of Breath (*qixue*).” As we have said, one does not use the Celestial Circuit.

The Great Medicine, instead, is refined by means of the Greater Celestial Circuit, i.e., by means of the Original Spirit, which is silent and luminous; but here, in fact, there is no actual “circulation.” Since this concerns the stage of “refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit,” it will not be described in detail in the present chapter.

Awakening to Reality says:

Pp. 69-98 are omitted from this preview

⁴ Liu Yiming, *Cantong zhizhi*, “Jingwen,” chapter 2. The expression “stealing creation and transformation” (*duo zaohua*) derives from the *Ruyao jing* (Mirror for Compounding the Medicine). The expression “reverting to the root and returning to life” (*guigen fuming*) derives from the *Daode jing*, 16.

3 Refining Breath to Transmute it into Spirit

“Refining Essence to transmute it into Breath” is the “initial barrier.” Essence is refined with Breath, and forms a Breath that becomes the “mother of the Elixir” (*danmu*). At this stage, “the Three return to the Two.” In the next stage, “refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit,” Breath is refined with Spirit, so that it returns to Spirit. At this stage, which is also called the “intermediate barrier,” “the Two return to the One.” After the “intermediate barrier,” there will be only the One Spirit (*yishen*), and one will be able to progress to the “higher barrier.”

The “intermediate barrier” is also called Barrier of the Ten Months (*shiyue guan*). The terms used to describe this stage include Great Medicine (*dayao*), Embryo of Sainthood (*shengtai*), “bathing at the four cardinal points” (*sizheng muyu*), “moving the tripod” (*yiding*), “going back and forth between the two Fields” (*ertian fanfu*), and Greater Celestial Circuit (*da zhoutian*). The Barrier of the Ten Months uses the metaphors of the ten-month pregnancy and the nurturing of the Numinous Medicine (*lingyao*). When the practice reaches this stage, it has already entered into its idealistic portion: it is deemed that if this stage of the practice is successful, one can invert the process of aging and return to youth, extend the length of one’s life and obtain longevity.

However, although “refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit” abounds in ideals of a religious nature, it also involves arduous practice. The alchemical methods have evolved from the self-cultivation arts of the *fangshi* (“masters of the methods”); they are related to ancient medicine, but do not draw on the shamanic and mediumistic arts (*wushu*) and are not concerned with fictional discourses. The methods, nevertheless, are complex, and for this reason few practitioners reach this stage of inner refinement. But even when these practices do not attain full achievement, they are beneficial to the mind and the body; therefore I will introduce

several relevant terms, with brief explications that may be consulted while reading the alchemical texts.



The Great Medicine (dayao 大藥)

According to the principles of alchemy, between the stages of “refining Essence to transmute it into Breath” and “refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit” there is an intermediate stage. At that time, the Internal Medicine and the External Medicine coagulate with one another. First, by means of the external cycling of the Celestial Circuit, one accumulates the External Medicine; then, through the operation of Spirit, the External Medicine is moved to the lower Cinnabar Field and rapidly generates the Internal Medicine. When the Internal and the External Medicines coagulate and coalesce together in the lower Cinnabar Field, they form the Great Medicine (*dayao*). This is the so-called “mother of the Elixir” (*danmu*). After a further refining of seven days, which is called “entering the enclosure” (*ruhuan*), it forms the Embryo of Sainthood (*shengtai*), also called the Infant (*ying'er*). “Entering the enclosure” is also called “barrier of sitting” (*zuoguan*); in Buddhism, it is called “confinement” (*biquan*).¹



The Embryo of Sainthood (shengtai 聖胎)

In one of the poems quoted above, *Awakening to Reality* says:

三家相見結嬰兒，嬰兒是一含真氣，十月胎圓入聖基。

When the three families see one another,
the Infant coalesces.
The Infant is the One
holding True Breath;
in ten months the embryo is complete —
this is the foundation for entering sainthood.²

¹ On “entering the enclosure” see above, p. 69.

² *Wuzhen pian*, “Lüshi,” poem 14.

Liu Yiming explains this poem as follows:

和合四象、攢簇五行，則精、氣、神凝結。是云三家相見，名曰嬰兒，又曰先天一氣，又曰聖胎，又曰金丹。

When the four images join one another, and when the five agents gather together, then Essence, Breath, and Spirit coagulate and coalesce one with the other. Therefore it says “the three families see one another.” This is called the Infant, the One Breath prior to Heaven, the Embryo of Sainthood, the Golden Elixir.³

Wu Shouyang says:

胎即神炁耳，非真有嬰兒也，非有形有象也。蓋大丹之成，先以神入乎其炁，後炁來包乎其神，如胎兒在胞中無呼吸又不能無呼吸，生滅之相尚在，出入之跡猶存，若胎孕之將產時，故比喻之曰懷胎、移胎、出胎。

The Embryo is nothing but Spirit and Breath. It does not mean that there is truly an infant, or that it is something provided with a form and an image. Essentially, in the formation of the Great Elixir, first the Spirit enters the Breath, then the Breath is embraced by the Spirit. It is like an embryo in the womb: it does not breathe, but cannot live without breathing. Existence and extinction coexist in it with one another, coming and going are together in it with one another. It is like the coming to life of an actual embryo; this is why we use the metaphors of pregnancy (*huaitai*), “moving the embryo” (*yitai*), and delivery (*chutai*).⁴

The terms used by Wu Shouyang in this passage are metaphors for the return of Spirit to the state of “great stability” (*dading*) at this stage of the practice. With some exaggeration, the alchemical masters speak of “pregnancy in the middle Cinnabar Field” (*zhongtian huaitai*). The texts, however, never say that this should be understood in a literal way.



³ Quoted, with some omissions, from Liu Yiming’s *Wuzhen zhizhi*, “Lüshi,” commentary to poem 14.

⁴ This passage is not found in Wu Shouyang’s *Tianxian zhengli zhilun*, which Wang Mu quotes as its source. A similar passage is found, however, in Wu Shouyang’s *Xian Fo hezhong yulu*, “Wu Taiyi shijiu wen,” no. 6. On “moving the embryo” from the middle to the upper Cinnabar Field, see below, p. 112.

“Bathing at the Four Cardinal Points” (sizheng muyu 四正沐浴)

The term “four cardinal points” (*sizheng*) refers to the four spatiotemporal markers Zi 子, Wu 午, Mao 卯, and You 酉, and to the four seasons, namely spring, summer, autumn, and winter (see table 8). Zi and Wu respectively correspond to North and South; their images in the precelestial arrangement of the trigrams are Qian ☰ and Kun ☷. Mao and You respectively correspond to East and West; their images in the precelestial arrangement of the trigrams are Kan ☵ and Li ☲. (See table 4.)

In addition, Zi, Wu, Mao, and You serve to mark the practice of “bathing” (*muyu*). The *Cantong qi* says:

子南午北，互為綱紀。

Zi at South, Wu at North,
are each other’s guiding thread.⁵

It also says:

龍西虎東，建緯卯酉。

Dragon at West, Tiger at East,
across the way are Mao and You.⁶

In terms of locations, Zi is the Meeting of Yin (*huiyin*) cavity; Wu is the Palace of the Muddy Pellet (*niwan gong*); Mao is the Gate of Life (*mingmen*); and You is the Crimson Palace (*jianggong*).⁷ In the Lesser Celestial Circuit, these are the locations of the “bathing at Mao and You” (*maoyou muyu*). In the Greater Celestial Circuit, they refer instead to the times of “bathing”: since the Yang principle is born in the positions of these four cardinal points, one should innerly practice the method of “bathing” at the corresponding times.

Pp. 103-108 are omitted from this preview

⁵ *Cantong qi*, chapter 24. These verses allude to the “inversion” of the ordinary cosmological patterns, where Zi corresponds to the North and Wu corresponds to the South (see table 8).

⁶ *Cantong qi*, chapter 24. These verses also allude to the principle of “inversion”: ordinarily, the Dragon is an emblem of the East and the Tiger is an emblem of the West (see table 1).

⁷ The Crimson Palace is the heart, or the central Cinnabar Field.

4 Refining Spirit to Return to Emptiness

“Refining Spirit to return to Emptiness” is the highest ideal of the alchemical doctrines. This stage is also called Higher Barrier (*shangguan*) and Barrier of the Nine Years (*jiunian guan*). The term “nine years” does not refer to the time required to achieve the Great Elixir; it alludes, instead, to the story of Bodhidharma who sat facing a wall for nine years, taking this as a metaphor for the stage in which one enters the practice of Xing (Nature). In constant stability and constant silence, all things return to the Origin. Therefore another name of this stage is “refining Spirit to join with the Dao” (*lianshen hedao*), where Dao means Emptiness and Non-Being (*xuwu*).

Awakening to Reality says:

道自虛無生一氣，便從一氣產陰陽，陰陽再合成三體，三體重生萬物張。

The Dao from Emptiness and Non-Being generates the One Breath, then from the One Breath gives birth to Yin and Yang; Yin and Yang join again and form the three bodies, the three bodies repeatedly generate, and the ten thousand things grow.¹

This poem describes the process of generation from the Dao, which is a forward process of “going along” (or “continuing transformation,” *shunhua*). The alchemical practice, instead, emphasizes the backward process of “inverting the course” (*nixing*). It upholds that, in the first place, “the three bodies return to two bodies,” when Essence, Breath, and Spirit are refined into Spirit and Breath; this is the stage of “refining Essence to transmute it into Breath.” Then comes the stage in which “the

¹ *Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem 12.

two bodies return to one body” and there is only the Original Spirit; this is the stage of “refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit.” Finally comes “refining the One to revert to Non-Being” (*lianyi huanwu*), which is the stage of “refining Spirit to return to Emptiness.”

As shown by the explanation given in the poem quoted above, “reverting to Emptiness and Non-Being” is equivalent to “returning to the Dao.” Therefore the alchemical texts often use the symbol ○ to represent Emptiness—the state in which all things enter Emptiness and become entirely clear. One reverts to the fundament and returns to the root, enlightens one’s mind and sees one’s Nature. This is the highest goal of *Awakening to Reality*.

Zhang Boduan and Buddhism. According to the alchemical methods of Zhang Boduan, one should first cultivate one’s Ming (Life) and then one’s Xing (Nature), and should first devote oneself to the practices and then to the Way. In his preface to the *Wuzhen pian shiyi* (Supplement to *Awakening to Reality*), Zhang Boduan says:

『悟真篇』者，先以神仙命脈誘其修鍊，次以諸佛妙用廣其神通，終以真如覺性遣其幻妄，而歸於究竟空寂之本源矣。

Awakening to Reality first attracts one to the practice of self-cultivation in accordance with the bloodline of the divine Immortals; then broadens one’s spiritual comprehension in accordance with the wondrous operation of all the Buddhas; and finally leads one away from illusions and delusions in accordance with one’s own true enlightened Nature. Thus one returns to the ultimate fundament of absolute emptiness and silence.²

As shown by this passage, when Zhang Boduan describes the fourth and highest stage of the alchemical practice, he uses Buddhist principles to explicate the “return to Emptiness.” This differs from both the *Cantong qi* and the *Ruyao jing*. Opening a new path, Zhang Boduan employed Chan as a metaphor for the Dao. Although the respective ways of argumentation are different, his foundation was explaining the Taoist alchemical practice of Xing. In order to widen the vision of his disciples, therefore, he used metaphors of all kinds, and explained the profound meaning of “returning to Emptiness” by means of the Buddhist idea of the “true enlightened Nature.”

² *Wuzhen pian shiyi*, Preface.

Between the late Tang and the Five Dynasties (ca. ninth-tenth centuries), the notion of the “unity of the Three Teachings” (*sanjiao heyi*) favored the integration and harmonization of Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. During the Northern Song period (960–1127), the trend toward convergence continued: each of the Three Teachings was explicated by means of the others, and each drew from the others. Zhang Boduan himself was a disciple of Taoism who came from Confucianism and was also engaged in Buddhism. In his preface to *Awakening to Reality* he says:

僕幼親善道，涉獵三教經書，以至刑法、書、算、醫、卜、戰陣、天文、地理、吉凶、死生之術，靡不留心詳究。

Since my youth, I have cherished the good Dao. I have inquired into the scriptures of the Three Teachings, and have also made careful and detailed studies of law, calligraphy, mathematics, medicine, divination, military science, astronomy, geography, prognostication, and the arts of life and death.³

As we can see from this passage, Zhang Boduan was well-versed in the principles of the Three Teachings, and was extremely learned. However, he was ultimately a master of the Taoist Golden Elixir, and he did not convert to Buddhism. During the Qing dynasty, the Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723–35) issued an edict stating that Zhang Boduan had deeply understood the principles of Chan Buddhism. The emperor gave orders to incorporate *Awakening to Reality* into the Buddhist Canon and into the *Yuxuan yulu* (Imperial Compilation of Recorded Sayings).⁴ He also granted Zhang Boduan the title of “Chan Immortal” (*chanxian*). All this was due to the emperor’s own study of the Chan principles and to his adherence to those teachings. In fact, the principles of the Pure Cultivation branch (Qingxiu pai) of Taoist alchemy are in agreement with the Chan doctrine of “enlightening one’s mind and seeing one’s Nature” (*mingxin jianxing*). Therefore Zhang Boduan certainly drew from the Chan doctrine. However, his essential intent was to elucidate the profound meaning of “refining one’s Nature” (*lianxing*). He was not both a Taoist and Buddhist, and in the appellation “Chan Immortal,” the emphasis should fall on the word “immortal.” In his preface to the *Yuxuan yulu*, the Yongzheng Emperor maintains that the three religions (Taoism, Confucianism, and

³ *Wuzhen pian*, in *Xiuzhen shishu*, chapter 26, preface.

⁴ The *Yuxuan yulu* (chapter 10 in the edition of the Buddhist Canon of the Qing period, the *Qianlong Dazang jing*), contains selections from the “Outer Chapters” of the *Wuzhen pian*.

Buddhism) are one, but this only reflects his own views on religion and government.

Returning to Emptiness. When the Zhong-Lü alchemical tradition explains “refining Spirit to return to Emptiness,” it builds in the first place on the foundation of “refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit.” One should move the Infant from the lower to the middle Cinnabar Field, where it is further refined and nourished. Then the Infant is moved from the middle to the upper Cinnabar Field; this is called “moving the embryo” (*yitai*). Finally one obtains the Yang Spirit, which exits from the Gate of Heaven (*tianmen*); this is called “delivery of the embryo” (*chutai*), and is also called “nourishing warmly” (*wenyang*). This is not mentioned in any of Zhang Boduan’s works. *Awakening to Reality* says:

藥逢氣類方成象，道在希夷合自然，一粒靈丹吞入腹，始知我命不由天。

Only when the Medicines meet in breath (*qi*) and kind do they form an image:

the Dao is inaudible and invisible, and is joined to What is so by Itself.

Ingest the one grain of numinous Elixir, let it enter the belly, and for the first time you will know that your destiny does not depend on Heaven.⁵

This poem refers the *Daode jing*, which says: “Look at it, and you do not see it: it is called invisible. Listen to it, and you do not hear it: it is called inaudible.”⁶ As one dwells in constant stability and constant silence, and is pervasive in responding to the external impulses, the four elements return to emptiness, and one escapes from the cycle of birth and death.⁷ Zhang Boduan does not explain the “egress of the Yang Spirit” (*chuyangshen*) and other imaginary states, but considers “returning to Emptiness” to be the same as purely entering non-doing, being entirely pervasive and unhindered, being existent for ever and ever like Heaven and Earth, and obtaining the Great Liberation (*da jietuo*).

Pp. 113-117 are omitted from this preview

⁵ *Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem 54.

⁶ *Daode jing*, 14.

⁷ In Buddhism, the four elements (*sida*), namely Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind, are respectively related to the qualities of hardness, wetness, warming, and movement. Their joining gives birth to the material entities.

Part 3

CONCLUSION

The “Arts of the Way”

The Taoist “arts of the Way” (*daoshu*) derive from two sources. The first is the shamanic and mediumistic arts (*wushu*), which involve such practices as the use of talismans, spells, prayers, and planchette writing (*fuji*). The second is the self-cultivation arts of the *fangshi* (“masters of the methods”), which include breathing, diets, and so forth. Originally, both types of arts were subsumed under the denomination of “arts of the Way” (*daoshu*). From the late Tang period onward, Neidan gradually began to attract attention. The Pure Cultivation branch (Qingxiu pai) also admitted certain Buddhist principles, which were integrated into the alchemical practice. Zhang Boduan gathered the achievements of several masters; these provided the foundations for the principles of the Internal Elixir in his *Awakening to Reality*, which he deemed to represent the core of the “arts of the Way.”

The author of *Awakening to Reality* entered Taoism coming from Confucianism, and also studied the Classics and the historical texts. His learning was broad and deep, and he widely sought teachers and companions. Therefore his alchemical methods give emphasis to the practical aspects. He recommends arduous practice, and is neither interested in fictional discourses nor concerned with speeches by gods or spirits. He only advocates nourishing the Three Treasures and controlling the body and the mind. He intends to probe into the ultimate origin of life and to indicate a path for self-cultivation.

In addition to understanding the principles of medicine, Zhang Boduan also studied astronomy and geography. His *Book of the Eight Vessels* was incorporated by Li Shizhen in his *Bencao gangmu*, and is an invaluable source for the study of traditional Chinese medicine. His methods for the initial stage of the practice and for “refining Essence and transmuting it into Breath” have been used for present-day research into the healing methods of Qigong. Zhang Boduan did emphasize the practices of “ceasing thoughts,” “harmonizing the breathing,” “using the Intention as a guide,” and “clearing the Barriers”; all these practices, however, are

closely related to medicine and healing, and thus can be seen as a precious legacy on the value of “sitting in quiescence” for healing purposes.

Needless to say, Zhang Boduan was a Taoist adept, and could hardly refrain from adopting a religious, mystical, or idealistic way of seeing. In his *Secret Text of Green Florescence*, however, he maintains that “the Heart is the lord; Spirit is the ruler; and the Intention is the go-between.” In practice, this means that the Heart is the material foundation of the brain; the Spirit is the function of the brain; and the Intention is the activity of the brain. Although Zhang Boduan also emphasizes harmonizing the functions of vitality and thoughts, he actually assigns them a secondary rank.

Concerning his investigations into the origins of life, Zhang Boduan emphasizes that the “Medicine” is a function of Essence, Breath, and Spirit that coagulate with one another. His view that Essence is the foundation of life, and his method of using the Intention to lead the cyclical movement of the True Breath within the body, are consistent with the constitution of the human body, and avail themselves of the principles of self-healing that are inborn in the human being. Zhang Boduan’s attitude of carrying out a deep investigation into the origins of life in order to attain longevity, as well as his notion that human life is related to the movements of Heaven and Earth, contain elements of the candid materialism that is also seen in the ancient Chinese philosophy of life. He developed the principles of the ancient alchemical classic, the *Cantong qi*, and integrated them with Buddhist principles concerning the cultivation of one’s Nature. Moreover, he assimilated various ancient methods of Nourishing Life, including *daoyin*, inner observation, embryonic breathing, and meditation, into his own alchemical methods. These methods are pragmatic, and do not rely on pointless discourses; they collect the heritage of traditional medicine, and recapitulate the methods of healing and long life elaborated by the ancient Chinese people.

For those who study these subjects in the present day and will study them in the future, Zhang Boduan’s work is invaluable not only as a source that enables us to investigate the philosophy of life, but also as a legacy that allows us to probe into life’s very own secret.

Tables

TABLES

Table 1: Five Agents (Associations)

	WOOD	FIRE	SOIL	METAL	WATER
DIRECTIONS	east	south	center	west	north
SEASONS	spring	summer	(midsummer)	autumn	winter
COLORS	green	red	yellow	white	black
EMBLEMATIC ANIMALS	green dragon	vermilion sparrow	yellow dragon	white tiger	snake and turtle
NUMBERS	3, 8	2, 7	5, 10	4, 9	1, 6
YIN-YANG (1)	minor Yang	great Yang	balance	minor Yin	great Yin
YIN-YANG (2)	True Yin	Yang	balance	True Yang	Yin
STEMS	<i>jia</i> 甲 <i>yi</i> 乙	<i>bing</i> 丙 <i>ding</i> 丁	<i>wu</i> 戊 <i>ji</i> 己	<i>geng</i> 庚 <i>xin</i> 辛	<i>ren</i> 壬 <i>gui</i> 癸
BRANCHES	<i>yin</i> 寅 <i>mao</i> 卯	<i>wu</i> 午 <i>si</i> 巳	<i>xu</i> 戌, <i>chou</i> 丑 <i>wei</i> 未, <i>chen</i> 辰	<i>you</i> 酉 <i>shen</i> 申	<i>hai</i> 亥 <i>zi</i> 子
PLANETS	Jupiter	Mars	Saturn	Venus	Mercury
RELATIONS	father	daughter	ancestors	mother	son
VISCERA	liver	heart	spleen	lungs	kidneys
BODY ORGAN	eyes	tongue	mouth	nose	ears

Table 1. The five agents (*wuxing*) and their associations.

TABLES

Table 2: Five Agents (Spatial Distribution)

FIRE South Vermilion Sparrow 2 cinnabar Original Spirit (<i>yuanshen</i> 元神)		
WOOD East Green Dragon 3 True Mercury inner nature (<i>xing</i> 性)	SOIL Center 5 intention (<i>yi</i> 意)	METAL West White Tiger 4 True Lead qualities (<i>qing</i> 情)
WATER North Dark Warrior 1 black lead Original Essence (<i>yuanjing</i> 元精)		

Table 2. Spatial arrangement of the five agents (*wuxing*), with some of their main associations. In agreement with the traditional Chinese convention, North is shown at the bottom, South at the top, East on the left, and West on the right.

TABLES

Table 3: Eight Trigrams (Associations)

☰	☱	☲	☳	☴	☵	☶	☷
乾	兌	離	震	巽	坎	艮	坤
QIAN	DUI	LI	ZHEN	XUN	KAN	GEN	KUN
heaven	lake	fire	thunder	wind	water	mountain	earth
father	youngest daughter	second daughter	eldest son	eldest daughter	second son	youngest son	mother
south	southeast	east	northeast	southwest	west	northwest	north
northwest	west	south	east	southeast	north	northeast	southwest

Table 3. The eight trigrams (*bagua*) and their main associations.
 From top to bottom: elements in nature, family relations,
 and directions in the cosmological configurations
 “prior to Heaven” (*xiantian*) and “posterior to Heaven” (*houtian*).

TABLES

Table 4: Eight Trigrams (Spatial Distribution)

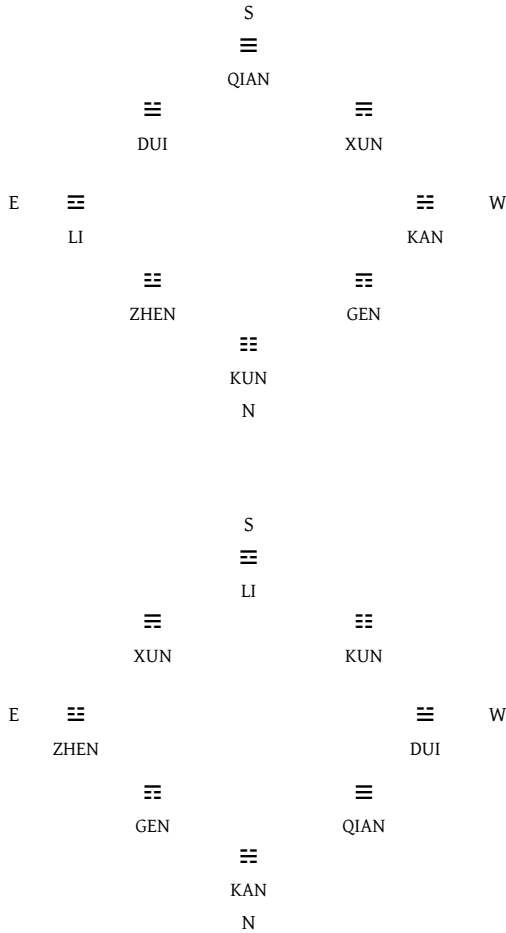


Table 4. Spatial arrangements of the eight trigrams (*bagua*) in the cosmological configurations “prior to Heaven” (*xiantian*, top) and “posterior to Heaven” (*houtian*, bottom).

TABLES

Table 5: Sixty Hexagrams

	DAYTIME		NIGHTTIME
1	Zhun 屯 ䷂	䷃	Meng 蒙
2	Xu 需 ䷄	䷆	Song 訟
3	Shi 師 ䷆	䷇	Bi 比
4	Xiaoxu 小畜 ䷈	䷉	Lü 履
5	Tai 泰 ䷊	䷋	Pi 否
6	Tongren 同人 ䷌	䷍	Dayou 大有
7	Qian 謙 ䷎	䷏	Yu 豫
8	Sui 隨 ䷐	䷑	Gu 蠱
9	Lin 臨 ䷒	䷓	Guan 觀
10	Shike 噬嗑 ䷔	䷕	Bi 賁
11	Bo 剝 ䷖	䷗	Fu 復
12	Wuwang 無妄 ䷘	䷙	Dachu 大畜
13	Yi 頤 ䷚	䷛	Daguo 大過
14	Xian 咸 ䷞	䷟	Heng 恆
15	Dun 遯 ䷠	䷡	Dazhuang 大壯
16	Jin 晉 ䷢	䷣	Mingyi 明夷
17	Jiaren 家人 ䷤	䷥	Kui 睽
18	Juan 蹇 ䷦	䷧	Jie 解
19	Sun 損 ䷨	䷩	Yi 益
20	Guai 夬 ䷪	䷫	Gou 姤
21	Cui 萃 ䷬	䷭	Sheng 升
22	Kun 困 ䷮	䷯	Jing 井
23	Ge 革 ䷰	䷱	Ding 鼎
24	Zhen 震 ䷲	䷳	Gen 艮
25	Jian 漸 ䷴	䷵	Guimei 歸妹
26	Feng 豐 ䷶	䷷	Lü 旅
27	Xun 巽 ䷸	䷸	Dui 兌
28	Huan 渙 ䷺	䷻	Jie 節
29	Zhongfu 中孚 ䷛	䷼	Xiaoguo 小過
30	Jiji 既濟 ䷾	䷿	Weiji 未濟

Table 5. Sequence of the sixty hexagrams during the thirty days of the month.
Qian ䷀, Kun ䷁, Kan ䷜, and Li ䷄ are not part of this cycle.

TABLES

Table 6: “Sovereign Hexagrams”

復	臨	泰	大壯	夬	乾	姤	遯	否	觀	剝	坤
Fu	Lin	Tai	Dazhuang	Guai	Qian	Gou	Dun	Pi	Guan	Bo	Kun
子	丑	寅	卯	辰	巳	午	未	申	酉	戌	亥
zi	chou	yin	mao	chen	si	wu	wei	shen	you	xu	hai
黃鐘	大呂	太簇	夾鐘	姑洗	仲呂	蕤賓	林鐘	夷則	南呂	無射	應鐘
huangzhong dali	taicou	jiazhong	guxi	zhonglü	ruibin	linzhong	yize	nanlü	wuyi	yingzhong	
11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
23-1	1-3	3-5	5-7	7-9	9-11	11-13	13-15	15-17	17-19	19-21	21-23

Table 6. The twelve “sovereign hexagrams” (*bigua*) and their relation to other duodenary series: earthly branches (*dizhi*), bells and pitch-pipes (*zhonglü*), months of the year, and “double hours” (*shi*).

TABLES

Table 7: Celestial Stems

	STEMS	AGENTS	DIRECTIONS	COLORS	VISCERA	NUMBERS
1	<i>jia</i> 甲	WOOD	east	green	liver	3, 8
2	<i>yi</i> 乙					
3	<i>bing</i> 丙	FIRE	south	red	heart	2, 7
4	<i>ding</i> 丁					
5	<i>wu</i> 戊	SOIL	center	yellow	spleen	5
6	<i>ji</i> 己					
7	<i>geng</i> 庚	METAL	west	white	lungs	4, 9
8	<i>xin</i> 辛					
9	<i>ren</i> 壬	WATER	north	black	kidneys	1, 6
10	<i>gui</i> 癸					

Table 7. The ten celestial stems (*tiangan*) and their associations.

Table 8: Earthly Branches

	BRANCHES	AGENTS	DIRECTIONS	HOURS	NUMBERS
1	<i>zi</i> 子	WATER	N	23-1	1, 6
2	<i>chou</i> 丑	SOIL	NNE 3/4 E	1-3	5, 10
3	<i>yin</i> 寅	WOOD	ENE 3/4 N	3-5	3, 8
4	<i>mao</i> 卯	WOOD	E	5-7	3, 8
5	<i>chen</i> 辰	SOIL	ESE 3/4 S	7-9	5, 10
6	<i>si</i> 巳	FIRE	SSE 3/4 E	9-11	2, 7
7	<i>wu</i> 午	FIRE	S	11-13	2, 7
8	<i>wei</i> 未	SOIL	SSW 3/4 W	13-15	5, 10
9	<i>shen</i> 申	METAL	WSW 3/4 S	15-17	4, 9
10	<i>you</i> 酉	METAL	W	17-19	4, 9
11	<i>xu</i> 戌	SOIL	WNW 3/4 N	19-21	5, 10
12	<i>hai</i> 亥	WATER	NNW 3/4 W	21-23	1, 6

Table 8. The twelve earthly branches (*dizhi*) and their associations.

Glossary of Chinese Characters

- anmo daoyin* 按摩導引 (“pressing and rubbing” and “guiding and pulling”)
anyin 按引 (“pressing and pulling”)
bagua 八卦 (eight trigrams)
Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾 (1194–1229?)
bairi guan 百日關 (Barrier of the Hundred Days)
Baizi bei 百字碑 (Hundred-Character Tablet)
bamai 八脈 (Eight Vessels)
Bamai jing 八脈經 (Book of the Eight Vessels)
Baopu zi 抱樸子 (Book of the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature)
baoyi 抱一 (embracing Unity)
beihai 北海 (Northern Ocean)
Beizong 北宗 (Northern Lineage)
Bencao gangmu 本草綱目 (Pharmacopoeia Arranged into Headings and Subheadings)
bi 彼 (the “other”)
biguan 閉關 (confinement)
bixi 閉息 (stopping breathing)
cai 採 (“gathering”)
canghai 滄海 (Azure Sea)
Cantong qi 參同契 (Token for the Joining of the Three)
Cantong qi chanyou 參同契闡幽 (Clarification of Obscurities in the *Cantong qi*)
Cantong zhizhi 參同契直指 (Straightforward Directions on the *Cantong qi*)
canxia 餐霞 (“swallowing mist”)
chang 常 (constancy)
Changdao zhenyan 唱道真言 (True Words Chanting the Dao)
Changsheng quanjing 長生詮經 (Book on the Principles of Long Life)
changan 禪觀 (contemplation)
chanxian 禪仙 (“Chan Immortal”)
Chen Niwan 陳泥丸 (?–1213)
Chen Tuan 陳搏 (ca. 920–89)
Chen Zhixu 陳致虛 (1290–ca. 1368)
chengjiang xue 承漿穴 (Receiver of Fluids cavity)
chongmai 衝脈 (Thoroughfare vessel)
chu yangshen 出陽神 (“egress of the Yang Spirit”)

- chuguan* 初關 (“initial barrier”)
chutai 出胎 (“delivery of the embryo”)
cuanqu 攢簇 (“gathering together”)
 Cui Xifan 崔希範 (ca. 880–940)
da dinglu 大鼎爐 (Great Tripod and Stove)
da jietuo 大解脫 (Great Liberation)
da zhoutian 大周天 (Greater Celestial Circuit)
dadan 大丹 (Great Elixir)
dading 大定 (great stability)
daimai 帶脈 (Girdle vessel)
Dandao jiupian 丹道九篇 (Nine Essays on the Way of the Elixir)
danmu 丹母 (“mother of the Elixir”)
dantian 丹田 (Cinnabar Field)
dantou 丹頭 (“matrix of the Elixir”)
Danyang zhenren yulu 丹陽真人語錄 (Records Sayings of the True Man Ma Danyang)
Daode jing 道德經 (Book of the Way and its Virtue)
Daode jing zhushi 道德經注釋 (Commentary and Exegesis to the *Book the Way and its Virtue*)
daoshu 道術 (arts of the Way)
daotai 道胎 (Embryo of the Dao)
daoxin 道心 (“mind of the Dao”)
daoyin 導引 (“guiding and pulling”)
Daoyuan jingwei ge 道源精微歌 (Delicate Songs on the Origins in the Dao)
Daozang jinghua lu 道藏精華錄 (Record of the Essential Splendors of the Taoist Canon)
dayao 大藥 (Great Medicine)
de 德 (virtue)
dihu 地戶 (Door of Earth)
 Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874–1952)
Dinglu shi 鼎爐詩 (Poem on the Tripod and the Stove)
dizhi 地支 (earthly branches)
dongtai 動態 (dynamic state)
duiduan xue 兑端穴 (Mouth Extremity cavity)
dumai 督脈 (Control vessel)
dunfa 頓法 (“immediate method”)
duo zaohua 奪造化 (“stealing creation and transformation”)
ertian fanfu 二田反復 (“going back and forth between the two Fields”)
fa 法 (dharma; model)
famen 法門 (dharma-gate)
fangen fuming 返根復命 (“returning to the root and reverting to life”)
fangshi 方士 (“masters of the methods”)

- fenbi* 分泌 (internal secretions)
fengfu xue 風府穴 (Cavity of the Wind Palace)
 Fu Jinquan 付金銓 (1765–1844)
fuji 扶乩 (planchette writing)
fuming guan 復命關 (Barrier of the Return to Life)
fuqi 服氣 (“ingesting breath”)
gangqi 剛氣 (“firm breath”)
genqiao 根竅 (Root-Opening)
guan 關 (“barriers”)
guanqiao 關竅 (Opening of the Barrier)
Guanwu jin 觀物吟 (Chant on the Contemplation of Things)
guigen fuming 歸根復命 (“reverting to the root and returning to life”)
guixi 龜息 (“breathing like a turtle”)
guizhong 規中 (Center of the Compass)
 Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (1844–96)
gushen 谷神 (Spirit of the Valley)
heche 河車 (River Chariot)
Hetu 河圖 (Chart of the Yellow River)
hou 候 (“times, periods, spans of time”)
houtian 後天 (postcelestial, “posterior to Heaven”)
houtian jing 後天精 (postcelestial essence)
houtian qi 後天氣 (postcelestial breath)
houxi 喉息 (“breathing through the throat”)
huan 還 (return)
huandan 還丹 (Reverted Elixir)
huandu 環堵 (enclosure)
 Huang Baijia 黃百家 (1643–1709)
huangdao 黃道 (Yellow Path)
Huangdi neijing suwen 黃帝內經素問 (Inner Book of the Yellow Emperor: The Plain Questions)
Huanghu jin 恍惚吟 (“Chang of the Vague and Indistinct”)
huangpo 黃婆 (Yellow Dame)
Huangting jing 黃庭經 (Scripture of the Yellow Court)
huangting xue 黃庭穴 (Cavity of the Yellow Court)
huangting 黃庭 (Yellow Court)
huanjing bunao 還精補腦 (“reverting the course of the Essence to replenish the brain”)
Huanyuan pian 還源篇 (Reverting to the Origin)
 Huashan 華山 (Mount Hua)
huiguang fanzhao 回光返照 (“circulating the light and inverting the radiance”)
huiyin xue 會陰穴 (Meeting of Yin cavity)

- huo bi jin xing* 火逼金行 (“Fire pressing Metal into movement”)
huo zishi 活子時 (“living Zi hour”)
huohou 火候 (Fire Times)
huxi 呼吸 (“respiration,” “exhaling and inhaling”)
jiaji 夾脊 (Spinal Handle)
jianfa 漸法 (“gradual method”)
 Jiang Weiqiao 蔣維喬 (1872–1955)
jiaogan jing 交感精 (“essence of the intercourse,” i.e., semen)
jin yanghuo 進陽火 (“advancing the Yang Fire”)
jin 斤 (pound)
Jindan dacheng ji 金丹大成集 (The Great Achievement of the Golden Elixir)
Jindan dayao 金丹大要 (Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir)
Jindan sibaizi 金丹四百字 (Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir)
Jindan wenda 金丹問答 (Questions and Answers on the Golden Elixir)
jinfang 金方 (“direction of Metal”)
jing 精 (essence)
jing 靜 (quiescence)
jingming xue 睛明穴 (Eyes’ Light cavity)
jingzuo 靜坐 (“sitting in quiescence”)
jinhuo tuihuo 進火退符 (“advancing the Fire and withdrawing in response”)
jinhuo 進火 (“advancing the Fire”)
jinmen 禁門 (Forbidden Gate)
Jiqian ge 繼前歌 (Song of Following the Antecedent)
jiunian guan 九年關 (Barrier of the Nine Years)
jun 君 (lord)
keqi 客氣 (“extraneous breaths”)
Kuaihuo ge 快活歌 (Song of Joyful Life)
kunlu 坤爐 (Kun ☷ Stove)
 Kunlun 崑崙
lao fengbi 牢封閉 (“sealing tightly”)
 Li Buye 李樸野 (Ming dynasty)
 Li Daochun 李道純 (fl. ca. 1290)
 Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518–93)
 Li Xiyue 李西月 (1806–56)
liandao chengsheng 煉道成聖 (“refining the Dao to achieve sainthood”)
liang 兩 (ounce)
lianjing huaqi 煉精化炁 (“refining Essence to transmute it into Breath”)
lianming 煉命 (“refining one’s Life”)
lianqi huashen 煉炁化神 (“refining Breath to transmute it into Spirit”)
lianshen hedao 煉神合道 (“refining Spirit to join with the Dao”)
lianshen huanxu 煉神還虛 (“refining Spirit to return to Emptiness”)
lianxing 煉形 (“refining the form”)

- lianxing* 煉性 (“refining one’s Nature”)
lianxing huaqi 煉形化炁 (“refining the form to transmute it into Breath”)
lianyi huanwu 煉一還無 (“refining the One to revert to Non-Being”)
liaoming 了命 (“fulfilling Life”)
liaoxing 了性 (“fulfilling Nature”)
lingguang 靈光 (Numinous Radiance)
lingque 靈闕 (Numinous Portal)
Lingshu jing 靈樞經 (Book of the Numinous Pivot)
lingyao 靈藥 (Numinous Medicine)
 Liu Haichan 劉海蟾
 Liu Qiaoqiao 劉敲蹺 (1839–1933)
liu wu jiu ji 流戊就己 (“drifting Wu 戊 to reach Ji 己”)
 Liu Yiming 劉一明 (1734–1821)
liuzei 六賊 (“six thieves”)
 Longmen 龍門
 Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓
luche 鹿車 (“deer chariot”)
lulu 轆轤 (Pulley)
 Ma Danyang 馬丹陽 (1123–84)
Maiwang 脈望 (The Essence)
maoyou muyu 卯酉沐浴 (“bathing at Mao 卯 and You 酉”)
mei 媒 (“go-between”)
meipo 媒婆 (“match-maker”)
mianmian ruocun 綿綿若存 (“unceasing and continuous”)
 Min Yide 閔一得 (1748–1836)
 Ming 命 (Life, Existence)
mingguan 命關 (Barrier of Life)
mingmen 命門 (Gate of Life)
mingtang 明堂 (Hall of Lights)
mingxin jianxing 明心見性 (“enlightening one’s mind and seeing one’s Nature”)
muyu 沐浴 (“bathing”)
najia 納甲 (Matching the Stems)
 Nanzong 南宗 (Southern Lineage)
nei huxi 內呼吸 (“internal breathing”)
 Neidan 內丹 (Internal Elixir; Internal Alchemy)
neiguan 內觀 (inner contemplation)
Neijia quanfa 內家拳法 (Martial Arts of the Secret Schools)
neiqi 內氣 (internal Breath)
neishi 內視 (inner observation)
neiyao 內藥 (Internal Medicine)
ni 逆 (“inverting the course”)

- niuche* 牛車 (“ox chariot”)
niwan gong 泥丸宮 (Palace of the Muddy Pellet)
niwan 泥丸 (Muddy Pellet)
nixing chengxian 逆行成仙 (“inverting the course generates an Immortal”)
nixing 逆行 (“inverting the course”)
Peng Si 彭耜 (fl. 1217–51)
Penghu 蓬壺
qian santian, hou sanguan 前三田, 後三關 (“three Fields in the front, three Barriers in the back”)
qianding 乾頂 (Summit of Qian ☰)
qianding 乾鼎 (Qian ☰ Tripod)
qiangong 乾宮 (Palace of Qian ☰)
Qianlong Dazangjing 乾隆大藏經 (Buddhist Canon of the Qianlong Emperor)
qianqi [zhi] yunxing 潛氣[之]運行 (“circulation of the hidden Breath”)
Qiaoqiao dongzhang 敲蹻洞章 (Writings from the Cavern of Liu Qiaoqiao)
Qigong 氣功
qijing 奇經 (“extraordinary channels,” or vessels)
qijing bamai 奇經八脈 (eight “extraordinary vessels”)
 “Qijing bamai kao” 奇經八脈考 (“An Investigation of the Eight Extraordinary Vessels”)
Qinghua biwen 青華秘文 (Secret Text of Green Florescence)
qingjing 清靜 (clarity and quiescence)
Qingxia zi 青霞子
qingxiu pai 清修派 (Pure Cultivation branch)
Qiu Chuji 丘處機 (1148–1227)
qixue 氣穴 (Cavity of Breath)
qizhi zhi xing 氣質之性 (temperament)
qu kan tian li 取坎填離 (“taking from Kan ☵ in order to fill Li ☲”)
Quan Tang shi 全唐詩 (Complete Poetry of the Tang)
Quanzhen 全真
queqiao 鵲橋 (Magpie Bridge)
qukuang liujin 去礪留金 (“eliminating the ore to keep the gold”)
rangu xue 然谷穴 (Blazing Valley cavity)
renmai 任脈 (Function vessel)
renxin 人心 (human mind)
rouqi 柔氣 (“soft breath”)
ruding 入定 (“entering stability”)
ruhuan 入環 (“entering the enclosure”)
rujing 入靜 (entering the state of quiescence)
Ruyao jing 入藥鏡 (Mirror for Compounding the Medicine)
sanbao 三寶 (Three Treasures)
sanche yunzhuan 三車運轉 (“turning around the Three Chariots”)

- sanhua juding* 三花聚頂 (“the three flowers gather at the sinciput”)
sanjiao heyi 三教合一 (unity of the Three Teachings)
sanquan 三全 (“the three wholes”)
sanyuan 三元 (Three Origins)
shangde 上德 (“superior virtue”)
shangguan 上關 (“higher barrier”)
Shangqing ji 上清集 (Collection of Highest Clarity)
 Shao Yong 邵雍 (1012-77)
shaoyin 少陰 (Minor Yin)
shen 神 (Spirit)
shen 身 (body, person)
shen wai shen 身外身 (“a body outside the body”)
shengke 生克 (“generation and conquest”)
shengming li 生命力 (life force)
shengsi qiao 生死竅 (Opening of Life and Death)
shengtai 聖胎 (Embryo of Sainthood)
 Shi Tai 石太 (?-1158)
shi'er xiaoxi 十二消息 (“twelve-stage ebb and flow”)
Shihan ji 石函記 (Records from a Stone Casket)
shijie 尸解 (“liberation from the corpse”)
shishen 識神 (“cognitive spirit”)
shiyue guan 十月關 (Barrier of the Ten Months)
shouqiao 守竅 (“guarding the Opening”)
shouxin 收心 (“collecting the mind”)
shouyi 守一 (“guarding Unity”)
shouzhong 守中 (“guarding the Center”)
shuifu 水府 (Palace of Water)
shun 順 (“following the course”)
shunhua 順化 (“continuing transformation”)
si koujue 四口訣 (“the four oral instructions”)
sida 四大 (four elements)
sihu 死戶 (Door of Death)
Siku tiyao 四庫提要 (Descriptive Notes on the Books of the Four Repositories)
sizheng muyu 四正沐浴 (“bathing at the four cardinal points”)
sizheng 四正 (four cardinal points)
Sizhu Wuzhen pian 四注悟真篇 (Four Commentaries to *Awakening to Reality*)
suanyao guilu 送藥歸爐 (“delivering the Medicine to the stove”)
Taiji tu shoushou kao 太極圖授受考 (Study of the *Transmission of the Chart of the Ultimate*)
taixi 胎息 (“embryonic breathing”)
Taixi jing 胎息經 (Scripture of Embryonic Breathing)

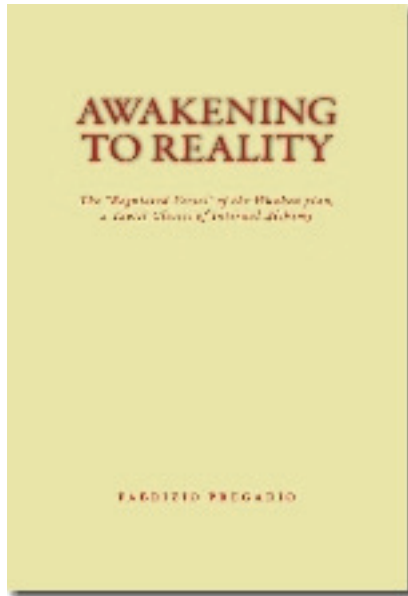
- Taixi jing zhu* 胎息經注 (Commentary to the *Scripture of Embryonic Breathing*)
Taixi ming 胎息銘 (Inscription on Embryonic Breathing)
tiangan 天干 (celestial stems)
tiangen 天根 (Heaven's Root)
tiangong 天宮 (Celestial Palace)
tiangu 天谷 (Heaven's Valley)
tianjing 天經 (Heaven's Warp)
tianmen 天門 (Gate of Heaven)
tianshu 天樞 (Celestial Axis)
Tianxian zhengli zhilun 天仙正理直論 (Straightforward Discourses on the Correct Principles of Celestial Immortality)
tianzhen 天真 (Celestial Reality)
tiao zhenxi 調真息 (“harmonizing the true breathing”)
tiaojing 調精 (“harmonizing the Essence”)
tiaoshen 調神 (“harmonizing the Spirit”)
tiaoxi 調息 (“harmonizing the breathing”)
Tingxin zhai kewen 聽心齋客問 (Answers to a Guest at the Studio of Listening to the Heart)
tong rendu 通任督 (“clearing the Function and Control vessels”)
tong sanguan 通三關 (“clearing the three Barriers”)
tongguan 通關 (“clearing of the barriers”)
tufu 土釜 (“earthenware crucible”)
tui yinfu 退陰符 (“withdrawing by the Yin response”)
tui fu 退符 (“withdrawing in response”)
tuoyue gongfu 橐籥功夫 (“practice of the bellows”)
Waidan 外丹 (External Elixir; External Alchemy)
“Waipian” 外篇 (“Outer Chapters”)
waiyao 外藥 (External Medicine)
Wan Shangfu 萬尚父 (Ming dynasty)
Wang Bangshu 王邦叔 (fl. ca. 1075)
Wang Haicang 王海藏 (Yuan dynasty)
Wang Jinchan 王金蟾 (thirteenth century)
wei 危 (Rooftop, lunar mansion)
Wei Boyang 魏伯陽
weilü 尾閭 (Caudal Funnel)
Weng Baoguang 翁葆光 (fl. 1173)
wenhuo 文火 (“gentle fire” or “civil fire”)
wenyang 溫養 (“nourishing warmly”)
wo 我 (the “self”)
Wu Shouyang 伍守陽 (1574–1644)
wu 無 (“nothing”)
wuhuo 武火 (“fierce fire” or “martial fire”)

- wuji 無極 (Ultimateless)
 Wuji tu 無極圖 (Chart of the Ultimateless)
 wujue 無覺 (non-perception)
 wulou 無漏 (“uncontaminated”)
 wuqi chaoyuan 五氣朝元 (“return of the five agents to the source”)
 wushu 巫術 (shamanic and mediumistic arts)
 wuwei 無為 (“non-doing”)
 wuxing 五行 (five agents)
 Wuzhen pian 悟真篇 (Awakening to Reality)
 Wuzhen pian chanyou 悟真篇闡幽 (Clarification of Obscurities in *Awakening to Reality*)
 Wuzhen pian shiyi 悟真篇拾遺 (Supplement to *Awakening to Reality*)
 Wuzhen zhizhi 悟真直指 (Straightforward Directions on *Awakening to Reality*)
 Wuzhen zhizhi xiangshuo sansheng biyao 悟真直指詳說三乘祕要 (Straightforward Directions and Detailed Explanations on *Awakening to Reality* and the Secret Essentials of the Three Vehicles)
 Wuzhen pian zhushu 悟真篇註疏 (Commentary and Subcommentary to *Awakening to Reality*)
 xiade 下德 (“inferior virtue”)
 Xian Fo hezong yulu 仙佛合宗語錄 (Recorded Sayings on the Common Origin of the Immortals and the Buddhas)
 xianshu 仙術 (arts of Immortality)
 xiantian 先天 (precelestial, “prior to Heaven”)
 xiantian jing 先天精 (precelestial Essence; Essence prior to Heaven)
 xiantian qi 先天炁 (precelestial Breath; Breath prior to Heaven)
 xiao dinglu 小鼎爐 (“Small Tripod and Stove”)
 Xiao Tingzhi 肖廷芝 (fl. 1260–64)
 xiao zhoutian 小周天 (Lesser Celestial Circuit)
 xiaoxi 消息 (“ebb and flow”)
 xin 心 (Heart; heart; mind)
 xing 刑 (“punishment”)
 xing 形 (form)
 Xing 性 (Nature)
 Xingming guizhi 性命圭旨 (Teachings on the Joint Cultivation of Nature and Life)
 xinxing 心性 (Nature of the Mind)
 Xishan qunxian huizhen ji 西山群真會真記 (Records of the Immortals and the True Men of the Western Mountain)
 Xiuzhen shishu 修真十書 (Ten Books on the Cultivation of Reality)
 Xiyou ji 西遊記 (Journey to the West)
 Xu Xun 許遜 (trad. 239–374)
 xu 虛 (Emptiness, lunar mansion)

- xuanguan* 玄關 (Mysterious Barrier)
xuanguan yiqiao 玄關一竅 (One Opening of the Mysterious Barrier)
xuanmiaoji 玄妙機 (“mysterious and wondrous mechanism”)
xuanpin 玄牝 (Mysterious-Female)
xuanpin zhi men 玄牝之門 (Gate of the Mysterious-Female)
xuanxuan 玄玄 (“mystery upon mystery”)
 Xuanzhong zi 玄中子
xubi 虛比 (“empty similitude”)
xuwei xue 虛危穴 (Emptiness-Rooftop cavity)
xuwu 虛無 (Emptiness and Non-Being)
yang qiaomai 陽蹻脈 (Yang Heel vessel)
yang weimai 陽維脈 (Yang Linking vessel)
yangche 羊車 (“sheep chariot”)
yangguang 陽光 (Yang radiance)
yangguang sanxian 陽光三現 (“three appearances of the Yang radiance”)
yangshen 陽神 (Yang Spirit)
yangsheng 養生 (Nourishing Life)
yao 藥 (Medicine)
 Ye Wenshu 葉文叔 (twelfth century)
yi 意 (Intention)
yiding 移鼎 (“moving the tripod”)
Yijing 周易 (Book of Changes)
yin qiaomai 陰蹻脈 (Yin Heel vessel)
yin qiaoxue 陰蹻穴 (Yin Heel cavity)
yin weimai 陰維脈 (Yin Linking vessel)
 Yin Zhiping 尹志平 (1169–1251)
yinfu 陰符 (“Yin response”)
Yinfu jing 陰符經 (Scripture of the Hidden Agreement)
ying'er 嬰兒 (Infant)
yinlu 飲露 (“drinking dew”)
yinshen 陰神 (Yin Spirit)
Yinshi zi jingzuo fa 因是子靜坐法 (Method of Sitting in Quiescence of Master Yinshi)
 Yinyang pai 陰陽派 (Yin-Yang branch)
yiqi 一炁 (One Breath)
yishen 一神 (One Spirit)
yishen buxin 以腎補心 (“using the kidneys to replenish the heart”)
yitai 移胎 (“moving the embryo”)
yitu 意土 (Intention-Soil)
Yiwai biezhuan 易外別傳 (The Separate Transmission of the *Book of Changes*)
yiyang sheng 一陽生 (“birth of initial Yang”)
yong 用 (operation)

- yongquan* 湧泉 (Bubbling Spring)
you you ru wu 由有入無 (“entering from Being into Non-Being”)
youwei 有為 (“doing”)
youzuo 有作 (“doing”)
 Yu Yan 俞琰 (1258–1314)
yuan 元 (“original”)
yuanjing 元精 (Original Essence)
yuanliao 原料 (*prima materia*)
yuanshen 元神 (Original Spirit)
yuanshi zuqi zhi qiao 元始祖炁之竅 (Opening of the Original Ancestral Breath)
yuanshi 元始 (Origin)
yudu 玉都 (Jade Capital)
yueku xue 月窟穴 (Cavity of the Moon’s Lair)
yuhu 玉壺 (Jade Pot)
yuhua 羽化 (“winged transformation”)
Yuhuang 玉皇 (Jade Sovereign)
yujing shan 玉京山 (Mountain of the Jade Capital)
Yuqing jinsi Qinghua biwen jinbao neilian danjue 玉清金笥青華秘文金寶內煉丹訣 (Alchemical Instructions on the Inner Refinement of the Golden Treasure, a Secret Text from the Golden Casket of the Jade Clarity Transmitted by the Immortal of Green Florescence)
Yuxuan yulu 御選語錄 (Imperial Compilation of Recorded Sayings)
yuzhen 玉枕 (Jade Pillow)
zanian 雜念 (impure thoughts)
zengjian 增減 (“augmenting and decreasing”)
 Zhang Boduan 張伯端 (987?–1082)
 Zhao Taiding 趙台鼎 (Ming dynasty)
zhen zhongzi 真種子 (True Seed)
zhengjing 正經 (“ordinary channels”)
zhenjing 真精 (True Essence)
zhenqi 真氣 (True Breath)
Zhenquan 真詮 (The Ultimate Truth)
zhenyi 真意 (True Intention)
zhiguan 止觀 (“cessation and contemplation”)
zhinian 止念 (ceasing thoughts)
Zhixuan pian 指玄篇 (Pointing to the Mystery)
 Zhong-Lü 鐘呂
Zhong-Lü chuandao ji 鐘呂傳道集 (Records of the Transmission of the Dao from Zhongli Quan to Lü Dongbin)
zhongguan 中關 (“intermediate barrier”)
Zhonghe ji 中和集 (Collection of Central Harmony)
zhonghuang 中黃 (Central Yellow)

- Zhongli Quan 鐘離權
zhongshi 種室 (“chamber of the seed”)
zhongtian huaitai 中田懷胎 (“pregnancy in the middle Cinnabar Field”)
zhongxi 踵息 (“breathing through the heels”)
Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709)
Zhu Yuanyu 朱元育 (fl. 1657–69)
zhu 主 (ruler)
Zhuangzi 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang Zhou)
zhuji 築基 (“laying the foundations”)
zifu 紫府 (Purple Prefecture)
ziran 自然 (“spontaneous, natural, so of its own”)
ziru 自如 (“spontaneous, natural, so of its own”)
zuichu huanxu 最初還虛 (“earliest return to Emptiness”)
zuichu lianji gongfu 最初煉己功夫 (“earliest practice of self-refining”)
zuo dayao 做大藥 (Compounding the Great Medicine)
zuodan 做丹 (Compounding the Elixir)
zuoguan 坐關 (“barrier of sitting”)
zuqi xue 祖氣穴 (Cavity of the Ancestral Breath)
zuqiao 祖竅 (“ancestral opening”)



Awakening to Reality
The “Regulated Verses” of the Wuzhen pian,
a Taoist Classic of Internal Alchemy

Translated by Fabrizio Pregadio

Golden Elixir Press, 2009, viii + 102 pp.
ISBN 978-0984308217, Paperback and PDF

www.goldenelixir.com
press/trl_01_wuzhenpian.html

Awakening to Reality (*Wuzhen pian*) is one of the most important and best-known Taoist alchemical texts. Written in the eleventh century, it describes in a poetical form several facets of Neidan, or Internal Alchemy. This book presents the first part of the text, consisting of sixteen poems, which contain a concise but comprehensive exposition of Neidan. In addition to notes that intend to clarify the meaning of the more obscure points, the book also contains selections from a commentary dating from the late eighteenth century, which is distinguished by the use of a lucid and plain language.

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