

Transforming Sexual Energy with Water-and-Fire Alchemy

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*If one abstains from intercourse,
the spirit has no opportunity for expansiveness.
Yin and yang are blocked and cut off from one another.*

— *Sunü jing* (Simple Woman's Classic; Wile 1992, 7)

Sexual love is one of the most powerful human experiences. Since ancient times, Daoists have sought to tap the power of sexuality to heal the body, deepen love relationships, and achieve elevated states of enlightenment. The Chinese texts on sexology are the oldest in the world, dating back about twenty-three hundred years (see Ruan 1991). Amongst the five major sexology texts are question and answer dialogues between the Yellow Emperor and his celestial advisors or sexual consorts on how to best cultivate sexual *qi* for long life and immortality (see Cleary 1994).

The body-centered cosmology of these early sexology texts and the oral traditions of different Daoist groups have led over time to a wide spectrum of sexual practices. These range from ritualized physical sexual intercourse through celibate contemplation of sexual essences copulating within the body, to conscious subtle-body love making with a partner at a distance. Inner sexual alchemy immerses the adept in the cosmic love-making of coupled polarities in nature—sun and moon, planetary and star beings (Bokenkamp 1997, 43; Wile 1992, 25; Winn 2001).

The notion that sexual energy is linked to eternal life at first glance seems counter-intuitive. The cycle of sexual birth and death defines human mortality. The idea that ephemeral sexual desires hold a hidden key to immortal life was codified by later Daoist schools of water-and-fire internal alchemy. Sexual essence or *jingqi*, is seen by them as the extremely fine spiritual substance of the soul that can be refined into the “elixir” (*dan*) of eternal life. It is the human secret to realizing the workings of the impersonal Dao, the opening and closing of its “mysterious gate.”

I have personally explored these Daoist methods over the last twenty-five years as student, teacher, and experimenter, driven by an intense curiosity about the nature of sexuality which intuitively felt central to spiritual evolution. I will share a personal Daoist sexual experience known as a “valley orgasm”. But first, since the canon of Daoist sexual teachings is so huge, we need a brief overview of the basic categories of Daoist sexual practice. The first distinction is between internal and external sexual cultivation. Inner and outer alchemy practices sometimes overlap, so these are not strict divisions.

There are two kinds of external sexual cultivation (*waidan gong*). One branch is the science of medical sexology which presents mostly “single cultivation” methods focused on improving bodily health. They include self-practices using *qigong* movements or self-massage, having a therapist prescribe herbs or other medical treatments (*tuina* massage, acupuncture, moxibustion, etc.) for sexual dysfunction. These medical sexology practices generally focus on balancing the kidney and liver *qi*-functions. The water phase (controlled by the kidney spirit) is responsible for generating sexual vitality, and the wood phase (controlled by the liver spirit) regulates the genitals and expresses sexual *qi*. The liver also stores the blood and thus regulates the female menstrual cycle (see Jarrett 1999; Dumas 1997).

The second branch of external alchemy practice is the bedroom arts (*fangzhong shu*). Known popularly as dual cultivation, these “arts of the bedchamber” involve the exchange of *yin* and *yang* physical fluids and subtle essences with a sexual partner (see Wile 1992). These practices focus more on the kidney-heart relationship as the axis around which the sexual volatility of the two lovers rotates. This outer alchemical water-fire relationship needs to be understood and brought into balance before one proceeds to inner practice.

The other category of sexual practice is internal cultivation (*neidan gong*), literally “inner elixir skill,” popularly translated as inner alchemy (see Lu 1970; Wilhelm 1962, Winn 2001). This is usually done as a solo meditative practice. The adept sexually couples his or her *yin* and *yang* essences internally as part of a lengthy process of defining energetic channels and opening up an inner body space or “cauldron.” The adept’s inner male and inner female are united within this cauldron, causing a process of spiritual rebirth. This practice is often not seen by outsiders as a sexual practice, since there is no physical

sexual partner visible. The more rare “dual internal cultivation” practice, on the other hand, involves a pair of high-level cultivators having energetic sex (without touching) as part of their meditative practice (Liu 2001).

I will provide a brief overview of the main procedures for women and men in external sexual practice, with a discussion of Daoist sexual cosmology and One Cloud’s Seven Alchemy Formulas for attaining immortality by copulation of water and fire.

HISTORY OF Daoist Sexual Cultivation

The bedroom arts flourished widely during the Han dynasty (206 bce – 220 ad), China’s first golden age. Sexual practices were supported by Chinese emperors, as they needed Daoist advisors to prevent sexual exhaustion servicing their large harem, which was their guarantee of a successor. They also sought to tap sexual love for the secret of longevity. This may account for the early Han sexology texts with conversations between female adepts and the legendary Yellow Emperor, who had 1200 concubines. Sex rituals flourished during the Tang dynasty (6th-9thcen.). There is evidence that Daoist sexual practices traveled to India and stimulated the flowering of Tantric sexual practices in the 7th – 9th centuries. (see Chu 1993). Inner sexual alchemy and solo meditative sexual practice achieved popularity in the Song (10th cen.), while partner practice was much written about during the Ming (14-16th cen). (Liu Xun 2002). Royal interest in sex has never flagged; when the Forbidden City was taken from the Emperor in 1911, over 1000 sex toys were found.

In the West Daoist sexual practices began to appear in the 1970s. They flourished as part of the sexual revolution stimulated by the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud and extended by Carl Jung, Wilhelm Reich, and Havelock Ellis. Bestselling self-improvement books—*The Joy of Sex* (Comfort 1972), *From Sex to Super Consciousness* (Rajneesh 1974), and *Sexual Secrets* (Douglas and Slinger 1979)—helped fuel a new openness to sexuality that mixed Daoist and Tantric ideas, depth psychology and the Free Love movement.

Western depth-psychology theory held that sexual impulse was a fundamental shaping force of the personality. Widespread acceptance of this idea opened Westerners to the alchemical interpretation of Daoist *yin-yang* theory that went one step further—that

sexual polarity can be transmuted into spiritual unity, that sex is the primary alchemical agent of human soul evolution. In his introduction to the Daoist alchemical text *Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung tried to impose his anima-animus psychological archetypes on *yin-yang* theory. Jung spent the last fifteen years of his life studying Western alchemy texts for their secrets. But he lacked a practical energetic methodology, beyond “talk therapy” on the couch to psychoanalyze dreams, to directly experience and guide these subconscious male-female forces in the body into superconscious states (see Wilhelm 1962).

Daoist alchemical ideas attracted Jung and other Westerners because they offered practical, body-centered methods to harness the cosmic *yin-yang* dynamic tension underlying all male-female relations. Indian Tantra shares similar underlying principles with Daoist alchemy. But Daoist sexual practices are not as entangled with religious deities, are more practical, and offer a far more detailed subtle energetic body map. The seminal books that popularized Daoist sexology in the West were *Tao of Love and Sex* (Chang 1977), and *Taoist Secrets of Love: Cultivating Male Sexual Energy* (Chia and Winn 1984). The latter text was translated into Chinese and contributed to renewed interest in Daoist sexual practices currently happening in mainland China.

Later sequels by Mantak and Maneewan Chia—*Healing Love: Cultivating Female Sexual Energy* (1986), *The Multi-Orgasmic Man* (1996), and *The Multi-Orgasmic Couple* (2000)—were reworkings of the first text, but aimed at a wider audience. These books, combined with a network of over a thousand Healing Tao teachers in thirty countries certified to teach Daoist sexual and subtle body practices, became the most visible aspect of Daoist influence in changing Western sexual paradigms. They became a major doorway for tens of thousands of Western spiritual seekers, who found themselves on a path of the previously obscure *Seven Alchemy Formulas for Immortality* passed on to Mantak Chia by the Daoist hermit One Cloud. (Winn 2001).

As practiced today, solo Daoist sexual cultivation might begin with special breathing or *qigong* practices to build up *qi* flow in the body. Stimulation arouses one’s sexual energy, which is then circulated from either the ovaries or testicles into energy channels that flow around the body. For dual cultivation with a partner, similar procedures would be done together, with sexual massage before intercourse using special positions

and coital techniques. Both solo and dual would likely practice Daoist meditation afterward.

Sexual Cosmology

*Dao gives birth to the One,
One gives birth to the Two,
Two gives birth to the Three.
The Three give birth to the ten thousand things.
— Daode jing (Tao Te Ching) verse 42*

External and internal sexual alchemy, single and dual cultivation practices, all rely on exactly the same principles of the trinity of *yin-yang-yuan* – the three forces described by Laozi (Lao Tzu). Some Daoists only write about the two forces *yin* (female) and *yang* (male) as the most tangible cycles of nature, but Daoist alchemy presents them in a trinity including *yuan*. The cosmic *yang*/positive and *yin*/negative poles spiral and pulsate around a third pole of neutral, primordial, or original energy (*yuanqi*), which appears in the core axis of the human body as the Penetrating Vessel (*chongmai*). This axis cosmically extends between the formless state of pre-heaven (*xiantian*) and the physical, earthly existence of post-heaven (*houtian*). The “ten thousand things” are procreated by the copulation of Heaven and Earth, and *yin-yang* is their eternal multi-orgasmic movement.

The human sexual orgasm is an exquisite echo of that cosmic *yin-yang* pulsation. Water-and-fire alchemy is the process of interiorizing within the microcosm of the physical body the subtle energetic love-making of the macrocosmos. By encouraging one’s human *qi*, and especially the sexual energy known as *jingqi*, to flow in rhythm and harmony with the hidden cycles of nature, one’s personal energy gates open to the cosmic flow of inner light and spiritual power of the Dao.

The notion that *yin-yang* is a sexual process is widespread not only in ancient Chinese cosmological texts, but I have found it to be true in my encounters in China with modern Daoists as well. They will cite the prime “numbers” of creation cited in verse 42 of the *Daode jing* as commonly divided into odd or male numbers and even or female numbers that must be combined to procreate. Numbers symbolize the core *yin-yang* forces of nature and have a sexual polarity and a life of their own.

Mircea Eliade's *The Forge and the Crucible* (1978) offers a definitive analysis of the myths of alchemy throughout the world. He devotes an entire chapter to "The World Sexualized," showing how universally—from Africa to China—the myths of alchemical and metallurgical transmutation are a sexual process. The alchemist reaches deep into the womb of the earth to extract her precious raw gold essences, refined through a process of sexual firing and cooling.

Daoist cosmology posits the existence of a superfine formless primordial or original essence called *yuan jing*. The primal *yin-yang qi*-pulsation of this essence gives birth to increasingly dense octaves of *yin-yang* activity, ultimately producing slowly vibrating matter in the physical plane. This continual copulation of *yin-yang* essence at all levels of vibration, from super fast formless to the excruciatingly slow vibration of a rock, is what's birthing out "the ten thousand things." So essentially, nature is having sex, continuously—a perpetual, nonstop orgasm. And that's why stars, planets, humans, insects, plants, and everything is bursting with this reproductive vitality.

Daoist theory details how the human process of body-creation itself is sexual. Human beings are considered a microcosm of the grand macrocosmic process of creation, so we have two levels of sexual procreation. One is external, a man and woman have sex to procreate another being, an outer child. The other is the ongoing internal process of procreating one's own body. In modern terms, it would be the eighty trillion cells in the human body sexually dividing and birthing new cells. Basically, our normal process is to internally clone ourselves.

Water-and-fire alchemy makes the energetics of that self-cloning process conscious and harnesses the internal procreative pulsation to give birth to an "inner child" that has true essence or *jing*. The presence of essence is very important. It means this alchemical spiritual rebirth is not merely a passive or temporary spiritual awareness that has been birthed in meditation; it is a real, live, internally kicking baby. In Daoist oral tradition, it is described as a ball of *qi* moving around spontaneously inside the physical body, eager to grow and give birth to a new self that will eventually become a sage or immortal.

Take a moment and imagine 80 trillion cells, each one having a little mini orgasm and reproducing itself. The sound of this collective pulsating orgasmic cell activity could

be described as the background hum of creation, In this case it is the hum of your deep *jing* transforming itself into your tangible living body. If you've got 80 trillion cells sexually dividing, that's a lot of sexual activity. On the other end of this spectrum we could talk about an orgasm in the ordinary sense of the term, the genital orgasm that happens when a male and a female have sexual intercourse.

SEXUAL ESSENCE (JING) AND SEXUAL ENERGY (JING QI)

The language Daoists use to talk about this spectrum of *yin-yang* orgasmic activity is expressed by the trinity of the “three treasures” to describe the transformations between essence (*jing*), subtle breath or energy (*qi*), and intelligence/spirit (*shen*). These three treasures transform from one into to the other, *jing* to *qi* to *shen*, and back again, *shen* to *qi* to *jing*, as one gives birth to matter and then dissolves back into spirit in each moment. Rebirthing produces a blissful state which is essentially a whole body, steady-state orgasm—but unconscious in most people.

Sexual practices, from Qigong through dual cultivation to solo alchemy, are different ways to amplify and expand our awareness of the flow between the two extremes of this *yin-yang* continuum, whole-body energetic orgasm, and physical genital orgasm. They are two ways of looking at the same process, but happening at different vibrational speeds. Simply becoming aware that your body is having internal sex on a cellular level can relieve feelings of sexual frustration or energize someone who is sick and depleted.

In Chinese medicine, the term “kidneys” indicates a broad energetic sphere that includes the sexual organs, kidneys, urinary bladder, and their various meridians. In men, this includes the penis, testicles, and prostate gland; in women, the ovaries, vagina, uterus, and breasts. The kidney spirit or intelligence regulates the endocrine glands, blood, bone marrow, and sexual essence, all fundamental to long life. But we need to be clear: “kidneys” in Chinese medicine is *not* the same as the physical kidneys of Western medicine. It does not mean just the two kidney bean-shaped organs, which are quite tiny, smaller than a fist, even though they have a big job to do. In classical Chinese medicine, “kidneys” is an orb or sphere of influence that penetrates and regulates the biological, psychological, and spiritual functions of the water phase or element. The water element

of the kidneys is considered the “first” amongst the five elements, as it is responsible for birthing everything.

Jing, the subtle essence holding the shape patterns of one’s body, is the key ingredient to apprehending the function of sexuality. *Jing* is perhaps best understood in Western terms as prime matter. *Jing* is the raw fuel that drives the pulsating rhythm of the body’s moment-to-moment cellular division and reproduction of itself. In modern terms, *jing* generates stem cells, genes, and the sexual hormonal energy of the glands, but is not sexual energy itself.

Jing in humans is governed by the water spirit of the kidneys. This psycho-biological intelligence is called *zhi*, literally the “body will.” *Zhi* is the instinctual will to be embodied, to survive, to seek pleasure, and to fulfill a specific destiny while in a body. It controls the *jing* that in the human animal is radiating polarized waves of male or female sexed energy which we may label charisma or magnetic power. In short, *jing* is the raw source of sexual desire and the feeling essence of earthiness, while *zhi* is the instinctive intelligence that governs the unfolding of the *jing*.

Without *jing*, the heart spirit (*shen*) would not be able to embody its virtues or have direct sensory experience of physicality. If one is feeling “spiritual bliss,” the bliss part is the feeling of smoothly vibrating *jing*, perceived through the lens of the heart and the other vital organ spirits. This *jing-shen* relationship between the kidneys and heart spirits can be volatile. *Jing* is thus the main source of vexation for spiritual seekers who ignore it or run from their sexual impulses in order to chase after the other end of the spectrum of consciousness, the *shen* or spirit body. The heart *shen* is the local portal for self-awareness into the physical body. At the other end of its spectrum the heart spirit integrates with the other body spirits to become the “great spirit,” an infinite sea of pure awareness. To achieve the state of great spirit, the seeker must ground his or her heart-spirit in the essence of kidney-*jing*.

What, then, is the difference between *jing* as soul essence and *jingqi* as sexual energy? *Jing* alone holds the infrastructure of the bodily form together and is stored in the bone marrow, where blood and hormonal precursors are manufactured before moving into the endocrine glands and blood vessels. In Chinese medicine, *jing* has a function similar to what Western medicine calls the stem cells. It represents an undifferentiated

entity that differentiates itself into many different functions. A stem cell, like *jing*, can become a heart cell or a kidney cell, a skin cell or a brain cell, or whatever it needs to become. According to Chinese medical theory, we basically manufacture ourselves in the bones and the brain marrow, which is also known as the Sea of Essence.

This deep sea of *jing* in the brain, bones, and core channel emanates the *jingqi* of sexual practice that then flows in all the meridians. This relation does not exist for Western sexologists who define sexual energy in terms of physiological response. They know that when someone gets sexually excited there is more blood flow, the heart is beating a little faster, there may be increased hormonal activity. Testosterone or estrogen levels change. There is tumescence, genital swelling, an erection, or vaginal swelling to increase friction, and also a swelling against certain nerves. That is as much as Western sexologists recognize. They do not see an energetic network or the connection of sexual energy to marrow.

In contrast, the Chinese distinguish at least thirty-three types of *qi* in the major meridians, not to mention hundreds of divergent and sinew meridians. Sexual or *jingqi* is one of them, yet very different from them. Unlike them, it has a sticky quality that allows it to act as the stabilizing or bonding energy between opposing male-female or *yin-yang* forces. This stickiness is the reason why it is so difficult to separate from a sexual partner and why divorce is frequently such a struggle. Sexual energy not only creates attachment to other bodies, but glues itself to emotions, thoughts, perceptions of identity, and the like. Thus, to maintain an energetic equilibrium it is essential that the mind remains calm and unattached during sexual practice. As the medical classic *Huangdi neijing* (The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic) says:

As for the way to engage in sexual intercourse, calmness makes for strength. Make the mind as calm as water, conserve the spiritual dew within. Knock at the jade gate with the jade stalk, the mind neither too tense nor too loose. You can tell what is best by how the woman sighs in response. Collect the spiritual mist, drink the celestial broth, sending them to the internal organs in order to store them deeply. (Cleary 1994, 20)

FIVE BODY SPIRITS NOURISHED BY SEX

Jingqi also has the power to amplify or multiply whatever it bonds to. It intensifies emotions, thoughts, and sensations. It multiplies cell and glandular reproduction rates,

either in your body or by giving birth to children. It can also be directed to amplify your creative energy in the world of play or career. Wherever we focus our sexual energy, it will multiply into abundance. Sexual energy thus acts as a bonding agent between the different layers of the energy body on the continuum between *jing*, *qi*, and *shen*. It cycles through the body's five phases as they move along the productive, nourishing, or creation cycle.

While the five major organ spirits function separately, at a deep level they remain one, and thus can function simultaneously in harmony with each other. The nourishing or "creation cycle" flows from water to wood to fire to earth to gold. In the body this translates into a cycle flowing from kidneys to liver to heart to spleen to lungs. If *qi*-flow is healthy, each organ will add to the vitality of the next organ in the cycle. As the Classic on Nourishing Essence notes:

To improve the functioning of the five organs, facilitate digestion, and cure the hundred ills, wait for the approach of ejaculation, then expand your belly and mentally move the qi around the body. Next, contract your belly again so that the jing disperses and reverts to the hundred vessels. Then penetrate your partner nine times shallow and once deeply between her zither strings and grain ears. Good qi will return, ill qi will depart. (Wile 1992, 104)

The exercise activates the sexual energy in the cycle of the five phases, beginning with the kidneys and their *jingqi*. If sexual energy is strong here, the next phase, represented by the liver spirit and known as the celestial soul (*hun*), is nourished and starts to expand the jing to the rest of the body. Blood flow begins to quicken, excitement arises. The liver stores blood and uses it to regulate the arousal of the genitals, controlling the blood flow needed for an erection. It activates the tendons and sends blood to the muscles, which translates into the passionate movement of grasping one's lover during intercourse.

Third in the cycle is the spirit of the heart. Its feeling of love and joy may amplify the sexual energy and project it out romantically to another person—or alternatively to the whole cosmos as divine love. The heart-fire warms the *jingqi* further and raises its vibration into a feeling of whole body radiance. Following this, the earth phase, represented by the spleen spirit and the mind-intent (*yi*), stabilizes and grounds the love-making process. That is to say, sexual love opens up one's inner space or "inner earth" to trusting one's lover. The private inner space of each person becomes a shared

collective inner space. Practitioners share the inner “earth” of their soul with their lover because the intention that governs our sense of trust and intimacy is strengthened by love-making. It controls our sense of boundary, and sexuality is about exploring and dissolving physical boundaries. Physically, the *jingqi* at this stage infuses the flesh to become especially sensitive. The mouth and lips, the body opening of the spleen and stomach, will begin to kiss more deeply and perhaps fiercely.

The metal or gold phase is governed by the lungs and represented by the corporeal or earthly soul (*po*). It regulates *jingqi* through the breath and controls the amount of *qi* that breath brings into the love-making. An orgasm in the lungs during love-making might take the form of temporarily stopping the breath. This means the lung *po* is ecstatic and breathes only internal *qi* from the love-making. It also brings in a sense of the personal, expressed commonly in the question: “How does this sexual relation strengthen my identity?” The gold aspect of the lung spirit is the most evolutionary of the five phases, as it can melt into liquid, take any shape, and hold individual shape for as long as necessary. It is also a metaphor for the alchemical journey of the personal self and the need to refine our inner *qi* into spiritual gold, i.e. into an incorruptible and immortal state.

Thus we can see how sexual energy can be circulated in the post-natal creation cycle to strengthen both our biological and psychological self. The vital organ spirits control our energy flow in the meridians, and feel refreshed and recharged by the vibrant *yin-yang* pulsation of sexual energy. The fire essence of the heart and the water essence of the kidneys are the most volatile, and thus are given the most importance in sexual alchemy. Water and Fire stimulate each other and keep the other in check. By keeping proper exchange between them, one enters a steady state that gradually opens the door to more refined love-making. By simply keeping an open heart you protect against blind lust, which ultimately injures the kidneys because it can never be satisfied by physical sex alone. All aloneness at core is the heart spirit (*shen*) seeking the love, sensual touch and sexual stimulation of the kidney *shen*. The mirror of this loneliness is the deeply embodied kidney spirit seeking the heart’s spiritual virtue of unconditional acceptance and love.

Women’s Practice

You should know that the desire of women is stronger than that of men. Once the monthly flow stops, her heart is like a blossoming lotus bud. It benefits from rain and dew and begins to grow its fruit.

A woman without a man is yin in isolation— she cannot bring forth a lotus blossom. Unless she receives the benefit of rain and dew, she is like a field without manure: useless.

– *Nüdan yaoyan*; Despeux and Kohn 2003, 212)

Women face two main challenges when cultivating sexual energy. One is the physical depletion of *jing* that occurs naturally due to their monthly cycle of bleeding. The cure for this is found in practices that lighten or eliminate the loss of blood during the menstruation through dietary adjustments, meditations, and self massages. The other challenge is the natural tendency of the uterus to contract. Under emotional stress, this may lead to an excessive or chronic contraction and thus cause *qi*-stagnation in the uterus, ovaries, and other sexual organs.

A women's ovaries store a tremendous creative power, potentially available for bearing children but also ready to enhance internal biological health. Daoist alchemical practice taps this female *jing* for spiritual rebirth. However, any suppressed emotional and sexual energy in the uterus can block the natural pathways of revitalizing the energy flow and may cause psychic exhaustion. It may result in pre-menstrual syndrome, ovarian or uterine cysts, and eventually cause some form of chronic illness.

Women have some natural advantages over men in overcoming the challenge of harmonizing their sexual energy. Their breasts function as an extra motor in the body, like an extra set of "upper kidneys" that provide more kidney power. This is needed for bearing children and breast feeding—the latter being energetically more exhausting than pregnancy because mother's milk is blood converted into milk. The breast-feeding mother must constantly replace her blood, which taxes her kidneys and thus her *jing*. To do so, she is equipped with a second pair of essence-producing organs.

A second factor giving superior sexual strength to a women is that the biological location of her sexual organs is more internal. This causes sexual energy to be spontaneously circulated in the meridians, stored in the vital organs, and expressed through the personality. It may also explain why many women seem to have a stronger—and more volatile—emotional life than men. This is the *yang* or fiery power hidden within their *yin* or watery nature, a fundamental concept of Daoist alchemy. If the volatile water

and fire mixture underlying a woman's emotional and sexual life are not harmonized, the result will be expressed through swings in biological and emotional processes.

A third factor contributing to the superior sexual strength of women is their abundant supply of pre-natal *jing* in the unfertilized eggs in the ovaries. Of course the ancients had no way to count these eggs, which modern science has revealed to number in the hundreds of thousands, far more than needed for childbirth. But Daoists have traditionally held that women have a nearly infinite supply of *yin*-energy due to their strong sexual potential and that this *yin*-potential can be converted into manifesting *yang* for spiritual growth.

However, in many cases the *yin*-potential is locked up because the uterus is packed with trapped emotional and sexual *qi*. This blockage is a kind of excessive earth-centered gravity in women. It is a *yin* virtue in that it leads them to develop strong nurturing and cooperative qualities. Daoist wisdom holds that even though women have a natural sexual-spiritual advantage, their deep and often excessive uterine-earth contraction makes it far more difficult for women to open the core channel of the Penetrating Vessel and spiritually ascend their *jing* to rebirth their *shen* in the upper elixir field (*dantian*) in the head, the spiritual gateway to Heaven.

The combination of ovary power and a dual set of kidneys gives women an inherently stronger sexual nature than men. This is why many male sexual practices are designed in part to balance out that inequality. Men have the compensation of having a simpler energetic system and an easier time of opening the core channel as they have no uterus in which to contract their *qi*. In men, the *jing qi* follows a different pathway, and is more likely to get stuck in their head.

It must also be kept in mind that women are constantly resonating with a completely different natural cycle than men. Women's blood is governed by a deep earth cycle, reflected in the lunar cycle of their menses. Resonance with the moon and its pull on blood and sexual energy further nourishes female kidney strength. The moon functions like a giant kidney in its regulation of the water element on earth. The lunar and earth influence implies a slower watery female cycle, rather than the fiery, hot daily solar male cycle. This naturally creates a lot of potential complications in communications and relationships between men and women.

Women lose *jing* through excessive bleeding during the *yin* or releasing half of the menstrual cycle. By energetically detoxifying the body with sexual *qigong* during the *yang* or building half of the cycle, the need for bleeding as a means of detoxifying is vastly reduced. Circular breast massage, “Ovarian Breathing,” and “Slaying the Red Dragon” are the primary methods for regulating cyclical hormonal fluctuations, made more powerful by inner alchemy meditation. An example of such an alchemical meditation is the internal circulation of female *jingqi* in the microcosmic orbit, which in most texts—written by male adepts—flows along the fire path, moving from the perineum up the spine, over the crown of the head, and down the water path, i.e., from the lower lip through the center of the chest to the navel. It regulates *yin-yang* balance in all meridians and opens energetic communication between the endocrine glands situated along the orbit: the reproductive gonads, adrenal, pituitary, pineal, thyroid, para-thyroid, and pancreas glands, plus the spleen and heart, organs that often behave like glands.

More appropriately, the orbit for women may more easily flow in the reverse direction of men, moving up the water path along the Conception Vessel from the perineum through the chest to the mouth and, after moving across the head, descending along the fire path of the Governing Vessel back to the perineum. This is known as “water leading the fire.” Which direction of flow is chosen is best determined by body type and spontaneous openness to inner communication. However, women during and after menopause are cautioned to lead with the water path, and it may help to moderate hot flashes.

After conservation of blood is achieved, women progress to the cultivation of ovarian essence. For women practicing dual cultivation, this includes absorbing male sexual essence and redirection of the genital orgasm to the spine, chest, heart, and into the vital organs until full body orgasm is achieved. Because the female breast/water-heart/fire relationship stabilizes the *jing* in the middle elixir field and the more internal location of the vagina, ovaries, and uterus, internal recirculation of sexual energy is somewhat easier for women than men. This may account for women finding it easier to achieve multi-orgasmic sexual experiences.

FEMALE ORGASM, AND SEXUAL REFLEXOLOGY

Further distinction for external sexual alchemy cultivators can be made between clitoral and vaginal orgasm. Clitoral orgasm is more fiery as it is linked to the expansive liver spirit that controls the nervous system and feeds the heart fire. Vaginal orgasm is considered to be more whole body, due to the zones of reflexology within the vagina that reflect the stimulation of the entire five phase vital organ cycle that cause the *jing qi* to “enter the hundred vessels” and thus heal all illness.

In ancient times the heart was considered the natural center for women; it expressed the center of gravity of their heart fire, balanced between two watery breasts. Modern women have become more similar to men, being much more active, i.e. *yang*, in the outer world. In the Chinese *qigong* community, the modern trend toward equal functions for men and women has been noted and held responsible for modern women’s center of gravity shifting down to the navel center from the heart center. A sample view of this shift was found amongst four different modern female Daoist adepts in China I have spoken with in recent years. A female Daoist nun on Mt. Hua summarized the view I heard elsewhere: “I begin cultivating in the lower elixir field. After that is open, I shift up to my heart center and practice from there. I invite the spirit of the Queen Mother of the West to enter my heart and guide me.”

A more physical sexual cultivation technique for women is to exercise their vaginal muscles by inserting a jade egg into their vagina and move it about as an internal exercise. This method was introduced by Mantak Chia as part of the oral tradition he received. The physical exercise aids women in restoring sexual function and tightening stretched vaginal tissue after childbirth. It also seals the *hui yin*, Great *Yin* point at the perineum, against leakage of *qi* caused by excess sitting. The movement of the jade egg is a solo practice for stimulating the internal sexual reflexology points that activate the flow of *qi* to the five vital organs. Quiet sitting with the egg in state of deep stillness allows the egg to be used as a medium for absorbing psychic toxins trapped in the uterus (Piontek 2001). This practice has become very popular among Western female sexual energy cultivators. Because most of the ancient sexology practices have gone underground in communist China, it is difficult to know if this practice continues there today.

The medical applications of female sexual practice include relief of pre-menstrual syndrome and menopausal hot flashes, healing of infertility (“cold womb syndrome”) and a variety of glandular and sexual dysfunction, including frigidity. Some Western women have completely stopped their menstrual cycle through voluntary internal practice. Most use it to simply lighten the amount and color of blood flow as they learn how to detoxify their blood. An important aspect of Daoist sexual practices for Western women is the sense of empowerment it offers. It is part of the larger paradigm shift of women gaining greater control over their inner sexual forces and seemingly immutable cycles of menstruation. (see Chia 1986)

Male Attainment

The way to extend life involves watching over the closing off of the flow of semen. When the semen is locked up and stored in a timely manner, then spiritual clarity comes and builds up. When it builds up, it inevitably becomes evident. Locking up the semen to stabilize vitality (jing) ensures that the supply of sexual fluid is never exhausted. Then diseases do not affect you...and you can live to be one hundred years old. (Sunü jing; Cleary, 1994, 6)

Men are on a much shorter cycle than women: the reproduction of sperm only takes twenty-four hours. Once a man has ejaculated, on this short cycle he may want to release it again the next day. Sperm is the male storehouse of *jingqi*—lost through excessive sex and ejaculation. Modern science offers some confirming evidence – a single ejaculation may cost a male between 300 to 500 million spermatozoa, which could be used for rejuvenation using Daoist methods. A scientific study showed that male nematod worms lived twice as long when they were biologically altered to prevent sperm loss. The conclusion: constant production of sperm taxes the male biologically. (Angier 1992)

The Daoist definition of “excessive” ejaculation varies according to body type, age, and climate. Ejaculation has less immediate impact on a healthy young male because of his abundance of *jing*. But all men must be especially careful during the winter, when kidney-*qi* moves inwards rather than out. In spring, it is healthy to ejaculate more since the liver-*qi* is *trying* to expand outwards. There are methods of slowing down ejaculation during sex, so that men can draw out the essence from their sperm and recycle it around the body to nourish other energy centers. These practices include “Testicle Breathing”

and “Drawing Up the Golden Nectar,” a method of internally sucking sexual *jingqi* up the spine as if it were liquid in a straw.

This technique, also known as “reverting sexual energy to nourish the brain” (*huanjing bunao*), has been known in Daoist literature for the past two thousand years (Pregadio 2000, 427; see also Wile 1992). This meditation likely began as a sexual practice to rejuvenate the brain and evolved to become a spiritual practice as the *qi* was observed to spiral up the spine and down the chest, blending the fire and water *qi* of the body and eventually causing the original spirit (*yuan shen*) to crystallize in the lower *dantian*. Today the practice of circulating *qi* around the body is a famous meditation known as the “small heavenly cycle” or microcosmic orbit. It creates a transitional pathway for *qi* flow between external and internal sexual alchemy, between cultivating post-natal and pre-natal *qi*. (see Chia 1984).

It is not necessary to become celibate to gain the benefits of recycling sexual energy to purposes besides reproduction. Celibacy is often the intent to sublimate sexual desire into a religious goal (see Eskildsen 1998). Daoist sexual energy cultivation with a partner (or solo, through masturbation) allows one to satisfy the need for sexual pleasure without sacrificing male life energy to the demands of constant sperm production. The Daoist methods of conserving seed essences simultaneously transmute that essence into internal spiritual processes.

The goal of the external sexual alchemy accordingly is to shift from a limited genital orgasm to a whole body orgasm. Slowing or stopping ejaculation does not prevent a man from having orgasm or being multi-orgasmic. Ejaculation is the physical release of sexual fluid caused by a mini-orgasm in the prostate gland which pumps the semen so it has enough momentum to enter deep into the female uterus. It also adds a clear fluid that supplies nutrition to the sperm for their journey to the egg that it hopes has ripened and is waiting on the wall of the uterus.

From the viewpoint of Daoist sexology, orgasm is defined by the pulsation of sexual energy and is not to be confused with ejaculation, which releases seed essence out the “ancestral muscle” or “jade stalk” (penis). Intensification and circulation of sexual *qi* can cause the rest of the meridians and organs to pulsate in unison. But men must stay relaxed, and not get obsessed with stopping ejaculation. The danger for beginners

holding their seed is they may also stop the *qi*-pulsation that creates orgasm. What works best is to focus on opening up the *qi*-channels and redirecting and recycling sexual *qi* before, during, and after orgasm.

In this way, ejaculation is delayed while the circulating sexual energy is being absorbed by other energy centers, vital organs, and meridians. Then, as the *qi* has already largely been extracted from the semen, physical ejaculation does not cause major loss of *qi*. Delaying ejaculation also allows the man to slow down his fire to stay in closer harmony with the woman's slower water cycle of arousal. This is known as "pairing the fire to match the water." It is a practical way for men to solve the common problem of premature ejaculation. A combination of continuous "Testicle Breathing" and sexual foreplay to "warm the woman's stove" allow the male to match the longer female love-making cycle. With practice a gradual shift is made from external to internal alchemy. The short-lived genital orgasm transitions into a blissful, steady whole-body orgasm that pulses all organs and meridians. When this faster vibrating pulsation becomes conscious in the deeper Eight Extraordinary Vessels and the three elixir fields (*dantian*), the practitioner experiences what can be described as a spiritual orgasm.

Innumerable other external methods support the sexual cultivation process. One is "Tongue Kung-fu" for strengthening that versatile sexual muscle; another is a method for absorbing *qi* directly into the genitals from the sun. Ancient texts mention that hiding of the sexual organs under clothing leads to their disuse, which may cause early death. Men can balance their excess *yang qi* by mixing it with *yin qi* drawn up from the earth. This cools and grounds the hot male sexual fire and supports the body's absorption of sexual *qi* for the purpose of self-healing.

For both sexes Daoist medical sexology posits that poor diet, shallow breathing, negative emotions and bad mental attitudes exhaust sexual vitality as quickly as semen or blood loss. Improving these with a regular meditation and Qigong practice for least twenty minutes a day is key to preventing low sexual energy and many associated dysfunctions.

YIN-YANG OF SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Among the two basic Daoist approaches to achieving sexual equilibrium, the external or dual cultivation requires finding a sexual partner and forming a deep dyadic relationship. It may appear this exchange involves only the two poles of *yin-yang*, between one woman and one man. However, the Daoist cultivator quickly finds out that sex involves not just two polarities, but rather four polarities. Regardless of one's sexual preference, each person has an inner male or an inner female. One half identifies with the physical body and creates the sexual identity as outer male or female; the other half is hidden in the shadow of the psyche but may dominate sexual preferences. Since both partners have an inner male or inner female, that doubles the energetic complexity. There are now four sexual identities influencing the relationship, with the possibility of four different sexual agendas.

Most men and women play out these polar roles and exchange sexual energy in a way that hopefully creates equilibrium. This is where cultivating inner stillness, the hallmark of the "third pole" of original *qi* in addition to *yin* and *yang*, becomes essential to holding one's center of a relationship in the midst of complexity. If the relationship becomes stable and love is present, the couple may spontaneously build up original *qi*, expressed as a common shared center of stillness. This is most often seen in long-term couples who are content to merely sit in the presence of each other with no need to stimulate or complete the other in any particular way. Their relationship has become a container for the neutral force at the core of their *yin-yang* dynamic. In religious language, sharing of this original *qi* could be called Divine Love, as it is grounded in a field that goes beyond sex and emotion.

Spiritual bonding is what ultimately holds human love together; it makes sexual love into a sacred art. The ability to go beyond polarity into the non-dual state of inner stillness shared with another makes sex feel sacrosanct. Relations in the beginning may only be held together by emotions, words, demonstrations of affection, and *yin-yang* attraction on the sexual level. But ultimately there has to be some deeper internal energetic glue, as the initial *yin-yang* attraction at the *jing*-level is satisfied and begins to fade. Then the attraction is sustained by refining the *yin-yang* polarities at deeper levels of energy, spirit, and the Supreme Mystery of Dao. In Western terms, this refinement process progresses from body through personality to soul and cosmic consciousness.

From the Daoist view of dual cultivation, the hidden purpose of any long-term commitment is to help each other grow in original nature—ultimately a spiritual purpose. People ostensibly stay together for all kinds of reasons, including economics, social pressure, fear of change, obligation to children, or mere habit. However, underneath all these there may well be a deeper reason, which according to Daoism is that we can continue to create something together through the interaction of *yin* and *yang* energies and reach an equilibrium in which original energy can manifest itself.

INNER SEXUAL ALCHEMY OF WATER & FIRE

*The life-force of the valley never dies –
This is called the dark female.
The gateway of the dark female –
This is called the root of the world.
Wispy and delicate, it only seems to be there,
Yet its productivity is bottomless.*

- Verse 6, Daodejing (Ames & Hall 2003)

The sexual fertility expressed in this image of a cosmic female vagina highlights the connection between cosmology and sexuality found in this famous Daoist classic (460 bce). Nature is experienced by the sage who is in touch with the Dao as a continuous cosmic orgasm. Dao sexually births physical creation through the pulsating *yin-yang* process arising from original breath (*yuanqi*). The sexual nature of the original state of chaos-unity (*hundun*) - from which the ten thousand things arise and to which they eventually return - was the basis for Daoist cultivation of human sexual energy in order to return to the origin. (see Tortchinov 1997)

The outer sexual methods strengthen the body and balance the mind. But the outer Fire and Water elements rarely come to full completion. Outer male Fire and outer female Water could be said to temporarily satisfy each other through sexual intercourse. But this is illusory, the post-natal fire and water *qi* build up their sexual charge again, seeking for another experience. But *qi* from a genital orgasm will disperse. This pattern will continue until the sexual seeker is finally fatigued by the chase, or sexual energy is effectively spent and no longer drives the individual.

In this context, humans naturally ask: why is there such friction between men and women? Why isn't life a joyful dance of playful opposites that accumulates more energy? In Daoist view, why does false or excess *yin-yang* usurp a true *yin-yang* dynamic? Why does it turn possessive, angry, violent,

soul shattering at times? Partly it results from the frustration of chasing after post-natal *qi* – sexual and otherwise - that doesn't last. But there is a deeper reason.

The outer sexual tension between men and women is also a reflection of tension between the inner masculine and inner feminine hidden within most people. The same dynamic tension that exists between our Becoming – our sexualized body essence - and our formless Being – also flows into our relationships. The horizontal social-sexual tension is a reflection of the vertical Heaven-Earth tension. It is ultimately the tension between our outer and our inner selves, our mortal and immortal self.

Sexual inner alchemy is a method for peeling off the layers of *yin-yang* imbalance protecting us from experiencing the original self beyond this dynamic. What is the likely cosmic cause of this false *yin-yang* tension? Daoists texts allude to a “golden age” that precedes our physical existence. Study of the alchemical process, whose primary goal is to cultivate Original Breath (*yuan qi*) within our physical body, allows us an educated speculation. Many layers of psychic stress may have resulted from the “tear” in the fabric of the life force when the original androgynous Early Heaven self was polarized into physical male and female bodies in Later Heaven. The androgynous self had both male and female poles within its body and was self-regenerating, or immortal. Its *yin-yang* cycle of life and death was renewed at will by drawing on the third force, *yuan qi*. (see Girardot 1983)

The fall into physically sexed bodies was a fall into mortality. The *yuan qi* was scattered by the splitting of the sexes. So when we alchemically work on resolving the *yin-yang* sexual tension within ourselves, and gathering the stillness of Original Breath within, we are by resonance also working on the collective sexual wound that exists within the collective psyche of humanity from this male-female split.

Understanding of this inner soul *yin-yang* dynamic highlights the fundamental difference between external sexual alchemy and inner sexual alchemy. Outer methods involve skillful management of sexual fluids and energy to improve physical health and harmonize a sexual relationship with a partner or with one's own sexed body. The inner sexual methods are focused on using sexual polarity to accelerate unfoldment of the human soul. Completing one's sexual identity at the soul level fulfills both our worldly destiny (*ming*) and our spiritual destiny (*xing*). The first stage is to awaken and rebirth our sexed body into a pure androgynous (bi-sexed or *yin-yang* balanced) energy body of golden light. This light or energy body is essential to consciously integrating our sexual essence with our pre-sexual original self.

What makes human life so sexually confusing is that we have present at each moment three different sexual impulses influencing our consciousness. Merging with the Dao ultimately requires the integration of these three seemingly separate identities: a male or female physical self, a male-female subtle energetic self, and an asexual primal spiritual self. This mirrors the flow of *qi* in Daoist cosmogony: human *qi* evolves through primordial, early, and later heaven (a.k.a physical earth). From earth, we must cultivate our sexually polarized *yin* and *yang qi* to return back to the Origin.

How is this practically accomplished? Inner alchemy captures the subtle sexually polarized forces of the cosmos and internalizes them within the energy body of the adept. An inner alchemy adept becomes spiritually pregnant, conceives an immortal embryo, births an inner immortal child who, with spiritual nurturing, matures into a sage or celestial immortal – hopefully within one lifetime. All this happens while still in a physically sexed body. The function of this inner sage is to harmonize the creation of the body, the personality, and orchestrate fulfillment of the soul mission. The sage is the soul pattern embodied and empowered with an inner will independent of the outer world. It has a life beyond physical death, thus is immortal. This sage lives in multiple dimensions, whereas before there is a human “monkey mind” - an un-integrated sea of outer wills floating about, grasping after physical straws.

Alchemy uses simple sexual metaphors to describe progressive states of enlightenment and spiritual immortality. Every stage of alchemy refines our sexual essence, *jing*, and marries it to a higher level of spirit (*shen*). This inner Water and Fire pairing cultivates the continuation of individuated consciousness after death – but attempts to fully penetrate that mystery while the adept is still alive.

ONE CLOUD'S SEVEN ALCHEMY FORMULAS

There are many different schools of inner alchemy, but all are based on a similar cosmology. I am most familiar with One Cloud's *Seven Alchemy Formulas for Attaining Immortality*. His alchemy formulas, orally transmitted to me by Mantak Chia, appear to date back one thousand years to the tenth century teachings of the semi-legendary Daoist Immortal Lu Dong Bin, when many schools of inner alchemy flourished during the Song dynasty. One Cloud was a Daoist hermit who lived on Long White Mountain (*chiangbaishan*) in northern China.

One Cloud allegedly achieved the breatharian state, living only on subtle *qi*. He died at age 96 in 1978. I have found small fragments of One Cloud's formulas in many Daoist monasteries I have

visited in China, but never the complete set of seven formulas. His lineage is not monastic or temple based, but rather a “mountain” hermit lineage, passed down one-to-one, sage to aspiring adept, for a thousand years.

One Cloud’s seven-stage path is a progressive training that offers a subtle body map for complete spiritual development. The first formula clears physical and emotional blockages and opens the post-natal *qi* channels, using the *yin-yang* and five phase patterns of *qi* flow that form the basis of Chinese medicine. It assumes external sexual alchemy techniques of male semen retention or lessening blood loss from female menses are being practiced. It re-directs this sexual energy into the “microcosmic orbit” so it flows up the fire or governing channel (*dumai*) in the spine and down the water or conception channel (*renmai*) in the chest. These two channels regulate all *yin-yang* flow in the twenty-four regular meridians.

The front and back channels also are two of the eight extraordinary channels that comprise the “macrocosmic orbit”, which adds belt, thrusting, and arm and leg channels that energetically connect us to the outer cosmos. Sexual energy is circulated in the first formula to open these deep channels and concentrate the adept’s sexual essence in the lower *dantian*. There it can attract and hold the presence of a unified heart-mind, the “five interior body gods” (*wujingshen*). Eventually these body spirits, when they complete their development, merge into the soul vessel or “*ling*” of the adept.

Some systems of *neidangong* may require celibacy in the hope that it will result in the spontaneous redirection of sexual energy to higher subtle bodies. But this is a hit-or-miss proposition, and celibacy can easily result instead in sexual repression, which slows progress in alchemical meditations designed to accelerate change. Sexual energy must be made conscious and transmuted, not suppressed. One Cloud’s system suggests using a deliberate method to guarantee the sexual energy is recycled in the orbit. This sexual *yin-yang* polarity cycling around the body is gradually alchemically “cooked” and fused into a post-natal pearl comprised of all five phases of *qi* (*wuxing*) and their ruling body spirits.

The microcosmic orbit and fusion of the five phases into a unified pearl is followed by three formulas - Lesser, Greater, and Greatest Enlightenment of “Water and Fire”. These formulas train the adept to use the *yin-yang* polarities of post-natal *qi* to hold open a portal into the pre-natal *qi* field deep in the core of the body. This portal is shaped as a *vesica piscis*, which in sacred geometry is the interpenetration of two spheres of male-female energies. The Lesser Kan & Li adept gathers the

five *jingshen* (deep body intelligences/spirits, or vital organ “gods”) into two internal identities – a primal water *yin* (inner female) and primal fire *yang* (inner male) – that copulate in the lower *dantian*.

This primal fire-water copulation births an immortal embryo, made of androgynous Early Heaven *yuan qi* that coagulates within the adept’s physical body. The practice is called “self-intercourse”. You have energetic sex inside yourself, and if successful, you get spiritually pregnant. This embryo is slowly birthed up the core channel, nourished by the copulation of natural sexually polarized geomantic forces within the earth below, planetary and stellar forces in heaven above.

In the Greater Kan & Li formula, you couple the essences of the sun and moon, which stimulates the birth of your inner child. It means you connect your inner male and female to the more pure, powerful *yin-yang* pulsing of sun and moon, and learn to ground that deep in the womb of the “true earth”, the formless or dark matrix of pre-natal earth inside physical earth. Earth holds our ancestral spirits (genetic blood lineage), and alchemy allows us to dissolve their deep issues, including deep ancestral sexual traumas. This process is internalized in the solar plexus or “yellow palace” of the adept, where the second refining of the “true golden elixir” of purified consciousness takes place.

In the Greatest Kan & Li the five planetary forces, which are experienced as collective astrological and archetypal soul patterns, are fused in the heart cauldron. This connects the adept to the collective heart of humanity, which is still polarized into male and female but on a vast scale. Humanity’s collective sexual tension is resolved: the inner sun (*yin* within the *yang*) and inner earth (*yang* within the *yin*) copulate to distill out a third level elixir of refined soul awareness. Merging the sun and planets takes the adept beyond all fear of death, i.e. loss of a sexed mortal physical body.

There are final three stages of immortality. Sealing of the Five Senses gathers the pole star and zodiacal essences within the head (upper *dantian*), allowing the lesser and greater spirits to copulate. The Congress of Heaven & Earth aligns the adept with the Three Pure Ones, and reverses the positions of the three *dantian* and couples their spiritual qualities. The seventh formula - Union of Man and Dao – requires surrendering to an elusive “living without resistance” (*wu wei*) path, that leads into the Supreme Mystery. All these methods involve the sexual-spiritual coupling of the individual human soul with collective universal forces. The adept becomes aware of the sexual dynamic as a cosmic *yin-yang* process, as entire dimensions of awareness couple and procreate realities.

The underlying paradigm repeated throughout these formulas is to couple Water and Fire (*kan* and *li*) as a continuous *yin-yang*, female-male, earth-heaven sexual coupling of energies through a well-defined network of physical and subtle energy body channels. The coupling process gradually shifts from the “horizontal axis” of male-female sexual relations to a “vertical axis” of heaven-earth subtle sexual essence coupling. This vertical spiritual coupling cannot successfully occur until the practitioner resolves much of his/her physical (horizontal) sexual tension. Sexual attraction is a very powerful aspect of one’s worldly destiny (*ming*). It has to be cultivated and refined before one can restore one’s original nature (*xing*).

VALLEY ORGASM.

How does inner Water & Fire alchemy impact on the sexual experience of the practitioner? The short answer is that it creates orgasmic waves of increasingly powerful subtle body pulsations through the blissful coupling of one’s sexual essence and one’s soul. Body as Water and soul as Fire are in an ongoing, sexually polarized primal relationship. Water and Fire coupling manifests in a more tangible, developed energy body, which mediates between the physical body and the soul’s field of spiritual awareness. Sexual essence is what allows us to give substance and tangible experience to our soul.

All this may seem impossibly abstract from the ordinary perspective of a male or female ego-sexed mind. So I offer a description of a Daoist “valley orgasm”, experienced in 1984 by myself and a partner who is now my wife. (see Winn 1984) The most interesting point of this and my numerous other experiences of subtle-body and at-a-distance soul sex is that they usually *precede* the act of physical love-making, i.e. they are not caused by physical intercourse. Rather the physical intercourse which may or may not follow is mostly a way to ground and digest the cosmic soul forces experienced

Joyce and I removed our clothes. We sat cross-legged on the bed facing each other, naked. It was our intent to meditate before making love. We both did testicle or ovarian breathing and circulated the sexual energy in the orbit to harmonize our sexual feelings in our three dantian. We each smiled to our inner heart, deep in the body’s core. There was no visualization or attempt to create any experience – we were simply in a state of naked surrender to each other. In deep silence, we noticed that a new and unusual pulsation began to envelop us.

It felt to me like a simultaneous yin and yang orgasm. The yang orgasm was my energy body pulsing with Joyce’s, expanding out in waves, that became inconceivably vast. We zoomed faster than the speed of light past planets and galaxies and then ecstatically merged into formless swirls of light and sound. The yang orgasm kept exploding out beyond our bodies.

The yin orgasm was an equal and opposite implosion deep within our bodies. Some powerful gravitational vortex keep sucking us into a tiny point that was incredibly heavy. I could feel that Joyce was inside that point as well. I felt deeply embodied and centered within my personal self.

The yin and yang orgasm was a marriage of sexual counter-forces. They held the space for a neutral observer in us to perfectly experience both orgasmic feelings at once. We sat in this state for half an hour, amazed and dumbfounded. It finally subsided. We fell into each others arms, knowing that a great and sacred mystery had been revealed to us. Our love-making was lovely and tender, but somehow anti-climatic. The shared yin-yang orgasm is what we remember, it is forever seared into our souls, and impelled us to marry.

This valley orgasm permanently shifted the nature of our sexual relationship. Our subtle bodies would quickly attune and later we found we could exchange deep sexual energy for hours, lying beside each other, naked or clothed, without any physical stimulation or intercourse. It was a direct exchange of our sexed subtle bodies. As our energy bodies mingled and coupled, we were infused with loving spiritual qualities. This led to long periods of spontaneous abstention from physical intercourse that could last for many months, but with exquisitely sublime daily subtle body coitus. As our subtle bodies crystallized and became more “real”, we eventually graduated to astral sex – the ability to intentionally exchange orgasmic subtle energy at great distances.

Daoist cultivators often experience profound shifts in their sexual identity when they first shift from external to internal alchemy. Their primal fire and water *qi* is focused in a very deep inner space within the body. This inner copulation can temporarily cause a loss of outer sexual desire. Eventually, the energy body re-organizes itself and begins to operate from this new inner space, which produces “true” or authentic *yin* or *yang* sexual energy. This changes the biological, psychological, and spiritual levels of one’s sexual identity. Sexual drive returns after some months, but with a major difference: sex is no longer a compulsory-habitual sex drive.

Sexual attraction becomes a choice, a soul-centered response to someone, but is no longer an unconscious biological instinct coming from their genitals. The adept has shifted deeper inside the body, merged their *shen* and *jing*, spirit and essence, and thus their inner male and female dynamic becomes conscious. The birth of a new androgynous “spiritual embryo” means they’ve opened a third and more neutral perspective on sexual polarity, rather than endless unconscious struggles for power between their male and female aspects that gets acted out or projected onto other people.

CONCLUSION

The tension between “pure being” and “becoming a sexual body” is so powerful that most “enlightenment” states rarely resolve this duality. Proof is seen in the uncontrolled sexual behavior of numerous self-described “enlightened” teachers from many different meditation traditions (Winn 2002). Daoist sexual alchemy attempts to go beyond

meditative quieting of the post-natal mind and breath by coupling and internalizing within the body the many subtle levels of *yin-yang* sexual tension that exist in the cosmos. It offers a practical whole-body centered process that step-by-step builds a harmonic bridge between the tiny, slow vibration of our individual human heart beat and sexual essence and the cosmic inner heart beating within whirling galaxies, black holes, and vast formless dimensions.

Sex drive, essential to the survival of any species, is also the driving force in humanity's spiritual evolution. Resolving sexual tension is the unconscious impetus behind all religious seeking to return to an asexual, formless divine state with unconditioned spiritual qualities (love, harmony, or other value). Daoist sexual alchemy, both outer and inner, is a progressive pairing of Water and Fire at the physical and soul levels of our sexual identity. Its premise is that the universe is sexed, and we need to understand male-female sexuality in relation to subtle sexual forces hidden within Nature.

Humanity's central spiritual task is to resolve its mortal sexual tension, which creates the fear of death at the root of most sickness and social ills. Sexual alchemy speeds human awareness of the relation between all *yin-yang* polarities to the immortal Original Breath. Healing humanity's deep and divisive sexual wound is synonymous with healing a deep tear in the *yin-yang* fabric of the life force.

The ultimate goal of Daoist sexual alchemy is to successfully restore communication with our original, immortal, non-dual, pre-sexual being. But it's not practical to go directly from living in a sexed body to being a no-sexed soul, without repressing the sexual drive. A way must be found for them to co-exist. The reality is that even an enlightened human being is going to remain physically sexed. The alchemical solution is to grow an energy body with both poles, male and female, in a deep functional harmony.

This bi-sexed androgynous energy body acts as a go-between our physical body and core spiritual self. The energy body gradually becomes the central identity. Alchemical formulas help us to absorb within the physical body the macrocosmic *yin-yang qi* sun-moon, planets, and stars needed to make a vibrational shift into universal consciousness. Once the energy body becomes stable, i.e. a "real" or "*yang* body" and

not merely a “yin body” mental or astral projection, our original pre-sexual spiritual self can consciously function within the sexed physical plane. This constitutes a complete journey from Creation back to Origin. This is not a regression into a primal or primitive state; the second half of that journey from Origin back into Creation requires the integration of our primal self with our sexual and socialized self.

Following the Way is ultimately about diving into *wuji*, the Supreme Mystery of the Dao, and emerging fresh, reborn. Daoists seek a conscious relationship with the Life Force and the Mystery from which it arises. We mostly act out our desire for Supreme Mystery with the more manageable, small sexual mystery of loving another person. By opening our hearts and entering the dark sexual mystery hidden inside own body, we are also able to directly merge with Dao.

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