

Pruning at the Tao Garden

This difference between pruning and trimming needs to be understood as much as the difference between mind and brain. Trimming is what you do on the outside as having a haircut; change your morals or your clothing style. Some hedges or even trees need this kind of trimming specifically because your choice is to have a certain form. A part of pruning can and will be looked at as trimming, the difference however is great as I will show you later on. Pruning if done correctly will make the tree or bush grow or flower more abundant, it will keep the plant young and healthy as practicing the Tao will keep our body fit and young as pruning away your fear, anger will keep you healthy. Pruning a fruit tree should take care so that the tree will not be too heavy. A tree should always be capable to carry its own branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. The form needs to be like an umbrella and empty inside; it needs light inside to carry healthy fruits full of Chi. If you put sticks or crutches underneath or around a tree it shows an unhealthy state, disturbs the energy of the garden and of the tree. A tree may need a pole beside it to support its growth or its direction. The band should always be tied between the tree and the pole so it creates a balance. A healthy tree is a whole tree, a tree that is in balance, not too much not too little. This balance or imbalance is what one needs to look for.

Rebalancing

To prune a tree is to re-create the balance. The balance of a tree can be looked upon as a game of yin and yang. Nature will always balance itself. However if one chooses to have a cultivated garden one needs to support the tree until it is able to grow the way you want it to grow, in balance. Making concessions in what is needed to be done does not help a tree. There cannot be compensation in the balance of pruning. The balance needs to be found in the tree. There can only be a support in the restoring of the healthy state and help it to find a new balance. With a trained eye one can see the imbalance of a tree and what is needed to be done to restore the balance. Often it is needed to go into the organs of a tree to find the tree's in-balance, like going into our organs to restore our balance. A tree ceases to be a tree and becomes sheer energy. If a tree is behind in care it can be good and often needed to work on it in phases. The tree that is put into the play of awareness, in a cultivated garden, needs to be supported until it can take care of itself. Most trees need to be looked after once a year to keep them in a healthy condition. Some more often. Many trees in the Tao Garden are lacking care and show an imbalance that can only be restored after intensive care for at least a few years. Some are to be left to see what happens. Still many trees are planted to double and need to be re-moved to allow enough space for the others to grow.

As Above So Below

The greater yin and yang of a tree exist as 50% of the tree below the ground and 50% above the ground. If you prune in the upper part the tree will compensate the extra Chi into fruits, flowers and the branches you have chosen to grow. The still greater yin and yang is in the harmony with the other trees in the garden. If trees are too close they will suffocate each other. To prune a tree can be compared with transforming the negative into the positive and to grow good virtues by directing the energy by growing the right branches. The smaller yin and yang of a tree exist in the balance of what we see above the ground. Nature will compost itself. To prune a tree is more like steaming the organs, meridians, spine and so on. There are different types of trees and often it is enough to see the type of tree to know what is needed, one not always needs to know the sort or name. I run into difficulty with the Teak tree for it is a type unknown to me. Some bushes are not planted in the correct place at the archway; I suggest buying some climbers and replace the others at the correct places. I suggest planting some bougainvillea and replant some Hibiscus to the blue stripes on the plan. Also perhaps to buy some Oleander to make the place more flowery, and in between the Townhouses there is some care needed. There are some trees that are in bad condition, and they still need more care to make them last longer. I think it is worth the time and the healing touch. The tree is part of our Tao. The reason to prune trees is to have them grow old, remain youthful, full of juice, flowers and fruits. My responsibility to a tree is to be aware that when I cut, that I cannot replace the branch. When I prune it is a meditation as deep as if I am pruning into my own being. This awareness and meditation is needed to cut a twig with love. Knowing how much it can and will hurt inside myself to be cutting away what is not needed is enough to care with my total being. I did not come close to getting done what I would have liked to do and what is urgently needed. I can stay and finish the mayor needs on the same basis I have stayed until now. It will be good to make a future plan for the garden.

Universal Healing Tao

Chi--life force energy, the power that links mind and matter—is the basis of Chinese medicine, philosophy and martial arts. For several thousand years, Taoist masters have practiced chi exercises, known as “Chi Kung,” which gives them exceptional strength, health, creativity and longevity. But only in the past decade has Taoist Master Mantak Chia opened these long-secret teachings to the western world. Master Chia founded the Healing Tao Center in New York, has taught over 30,000 students, certified over 200 teachers and written ten books describing Chi Kung practices in precise detail. In June, 1990, he was voted Chi Kung Master of the Year at the International Chi Kung Conference. They consider him the greatest kind of healer: he teaches people the powerful practical system of how to heal themselves.

Overview

The Key is Chi

Taoist meditation techniques are based on the principle of chi (pronounced 'chee'), or vital energy. Chi is the foundation of oriental medicine, acupuncture, philosophy spiritual and martial arts. According to chi theory, vital energy circulates through the acupuncture channels of the body. When the flow of chi is balanced and strong, the body is healthy and the spirit is at peace. Deposits from impure food, air and water, stress, exhaustion, emotional trauma, climactic extremes or excessive eating and drinking can all clog up the natural flow of chi like silt in a river. When the channels are clogged, sickness and disharmony results. Taoist exercises seek to improve health by dredging the channels with energy to restore and increase the flow of chi.

Taoist Technology

Several millennia ago the Taoist sages of ancient China lived in such harmony with life that they were sensitive to the flow of energy through their bodies. They devised meditations and exercises for enhancing this flow and repairing chi blockages. This enabled them to live vigorous, healthy lives to advanced ages. Taoist adepts could also concentrate their chi power into a deadly weapon in case of attack, and thus the techniques of masters became highly guarded secrets. Through centuries of secrecy, Taoist chi technology was obscured and scattered. Many teachings have been lost as old masters died out without passing them on. Surviving teachers held only parts of what was once a complete system.

Master Mantak Chia

For 30 years Master Mantak Chia studied meditative and martial arts in Thailand, Singapore and Hong Kong. Using Taoism as a base, he integrated many masters' once-secret teachings into one complete self-development system. The step-by-step techniques of the Healing Tao enable these who practice to bring body, energy, emotions, spirit and environment into greater harmony. Says Chia: "As we begin to heal ourselves, we are empowered to heal others and our planet."

Universal Healing Tao Basic Exercises

The basic Healing Tao exercises transform stress and tension into vitality and help change hurtful emotions to compassionate ones. Controlling and recycling life-force energy fills a drained, scattered life with personal power and calm. Taoist sexual energy practices can awaken innate creative and healing powers, and putting on the Taoist "Iron Shirt" roots us to the earth and draws energy from heaven, strengthening our physical bodies and aligning us with the universe.

The Goal - Self - Transformation

Master Mantak Chia has collected the teachings of living Tao masters and integrated them into a single system – a complete spiritual technology of self-transformation. It begins on the physical level, mastering basic meditations and postures, and from this solid foundation helps the soul and spirit transcend physical boundaries. The ultimate goal of the Healing Tao practice is the transformation of the human body, soul and spirit. Chia likens the process to a space shuttle launch. The physical body is the launching pad, the soul or "chi body" is the booster rockets and the spirit the shuttle – which eventually flies free.

Master Mantak Chia - Biography

When Mantak Chia, born in Thailand of Chinese parents, was only six years old he learned to "sit and still the mind" from Thai Buddhist monks. While in grammar school he learned Thai kick-boxing from his uncle, a pro boxer. At his high school in Hong Kong, a classmate introduced Chia to Master Yi Eng who taught him the basics of the Taoist system and authorized young Chia to teach and heal. Throughout his twenties he studied Taoist, Buddhist, Zen and Kundalini yoga techniques as well as Kung Fu with the top masters in the orient including Pan Yu, Cheng Yao-Lun and Meugi. Some teachers demanded large sums in exchange for their secrets. While living in Thailand, Chia once sold his house and car to pay for a single technique from an old master. To better understand the mechanisms behind the healing energy of chi, Chia studied western medical science and anatomy for two years. At that time he also managed the Thai branch of the Gestetner Company and became well acquainted with modern office technology. His facility with east and west makes his teaching easy to grasp. For example during workshops, Chia tells his students not to worry about the many complex steps it takes to perform some exercises: "This is just programming, so we go through it one step at a time. Once you're programmed, you don't have to go through all the steps – you just press a function key and the program runs by itself!"

Using Taoism as a base, Chia integrated the techniques of all his teachers into a single system which he calls the Healing Tao. In 1979 he moved to New York to set up the Healing Tao Center in order to introduce his system to the West. He teaches seventeen distinct courses all over North America and Europe Asia and leads eight weeklong retreats every summer in upstate New York and Thailand. So far he has published ten English-language books on Taoist practices, and most books have been translated into all major languages. Many of these practices have never before appeared in print. In the past ten years Chia, now only 50 years old, has certified over 200 of his students to become instructors who teach the Healing Tao system all over the world. Currently there are teaching centers in 18 states plus Australia, Canada, Austria, England, France, Greece, Italy, Holland, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, India, Japan and Thailand. What separates Chia from other Taoist masters is his ability to break a technique down into easy-to-learn steps for non-Chinese. Traditionally, a student could spend ten years with a master before he was given any instruction at all, just to test his sincerity. Chia has streamlined and condensed the practices to fit the lives of people who can't devote eight hours a day to meditation. In his basic weekend workshop, he teaches the fundamental Taoist technique for circulating energy through the two main energy pathways that other

teachers say can take several years to master. "The energy of the atom bomb: Chinese Taoists have been working with it in their own bodies for thousands of years."

Ozone - The Tao of Purification

Ever since oxygen (O₂) was released through the action of blue-green algae into the Earth's atmosphere, ozone (O₃) was formed by the ultraviolet rays of the sun, and for over 3.5 billion years, this ozone has been one of the most important purifying and balancing agents on this planet. In terms of the eternal Taoist concepts of yin and yang, hydrogen is the most yin, and oxygen the most yang element. And ozone is the most yang diatomic modification of oxygen, directly formed in nature through the action of Tai Yang, the Mid-day Sun, directly capturing the sun's energy. This pure yang energy of **ozone** not only inactivates every virus, bacteria, and other disease-causing agents; it also **purifies every cell of the body**, especially if injected directly into the veins. Some long-term practitioners of the Tao believe that four consecutive ozone treatments may be equivalent to 10 or even 20 years of practice. The main thing here is to *continue to practice the Tao* since these effects can just about be negated by two or three months of debauchery.

Ozonation of the Tao Garden

Master Mantak Chia has for years been aware of the health-giving effects of ozone. He also believes that Taoist bone marrow breathing in its ultimate form produces ozone to purify all the cells of the body. To enhance the quality of water of the Tao Garden, he therefore considered having the swimming pool and drinking water ionized. Ozonation of swimming pools has been done since the 1890s. It is quite common in Europe and increasingly used all over the world especially in the more affluent countries such as Japan, Korea, and Singapore. Ozonation of the Olympic training pool at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984 was one of the major reasons for the swimmers to break virtually all world records at this occasion.

Ozonation of the swimming pool of the Tao Garden proves somewhat of a challenge for several reasons. First of all, the tropical climate causes a rapid transformation of ozone of oxygen, which requires considerably higher ozone amounts than in temperate climates. Secondly, the water source of the pool is a river, which may carry pollutants that are not always removed by regular filters. Therefore a carbon filter is added after ozonation. Thirdly, especially during the hot season (March through Mid-June), there may be considerable dust pollution, which requires a rapid circulation of the water with powerful pumps in order to maintain the crystal clarity and pure deep blue color of the ozonated pool water. At the latest by June 1997, after fine-tuning the equipment, we hope that, the swimming pool at Tao Garden may provide you the healthiest most beautiful pool water available anywhere in Southeast Asia.

Ozonation of the drinking water of the Tao Garden is a very difficult problem indeed and requires a number of unique innovations. Again there is the rapid decay of ozone in a hot climate requiring higher amounts of ozone. Another problem is that there is the considerable variation in water use as to the time of the day and as to the season. Almost 50% of the daily water use is in between 06:00 and 08:30 am. In the off-season there may be 90% less water use than during the retreats when there needs to be water provided for up to 200 people including all instructors, students, kitchen, cleaning and administrative staff. The most difficult challenge though is that there is more than one kilometer of water pipes to the most distant users. For this reason it becomes necessary to do two things: First, this requires adding of small amounts of peroxide so that a long-term antimicrobial effects are achieved, including, keeping the water tower free of algae. Second, an entirely new fully pressured self-contained system for ozonation has to be created to provide high-mountain quality ozonated water throughout the system at a water pressure that gets the water to the furthest water user. The finishing touches of the Tao Garden drinking water system are magnetic double vortices to enhance the ozone transfer uniquely designed for this application and the cooling of the ozone-oxygen of air stream to 50° C (-58° F) for maximum effectiveness. These later features are particularly important for ozone applications in tropical climates as well as for toxic waste destruction and are patented technologies of the author. At the latest, by September 1997, the Tao Garden drinking water ozonation project could be completed to provide the highest mountain-spring water quality available anywhere in the world.

Ozonated Water and Taoist Practice

Ozonated water not only is absolutely clean, free of any disease-causing agents but also has a direct healing effect of the gastrointestinal tract as well as the whole body. It is directly healing in cases of gastric and duodenal ulcers, gastritis, enteritis, colitis, hepatitis, and cholecystitis. In "healthy" people, it helps wellness by shifting the intestinal flora from *predominantly anaerobic Escherichia coli* (E.coli) towards the more ideal 85+% aerobic flora consisting mainly of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *L.bifidus*. And, in a small way, ozonated water helps to clean out every single cell in the body.

To understand the importance of this ozone-induced cleansing process for the Taoist practitioner you have to understand that cells clogged over the years with waste material have only a limited storage capacity for energy. Though most of the processes of Taoist practice take place in the quantum field and cause a subtle homeopathic imprint that, in the long run, causes the transformation of the body into the immortal total yang body, the physical space for this to take place are the unclogged spaces of the cells, particularly of the bones, the largest energy storage space, and internal of organs: In woman particularly in the uterus, and in both sexes, in decreasing order of storage capacity, gallbladder and biliary system liver, urinary bladder and urinary canaliculi, large intestine, small intestine, kidney, spleen, pancreas, lungs, and heart. According to Taoist theory, the brain has virtually no energy storage capacity. After a 4-day course of intravenous (IV) ozone, Taoist practitioners experienced a dramatic improvement of all aspects of their practice and martial

artists tremendously increased their reactions and other performance criteria. IV ozone homeopathically reverses any significant disease processes in the body. The homeopathic "healing crisis" can cause significant psychological discomfort but almost never any physiological stress with increased heart rate or blood pressure. Extremely yang bodies such as seen in advanced Taoist practitioners or Taoist Masters seem to need much less ozone for full effect. Fire types tolerate ozone well, so do Earth and Metal types. In Water types, ozone has to be applied slowly to avoid excessive boiling; the same applies to Wood types where one should not burn too fast.

The Hydrogen Peroxide Alternative to Ozonation of the Tao Garden

Hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) is a powerful oxidant that is about twice as effective as chlorine (Cl) without any of the detrimental side effects of chlorination. If bought as a 35% solution in drums, it is competitively prized as compared to chlorine, hypochlorite ($NaOCl$), or other halogenated oxidizing agents. Through the use of H_2O_2 , the detrimental side effects of chlorine can be avoided. These range from burning eyes and skin irritation if swimming in chlorinated water, fungal infections of the skin ("athlete's foot") and increased frequency of vaginal yeast infections, to low thyroid conditions (hypothyroidism since chlorine replaces the iodine in the thyroid). Hypothyroidism, in turn, causes a general low energy state in the body leading to what was been called the chronic fatigue immunodeficiency syndrome (CFIDS), proneness to infections, and all types of chronic degenerative disease including cancer and arthritis. Trihalomethanes such as chloroform (Cl_3HC) that are formed during chlorination are directly causing cancer, as do thousands of other chlorinated products that may be formed in the water during chlorination. Specifically, for the Tao Garden, H_2O_2 can be used as a safe alternative to ozone (O_3). Though the water will not have the high mountain quality, the deep blue color and all the healing effects, as described above, it still will not cause eye irritation and surely will taste better than chlorinated water. What is required for H_2O_2 application is basically a storage tank, a dosage pump, a carbon filter after H_2O_2 application, and a measuring device to insure that an appropriate electronegative has been achieved. For the swimming pool this electronegative should be around -70 mV, and for the drinking water this should be, if H_2O_2 is applied before the water is pumped up into the water tower, about -120 mV. Depending on the effect and the quality of the water these values may have to be adjusted. The best about H_2O_2 -there is virtually no waiting time for the equipment to be installed and the cost of the equipment is minimal.

At Once My Body Remembered That Sense Of Lightness

Well before dawn, I had left Tokyo behind me. The mega city was still very quiet when I walked to the station of the Sky Liner, which took me to the airport. Yet the lights of a multitude of small restaurants were already on as soon the first customers would come in. There were several Japanese that day on their way to Chiangmai. I was so fortunate to sit next to a young Japanese couple who gently created space for their small girl and boy to play. They made everybody around smile. That day I was the only one leaving Japan to go to the Tao Garden. I felt quite privileged. In the eyes of the millions who soon would dutifully rush out of their homes to fill the perfectly smooth functioning network of trains and subways of this center of high tech modernization in Asia. I might well have appeared quite crazy, had they guessed the purpose of my inner journey. But this thought did not disturb me, as I realized that my craziness protected me from the pathology of the codes and delusions supposed normality. Well after dusk I finally arrived with the small bus in Talat Mai, together with some women who returned with their baskets from the Chiang Mai market. From the village, it only takes a few minutes to reach the Tao Garden. You walk down the road along the irrigation canal which still is crossed by a few small hanging bridges on which at times you see children run or ride bicycle in a artful play for balance. Soon you take a turn to the left to enter a sandy path, lined with wooden houses, orchards with fruit trees and rice fields. At once a sense of peace invaded me, as I let the sounds of silence enter my whole being. To my memory come the words of a song by Schubert inspired by a poem of Goethe which I used to sing daily as a boy with an older brother of mine who played the piano: The village people withdraw and rise early. The dogs bark in such a friendly way that even the most determined robber would be inclined to give up his profession. Once again I am struck by how different the rhythms of rural life are as yet from those of city life in Thailand. Above me the moon gently dances from cloud to cloud in a clear sky, filled with stars. Through the trees I see already the conical roof of the community hall of Tao Garden with three rings of orange light around it. Its shape reminds me of the roofs of peasant huts in remote communities in China which I have seen in old books with photographs of China at the beginning of this century. They are identical to the shapes of cyanic houses of other civilizations in Asia, Africa, Arabia and the Americas before the houses turned square and the spiral like patterns, reflecting the structure of movements of cosmic energies were lost.

How good it is to meet many old and new friends from all over the world. What a diversity of background and vocations they bring along: Apart from quite a few Healing Tao teachers, there is a carpenter, a plumber, a nurse, a psychologist, some psychotherapists, a biochemist, a nurse, stewardesses, a ski instructor, engineers, a musician, a shipbuilder, a painter, a notary, a kindergarten teacher from Kyoto, an accountant, a furniture retailer owner, a woman who runs a shop with children's toys, acupuncturists, students of Chinese philosophy, shiatsu doctors, a yoga master and many others.

A book which would trace their inner journeys towards in the Healing Tao in the way in which The North American novelist wrote his famous novel "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" might well serve as a fine illustration of Master Chia's "How to Transform stress into Vitality". At times the deep sense of all your adventures you went through reveals itself suddenly, like a patch of soil in the forest, when it is illuminated

by the rays of the sun which plays with the wind which each moment changes the movements of the branches and leaves. What a blessing is it to be able to withdraw for a brief span from the turbulent world, which thrives, on ever-new rounds of stimulants and addictions at the expense of what deep down people long for. When I enter the Garden, my body starts to remember at once the sense of well being and lightness it experienced during previous visits.

Coming down to Earth

For many years I traveled around the world, as I worked in different continents as a United Nations Adviser, devoted to the cause of development and social justice. It took time to realize that true development can only come from within. Before “development” was half a century ago invented as an ideological instrument to legitimize the untrammled pursuit of economic growth and expansion and as a tool of social engineering, it was used in biology to refer to a process of unfolding intrinsic in nature. From there it was taken and used as a metaphor refer to the inner potential in a person and in people to realize their innate creative endowment. It was soon obvious to me that given the forces at work in the dominant world system, it only would bring affluence and prosperity to a minority of people in the world and that ever larger groups of people would be marginalized at the expense of their dignity and self esteem. Yet I persisted in my dream. It took me years to accept that social justice, if not inspired and accompanied by love and accompanied would not only jeopardize freedom but was also bound to increase pain and suffering. How difficult was it to give up the idea that social revolutions were enough for creating a just and peaceful world. I felt close to so many friends in different parts of the world, committed to social transformation. I did not want to give up, as I felt it as a betrayal to what I stood for. I intensely studied the historical origins of the utopias, which inspired the social movements in different parts of the world, in particular in China. They were inspired and reflected the longing for a return to ancient modes of being marked by a state of relaxation, togetherness and sharing in which people were free oppressive rule and submission to alienation. These states of being had been shattered with the rise of feudal cultures and the growth of religious and ideological system, legitimizing oppression, inequity and privilege. Hardly was I aware that these utopias also represented images created by my most inner self, as it longed to get in touch with its own origins. Even less did I realize that my attachments to these utopias also served as an escape. By dreaming of them, I exempted myself from assuming responsibility for my own personal transformation in the here and now. I was every day concerned with the whole world but I was hardly aware of what happened within me and around me in my daily life.

Turning Inward

Then there came a time in my life that I started to turn inward to understand myself. I started to question many of the assumptions, which had brought me to be so externally oriented. How difficult was it for me to reconcile within myself doing and being, as was inclined to construe them as opposites inimical to each other. But why look at being and doing as two irreconcilable polarities? Would it be possible to live and act in the world, without being absorbed and carried away by it? Would it be possible to learn to live and act “from within” and infuse action with love and compassion, so that it does not degenerate into activism or action in view of great external aims which do not touch the heart and leave the soul dry out?

There are several ways to deal with pain within. One is to try to forget the pain and use the outside world to forget. The other is to turn inward and face one’s inner self. Then you need to learn to become gentle with yourself and deeply look into what generated the pain and the patterns you created to prevent getting in touch with yourself. This means that rather than looking for happiness and ha home outside yourself. You awaken to the insight that you can only create them within yourself. How can you truly be in touch with the world outside yourself, if you are not in touch with yourself? How can you contribute to create a new world outside yourself, if you do not first create a new one inside yourself? A new world in which your true self, your child, your spirit will feel at ease and in peace, as they experience you as gentle, generous, loving and patient, fair and open and just with yourself? How revolutionary are the words of Jesus: “Love your neighbors, as you love yourself? But how can you begin to love yourself and your neighbors who are more than any time before in history not only the people of your neighborhood and village, town or city, but also all the people of the whole world. In one way this is true, as people of the whole world do see each other on TV every day. At the same time however, with the erosion of community in the modern world and the rise of the individualist ethos, whatever reminds of community is also experienced as a threat. Rights and obligations have increasingly grown at odds with each other. With it, also violence, vengeance and bitterness have been growing. Unless a new balance will grow, this trend is likely to continue. Lao Tzu is clear on this: within yourself. External changes, which do not reflect inner transformation, a change of heart, only create more illusions and thereby more violence. I do believe that forgiveness is, as Master Chia frequently emphasizes, the key to any process of healing and self- healing. It opens the heart and thereby opens the body and sets in motion and restores in the body mind the free flow of energy both from within and from outside. If you learn to smile inward, the space for energies to flow multiplies. Also your capacity to receive and process the energies from the universe also grows. The more genuine becomes your inward smile; your body opens up for love to transform your inner energies. Also you raise your ability to get in touch and extend your love to others and to the universe, as you begin to unite with your origin, which is the love from which all energy and love springs.

In the Taoist tradition the process of internal alchemy starts with the inner smile. This is he basis of all the practices of self- transformation. The inner smile opens the body and its energy pathways and sets in motion the process of self- healing and getting in touch with the universe.

Learning to Practice Balance

The fusion practice lies in a process of real self- transformation in which one's perception of and relation towards oneself as well as others in the real world is changing. It is a process of becoming truthful and honest with oneself in cultivating self observation and know and understand oneself, at the origins of both the pre- Socratic Greek tradition as well as the great Asian traditions. In the Greek mystery schools, nobody was admitted to the study of astrology, mathematics and others sciences, if she/ he had not previously had been initiated in facing her- self and getting to know and understand her/ himself. Knowledge of the outside world without knowing the inner world was considered risky as inside imbalances might well compound outside imbalances. How could you observe the world and its laws of motion in a dispassionate manner, if you had not learned to observe yourself in a detached manner, as a witness, without judgment? In this respect I appreciated very much Master Chia's new emphasis in the fusion as a practice on enhancing self- understanding and self- knowledge, by balancing the negative and positive emotions and his focus on the positive within the negative and the negative within the positive: not too much, not too little of either. In the negative emotions such as fear, anger, impatience, worry and sadness are hidden reservoirs of power, once they are freed through the growth of gentle self- awareness and its dawning into self- understanding, self- acceptance and self- forgiveness. For this one has to go deep inside. I believe that what holds us back mostly from this venture is that we have a tendency to keep it from entering into our consciousness that we have been betrayed by life, as we did not receive the welcome or fair treatment or love we deserved. As we felt not loved or thought we were not loved, we decided, often quite early on in life to take revenge by refusing to open the heart so that its natural tendency to grow in love and compassion is stunted. So to me it is essential for the fusion practice to be helpful and liberating, to go deep down into the patterns we created in our own life and which made us lose our sensitivity. It often happens that children in order to secure in their early years the love of their parents and those on whom they depends feel forced to give up what they feel as the most essential and precious to them. They then feel wounded and keep their wounds open during their whole life to take revenge, by discharging onto others what they have suffered or presume to have suffered themselves. I say " presume" as what a human being always creates and is responsible for his/her own emotions and the perceptions and images in which they are rooted. In this respect each human being is unique and original in her/ his sensitivity and vulnerability as well as in her/ his inner potential and willingness to transform self. As to myself, deep down I cherished for many years the idea that somehow in my yearly years I had not received the love I needed and I felt that I had been betrayed by life. A few times in my young years I have been very sick and could have died. In hindsight I believe that I wanted to die to somehow take revenge on life. For years I carried with me the wounds and kept them open so that I had reason to feel and be angry and I projected my anger on people and the world around me. Thus I cultivated the idea, which I deeply fixed within my self of being a victim, so that I could hold others responsible for my self- construed misfortune.

Healing, Wholeness and Holiness

I somehow transformed my anger in creative energy in service of the cause of cause of justice, as I could not stand others seeing suffering. In his process I was quite unconscious that the suffering in the world I felt I ought to combat mirrored my own suffering. Also I hardly realized that time my anger made me lose much of my creative energy as my negative emotions held much power over me. Surely in one-way anger infused me with energy, as it fueled my creativity in devoting myself to the cause of justice in the world. Yet at the same time it tended to make me lose my sensitivity, as it made me lose touch with my deeper self and pushed me to become quite judgmental and moralistic and divide the world in good and bad people. Subsequently, I legitimized myself in my attitude by giving it a theoretical underpinning. Marxist theory provided an excellent tool for that. It made the whole structure of injustice transparent, yet it created also an anonymous faceless world in which there was no place for love, mercy and compassion and justice was bound to create its own merciless forms of injustice and humiliation. It took me much time to see how with the growth of suffering within myself, self- pity hindered me to open my heart. Even more difficult was it to become aware of the ways I had created the habit of projecting my own anger on others by seeing in them negativities that I had been unable to dissolve in myself. It took me years to open the heart and to begin to transform my anger and bitterness. I knew that I carried deep in my heart great love and compassion but that was unable to free them. Only when I really began to truly understand and forgive myself, I could begin to understand, accept and forgive my wonderful well-intentioned parents and others whom I held responsible for my pains and wounds. It too me years to realize that suffering, if it is possible to understand its cause and transform is, can have a deep positive meaning. There is truth in the old proverb: "No gain without pain". Also suffering of some kind, in one way or another, is inevitable. The question is whether it can serve as the opening of a learning process If you are willing to look into the mirror, you discover you hold the key to you own healing and you come to see the positive within the negative, as you free its energies.

To grow in the process of self- healing and let it become effective so that it helps you to balance your requires a daily practice of turning gently inward, balance the negative with the positive and look at your shadow side as a precious part of yourself which is waiting to be acknowledged, accepted and embraced. This will radically change not only your relation with yourself, but also others, as you are no more in need to project that dark part of yourself on others. Thus outer harmony is dependent on inner harmony. Healing, whole and holy have same etymological root. In the healing process, the split between opposites is overcome and with the integration of the repressed and rejected parts of yourself, the inner split is overcome

and you become whole. Holiness means being whole and in balance with oneself and with the whole, the universe. The healing process helps you to open both the energies towards the inside and towards the outside, the world and the cosmos. If you are no more afraid of yourself, you lose also your fear for others. So self healing and becoming whole are intimately connected. The deeper your inner healing/ becoming whole, the more you feel the whole universe is yours and in you, with all its wonders.

Starting to Resonate with the Universe

Then you come to a point where your channels have become open for the energies from the universe and you learn to increase and enhance them in yourself, after they have been detoxified and cleansed and you have learned to steam them in the lesser Kan and Li practice. Then the universe can start to work in and for you. Then your own body and the heart and kidneys need to work less, as you are pulsed by the universe and they enter into its rhythms and pulsations by which it empowers the whole cosmos and nature and all life and matter around you.

Learning to Embrace the Universe

When you enter in harmony with the universe and nature around you, you start to resonate with its pulsing which start to pulse within your own body and its channels, cells, organs, glands and bones, then your life becomes effortless and starts to move in you by itself, as we learn in the amazing formula of the Greatest Kan and Li. Your whole body becomes light and your heart free and full of joy, as it begins to dawn on you that you live by the grace of being moved by the powers, which gave you life. You begin to understand how upon the process of conversion through the liberation of sexual energy and its conversion, the chemistry of the body enters into a process of conversion, as the physical body starts to birth the energy body which in turn may give birth to the Light or Rainbow Body. Then life acquires a wholly new perspective and you start to look back with a smile at the smile world you once made for yourself and you shaped the world into the one you needed, to suit your small designs. You then look at yourself, the world and history in a new light. Oh, how many theories did I defend, espouse and propagate to solve the world's problems. How absurd were my pretensions and how ludicrous my rhetoric, as I hide from what my innermost being was asking from me. Everything in the world had to change except myself. How many shrewd and ingenious ways did I invent to exempt myself, as I found it too difficult to really face myself and my own need for inner transformation, although my soul was so thirsty for it and suffered so much from the injustice I committed to her. How could I have been so tough on you and why could I not refrain from often being so rough on you? How long did it take me and how hard it remains for me to disarm my defenses so that compassion could grow and love could start to move by itself and my inner child finally feels in the way I breath that I am becoming peace. Thank you, Master Chia, for often speaking of that great master of self- transformation, Jesus from Nazareth, the son of a simple carpenter, who fortunately never did any degree in theology if you do not become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I know that it is true and every day my inner child reminds me of it. She asks me to listen to her and to not forget her. But frequently I do only listen half-heartedly, as I am wrapped up in my schemes and seduced by the tough ambitious self- centered part of me which wants me to close my heart and re-enter into the world of ordinary consciousness in which adaptation to the hegemonic norms and conformism to the laws of inauthenticity are highly prized and well rewarded. Yet very clearly this tendency within myself is in decline, as my heart opens up and I start to see myself in others and others within myself. I know that only if I take care of my child and celebrate her, will I be given access to the unlimited energy of the universe by which I am breathed so that I can awaken to the inner truth of my existence. How many days and night my soul and body had to wait to be loved by myself. How many inner journeys and struggles did it take to overcome and begin to gently transform my resistance so that I could at last began to experience the universe as love and embrace it as a mother embraces her first born child. I feel deeply graced by the meditations we have done at the lakeside. At times this sense of gratitude was so overwhelming that tears sprang up in my eyes, as I came to feel the wonder of being alive. The wonder is not in extraordinary but in the life of everyday, the greatest one of which is that, as a German poet says, you simply are there and that when you open the window, everything is already there and you are in each very moment in what is always already yours.

The Universe is Sacred you cannot improve it

But how can I assume responsibility for myself, if I do not understand that hell and heaven do not exist outside myself but are realities generated by myself and reflecting my own inner states of being? How can I walk the path of freedom if I do not own up my contradictions and the shadows, which I generate within myself? How can I at all free myself from my projections through which I make and hold others responsible for my own weaknesses and suffering? I do feel that, given the all pervasive crisis in civilization which the world is going through, inventing and engineering ever new forms of rational management and reducing all problems to questions of proper control is an invitation to disaster. Especially if and when narrow forms of self-interest drive them forward, they tend to enhance authoritarian modes of exercise of power. They are also bound to lead to even deeper chronic forms of violence among people and in the ways they relate to the universe. A new civilization cannot be extrapolated from an old one, which is rooted in the very contempt for and negation of the nature of the universe. In this I share what has come to us from the great wisdom master Lao Tzu. In the Tao Te Ching he appeals in matchless paradoxes and with unflinching courage to the rulers of his time and calls on them to listen to their inner voice, align with the forces of the universe and serve the people. Undoubtedly Lao Tzu conveyed to us in the Tao Te Ching insights from his a high-energy body and Spirit, no more held down by the constraints of ordinary consciousness. Yet at the same time his views are filled to the brim with earthiness, as he looks deep into the hearts of the people around him, especially the

rich and privileged aristocrats. He does not scold them but holds up for them a mirror of the universe and nature in which they see reflected themselves and can discover their own true nature.

In Lao Tzu words we see reflected the admonition coined in the old French proverb “Noblesse oblige”: Nobility carries its obligations/ responsibility with it. Undoubtedly this proverb reflects the dualization between rights and obligations, with the growth of social polarities and those between the powerful and the powerless. Lao Tzu appeals to the rulers of his time to be compassionate and merciful and to abstain from insisting on their formal rights and privileges with which they tend to might protect themselves against their natural inclination to share and be compassionate. His attitude reminds us of that of Jesus: “What gain does it give you if you win the whole world but lose you own soul? Rather than moralizing to them, he invites them to reflect and meditate on the futility and disasters which await them if they not honor their “Te” and that of their subjects: be truthful to your self, that is the universe as it works in yourself. May be it is useful to remember the etymological root of the word disaster, derived from “astrum”, the Latin word for star, preceded by the negation “dis”. Thus the root meaning of disaster conveys the experiential insight that if you disconnect from the stars you become disconnected and you get into trouble. This is the heart of the Taoist tradition; the inner structure of what gives meaning to life is to connect and reconnect with your origins and to live in alignment with the forces of the universe from which all life springs. This insight also underlies and inspires many other ancient cosmologies like that of the North American autochthonous peoples. Yet at the same time I remember that the Chinese character for “crisis” stands both for misfortune and opportunity.

The Unity of Yin and Yang

In this character I believe we touch perhaps upon one of the most extraordinary experiential discoveries of the Taoist tradition on the nature of reality as the unity of yin and yang as an indivisible unity of opposites as the source of all life in which the opposites always challenge and nourish each other and in which the negative and the positive, as equally indivisible and belonging together, are manifestations of this dynamic unity of opposites, like light and dark, what is above and below, heaven and earth, sun and moon, male and female. I deeply value the experientially gained insight at the core of the Taoist tradition which has become the basis of the Healing Tao practice: there is an inner order in the very nature of the universe/cosmos and in ourselves and all other forms of interplay of yin and yang. As my sense of being a manifestation of the universe grows and I start to feel the unity within myself with the universe, at the same time my love and compassion with myself becomes compassion with the whole and all there is below, above and around me. The only thing I have to “do” is to undo myself from my armor, which I have created in the course of my life so that my sensitivity and vulnerability to the experience within my body and my consciousness can flower. The Healing Tao practice and especially the practice of the cosmic chi kung which is now being integrated in all basic as well as advanced practices of the Healing Tao helps me to transform and gather my own qualities and energies. I am then enabled to draw into my own body and my organs and cells the love of the universe, the very primordial forces from which life springs. No wonder that the effects of this practice are not only healing but also regenerating and rejuvenating and bring joy and happiness. Thus the practice of the Healing Tao, I feel, helps me to return to my origin, to realize oneness and become the undivided Being of which Lao Tzu speaks, when he uses the metaphor of the unknown log (p`u), the undivided Being which is hidden in my most innermost being. In his context we need to be aware of the attempt by the Confucianist rulers of China and the intellectuals/ philosophers in their service to co-opt Taoist practice and turn it into an abstract moral philosophy to secure the domestication of the people. In that sense the character “Te” at the center of the Tao Te Ching may most suitably be translated with “alignment with the universe”, or “actualization of the universe within oneself” or “power within oneself, which derives from one’s alignment with the universe” rather than by “virtue”. Virtue would rather convey the Confucianist view on morality, as an abstract code of behavior, dictating from above and outside by authorities, be they religious or political rulers. No wonder that in the process of state and class formation in all great feudal cultures, we can observe an intimate symbiosis and integration between these two, with often-fatal consequences for people’s own self-esteem, resilience and creativity. To me the radical (an adjective that is formed from the Latin substantive “radix/ root) originality of the Taoist view, which inspires the Healing Tao, is that there is no sin, as there is no irreconcilability between dark and light and as they are two poles of the same indivisible reality.

The Unity Of Light And Dark

All major religious systems, I refer especially to the three main monotheistic ones, The Jewish one, Christianity and Islam, are, I believe, based on the irreconcilable opposition between good and evil. They also have shaped the Hindu and Buddhist tradition in their social evolution, as they came to serve as political ends and were turned into instruments of law and order and in order to domesticate people into obeisance and submission to those in power. Such a view inevitably leads to crusades, and other forms of violence like the fundamentalisms, which abound and grow in the world of today, often manipulated by those who seek to power and appeal to people’s fear. In the Taoist tradition, the Light grows out of the dark, just like in the Buddhist tradition the lotus flower has its origins in the mud and the light of some great Renaissance painters in Europe like Caravaggio and Rembrandt seems to grow also out of the dark. What very much inspires me in Master Chia’s approach is his ability and courage to look through the facades of all exoteric religious and philosophical traditions and go to the heart of the different esoteric traditions which have so much in common. As a rule, with the rise of powerful states, the practitioners and followers of these traditions have been forced to go underground and were persecuted as heretic, as they held on to their independence and inner sovereignty and refused the intermediation of any religious or political system of

control from above and outside in their relation with the higher forces, as they felt that the key to the path to walk lies within their own body, their own being and their own consciousness.

Wu Wei

One cannot call the Tao Te Ching a religious book in the orthodox sense of providing a synthesis of truths and codes to be adhered to by the members of an institution, as the experience and the insight spring from within. Yet it is in its very core religious, if the adjective "religious" is traced to its roots in "re-ligare" which means truly connect/reconnect". The Tao Te Ching clearly evokes the intrinsic sacredness of the whole universe and all that is in it. The Tao Te Ching speaks of being of a process of harmony with the nature of reality rather than of doing in the sense of changing and manipulating that reality. Therefore it does not prescribe a code of given rules and prescribed behavior of a moral or ritual nature. In the Tao Te Ching the body, like the earth is viewed, as a sacred vessel and the seat of the sacred like the universe of which it is an expression and manifestation. Wu Wei may be seen as the ying state and phase in the Taoist practices and exercises, which follow on the yang phase. The Taoist practitioner feels, through a process of relaxation, into her/his true nature. As the renowned British scholar of the origins of Chinese science and civilization Joseph Needham, has pointed out, the translation of Wu Wei into "non-action" needs to be questioned. According to him, it is a Confucianist translation, designed to discredit the Taoist practice, as it equates them with lazy people who escape work and responsibility.

Like other Taoist scholars he suggests that Wu Wei means the enhancement of an inner disposition, of an attitude to life in harmony with the forces and energies of the cosmos. As such it reveals an attitude of reverence towards nature and the awakening of sensitivity to the cosmic energies within our bodies.

Did you ever meet an immortal?

It refers to a state of heightened receptivity and openness in which everything is perceived directly by the power of intuition, as the power of self-reflection and self-awareness which is intrinsic in simply being there without the interference of the ego and its design to change the natural spontaneous state which is the fruit of alignment. In reflecting on why I have always felt so attracted to the Tao, long before I became a student of the Healing Tao practice, I believe it is because I experienced the Taoist "science of feeling" as a radical challenge to the basic assumptions of linear rationality. This rationality lies at the heart of the deep down disconnection between body and mind, thinking and feeling, rationality and imagination, formality and spontaneity, inward and outwardness and so many other dualities which have marked Western culture from its early beginnings through Greek and Roman culture and the Judeo-Christian tradition. One may call it a miracle that Taoist practice, as it has come to us through the Healing Tao, has survived until the day of today. For centuries its practitioners were persecuted and had to go underground. Except for some brief periods, their critical attitudes towards the state and all forms of power, which affected people's autonomy and self-reliance and communitarian practices of reciprocity and sharing, were considered a threat to the Confucianist inspired law and order. Yet although the rulers feared them, at the same time they sought their counsel, especially with regard to their secrets of how to preserve the life force, as they abused their privileged position to abuse women, for their decadent pleasures and in their experiments to achieve immortality. Also the advice of renowned Taoist practitioners was eagerly sought in the training for warfare, as they possessed the secrets of how to protect oneself and to enhance inner power by the practice of chi kung, like today top managers in Hong Kong rely on Taoist teachers to help them to deal with the pressures and stresses of big business. Apart from these abuses, Taoists throughout Chinese history sided with the poor and needy and frequently organized and provided leadership to the great peasant movements which cyclically rocked the country when the common people felt that the Emperor had lost the Mandate of Heaven and his rule and that of the associated aristocrats, landlords and tax collectors had become too oppressive and exploitative. What strikes one, in reading the stories of the immortals, delightfully summarized in the lovely cards, available at the Tao Garden bookshop, is their courage to refuse commands by the Emperors and their determination to punish the powerful and privileged for their iniquitous practices vis a vis the common people. Finally these stories make clear that above all they were loved by the poor for sharing with them whatever property or possessions they still had and for creating laughter and mirth among the simple folk by their joyfulness which they would express in song and dance, before taking off into the higher realms, while always being prepared to return on earth, when the poor needed their help.

The accounts of their lives, as they have come to us through the legends over the ages, convey in a striking way their inner freedom and state of lightness. They remind us of their high quality of being which is the fruit of Taoist practice, that of the spontaneity of a child (Tzu-jan in the Tao Te Ching). In this lightness of being, they manifest their inner marriage of ying and yang, of their love and compassion with their sexual energy and of their inner light and the Light of the Universe, as the fruit of their inner alchemy practices of Kan and Li into the highest forms. Thus they have grown the energy body in the physical body and the Spirit body within the energy, so that they became free of time and space and yet grew in a state of being real than any form of ordinary reality. Their craziness in the eyes of conventional rationality should serve as a reminder for us that, unless we dare to free ourselves from our ordinary consciousness and the fixations of the norms of orthodoxy, there is little chance for us to become light and experience within ourselves the Light from which we have received our origin. The pristine Taoist tradition, in the same way as Buddhist tradition in India, was intimately connected with the defense and preservation of ancient tribal forms of democratic practice, which preceded the establishment of the State and of feudal rule, being rooted in a vision of village communities, patterned on the very system, as observed in the cosmos through highly advanced forms of inner sensing,

observation and meditation. I believe we need to deeply meditate on this point so that in our Taoist practice we create space for the balance of yin and yang both within ourselves as also in our relations between ourselves as men and women and in balancing self-reliance with sensitivity to the communitarian side of our being. There are good reasons to follow Joseph Needham in looking at Taoist practice, as the female undercurrent of Chinese history and culture, in view of the emphasis on the power of silence, equality of women and men, gentleness, reverence, feeling, sensing, compassion, forgiveness and humility qualities which sharply contrasts with the domineering, aggressive, patriarchal hierarchical and domesticating outgoing tendencies in the Confucianist ethos.

Learning as a pleasure

There is a stark contrast between both in their attitudes towards learning. While in the dominant mode, the emphasis is on submission and docility in the context of a strict hierarchical order, in the Taoist view the quality of learning depends on the state of inner relaxation and especially on the state of well being of the organs. If they feel at ease, joyful and happy, then the learning process is greatly facilitated. If however they do not feel at ease (disease starts according to Taoist medicine tradition in a state of dis-ease, as the free flow or energy is blocked), then learning is hindered. The implications of this Taoist view are vast. If they were taken seriously, most schools in the world, inclusive universities, might face closure. Surely this would allow for multiple originalities and creativities to flourish, as the process of the homogenization of cultures, with its devastating effects on creativity and dignity, would come to an end and peoples and people would be free to once again free to reconnect with what they themselves would experience as meaningful and relevant.

Chi Kung as a Source of Empowerment

The practice of Chi Kung has greatly helped me to rediscover the original Chi Kung nature of ancient postures in different traditions in relation to the experience of the sacred. These postures and practices existed long before religion became institutionalized and formalized. I refer to the bringing together of the hands in prayer in the Christian tradition, the elevation of the arms towards heaven, common to various traditions, the bowing down to the ground in the Islamic traditions, the prostrations in the Buddhist tradition and the movements of the body while praying and chanting in the Jewish tradition. All these practices have an immediate function in opening and restoring the channels in the body, so that in can connect and reconnect with the energies of the universe and heal itself and heal itself in the sense of becoming whole again, as it becomes one with itself and the universe. When I open inter-cultural workshops with people from many different parts of the world with a body meditation on this theme, they experience this insight into reconnecting power of such postures as a wonderful discovery, as it brings them back to the pristine roots of their own cultures and religious traditions. In this way they rediscover the originality and existential source of life giving energy beneath the ritualized gestures, which in the course of history and the symbiosis of religious ritual with political domestication have lost their life giving force. Chi Kung and the other Healing Tao practices are a powerful way to remember the energetic origins of religious practice. Above all, it helps us to reconnect with the primordial intuition of life as intrinsically religious and ecstatic. In that sense the Taoist insight into the function of chi can have a major function in helping people of different cultures to rediscover the roots of their own practices of connecting, the memory of which has disappeared in the course of time in a long process of institutionalization, ritualization and dogmatization.

Feminine Undercurrent

In becoming a student of the Healing Tao, I realized that I did not just make a personal choice but that this choice was deeply reflective of the need to question the thrust underlying the whole of Western culture in which I grew up as a child and which, in the process of colonization and its more recent forms of economic expansion and growth the whole world over, has multiplied the basic split between body and mind, feeling and thinking, above and below, good and evil which has been at the source of its formation. Many scholars like Morris Berman in his studies "The Re-enchantment of the World" and "Returning to Our Senses" have pointed out that there have been forces at work in European culture in its process of formation which have tried to systematically exterminate what he calls its feminine dimension.

This then, to survive, became an underground current in European culture. He means by this the body as source of awareness, meaning and orientation and he shows how both in religion with its emphasis on external authority and in science with its pursuit of objectivity, the body was devalued and ended up being turned into a mere object and input so that it, once devalued and stripped of its original sense, could be turned in an instrument of aims, planned and programmed from above and outside. He shows how as a result people's self-esteem and sense of dignity were severely affected and their senses atrophied. Erich Fromm put it in another way and speaks of a five hundred years lasting war against the peoples of Europe, in which their spiritual backbone was broken. We should not forget that in the process of rationalization and the growth of the "free market" over the last five hundred years but especially during the last fifty years and since the end of the cold war, millions of people lost their lives. In particular women who were the custodians of the traditions of sharing and reciprocity as well as of the connections with the sacred and ancient healing practices, were persecuted and in many places burnt at stake, after having been accused to be witches. Also on a large scale both women and men who were part of movements, which considered the unity of sex and love as a source of the divine, were condemned, tortured and often even more severely punished. There is little historical memory of the terrible price, which was paid for the advent of modernity. What is amazing is that, in spite of severe processes of repression over long periods, people do not forget deep

down the sense of their life so that a point comes and they stand up to recover what they have lost, as recent developments in Eastern Europe have suggested. In this sense I follow Carl Gustav Jung, the great Swiss philosopher of culture and psychiatrist who had a deep reverence for the Taoist tradition and especially for the I Ching. He wrote the introduction to its first translation into a European language by Wilhelm Reich. He has argued that although at the surface the consciousness of people may seem to have been eradicated, this is not possible as the roots cannot be touched, as they are immaterial and that there are always moments of crisis with possible turning points in the lives of peoples as well as individual people, especially when they are faced with despair, that they can reconnect with their deep memory and can remember their innate qualities and potential for goodness which may have been buried and has become invisible to them and to others in the process of alienation.

The Divine Nature of Love and Eros

Not without reason, many of the great mystics who experienced the relation with the sacred and the divine as a love relationship within their own body and mind were excommunicated by the church like Meister Eckhart who lived some 700 years ago and wandered around the whole of Europe. He questioned the virginity of the mother of Jesus, a central dogma in the Roman Catholic Church and held that virginity did not refer to the physical body but to her spirit of an unbroken relationship with the divine in herself, thereby restoring both the dignity of body and spirit. He also spoke of the divine and sacred in the whole creation and everything that exists and was therefore accused of pantheism, as the church insisted on the separation of what was divine and not, what was above and below. We know also the ecstatic writings and music of the famous mystic Hildegard von Bingen, a woman of extraordinary endowments who expressed her ecstasy in cosmic songs about the greening of the soul by the divine lover. When I was quite young I used to read the ecstatic love poetry by the Flemish woman mystic Hadewych, who expresses the love for her divine lover in the most passionate form, exclaiming that her body confines her too much, as her love makes her feel so vast "Alle dinghe sind me te inghe, ick bin so wijd". In the same period also lived Francis of Assisi whose canticle of the sun is an intense song of love with the cosmos, the sun, moon and stars and all what grows and lives. His ecstatic song is an intimate love dialogue with all that is alive. Reading his canticle when growing up gave me a first initiation in the Italian language. There is much evidence that his original love for the young woman Clara played a great role in the transformation of his energy. At the same time lived in Italy the great poet Dante who wrote the Divine Comedy and "The New Life", a cycle of mystical love poetry, devoted to his great love, the young woman Beatrice" I found them so beautiful that I learned a number of them by heart. Some of them have a strongly Taoist understanding of how love works: "gli occhi porta la donna mia amore per che si fa gentil cio ch'ella mira in her eyes my lady carries love by which she makes gentle whatever she sees. This is a precise description of what master Chia often calls the transformative nature of love. I also vividly remember the love poems of John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic in the late Middle Ages who evokes in his verses his ecstatic love relationship of his soul with the divine lover. His poetry is undoubtedly the most beautiful and also the most erotic one of the whole Spanish literature. No wonder that the brothers of his own religious order closed him up in the prison in their own monastery. I read them when I was eighteen, as they inflamed me, without understanding their inner meaning. The same love relationship imbued John's spiritual woman friend Teresa of Avila whom he greatly revered. She used to dance out her ecstasy before the altar to the amazement of the nuns the monasteries she founded. Obviously there were quite a few nuns in her monasteries that, like herself, had chosen to become a nun rather than suffer from an arranged marriage.

Becoming Intimate With Your Own Origin

I feel grateful to Master Chia for helping me to understand, through the healing love and the Kan and Lie practices the secrets of Taoist inner alchemy, the process of transformation and refinement of sexual energy into higher forms of spiritual energy. They have not only helped me to illuminate and value with new eyes what is to me most precious in the history and culture of my own continent. They have also opened up a new perspective on my own path to walk and the unity between what is above and below in myself. Thanks to Master Chia, I feel more down to earth, as I learned to improve my grounding and root myself in mother earth and nurture myself with her energy. Also I have learned to become more intimate with my origins. There is a deepening trust that when I help my inner child to grow, she will never forsake that and me she will reciprocate the love I gave her. I feel that in the Taoist Healing practice, I have finally come to touch ground and that I am in to learning to freely move to where my love will take me, moved by the Love who gave birth to me. I have just become sixty-five years of age but realize that it is not the age, which determines my state of being but the stage in which I find myself, my state of being. But I feel that I will always remain a beginner, to be quite blunt. I have grown to be increasingly lazy and my detachment from these attachments is a slow affair. On the one hand it has its roots in a fierce resistance to be cooped by the madness and the rush of the times in which we live. On the other hand it is also a form of self-protection to create the space I need to get in touch with myself, although often I try to escape that inward movement.

Growing in Awareness

As long as I realize that I am just a beginner, I may grow a genuine sense of humility, which surely has never been one of my strong points. But with the decline of reactivity, this quality has a chance to grow and here will be more balance. What has made this retreat especially worthwhile for me has been that I have begun to understand the inner unity of the structure of the practices of the Healing Tao and the inner logic of the sequence in which they are being introduced and follow upon each other. It is amazing to see how the whole array of techniques learned in the basic practices of the healing love and iron shirt chi kung serve again as

the foundation for the Greatest Kan and Li. What I also learned in this retreat is that in the practice and the devotion to the practice, the body starts to remember and understand the formulas, as they have entered into its memory. Thus in and through the practice and only in this way true insight grows. Another point is that in and through the practice, also one's perceptions change and with it the sense of what it is all about. What has been in me on the foreground in my feeling is a sense of elation and amazement as to what over the ages the Taoist Masters have done for us and the gift to humankind, contained in their teachings. Finally I realize that my technical advance in the formulas needs at every step and moment to be accompanied and balanced by a growth in awareness. They only serve the process of inner transformation, if and when they help me to transform my old ways of breathing, of posture, of relating to my own body and mind, to others and the universe, especially those to whom I am close, in the life from day to day in the here and now. It is easy to fall in love with formulas and their mechanics. They contain the keys to the processes of self-transformation. Yet, in the desire to master the techniques as practical tools to advance, one may at times forget that their primary goal is not to serve to secure or achieve technical mastery, but that they above all serve the process of self-transformation which involves ourselves in our whole being and our relation with ourselves and others and the world. It is unavoidable that at some point or in some phase a split arises between yin and yang, being and doing, structure and process, inner and outer. There is a danger to fall back on old patterns of judging others or ourselves from moralistic perspectives in terms of good or bad. Surely the advance of Taoist practice needs people not afraid to express what they feel, without fear. Central is that critique is inspired by the intention to be constructive. Yet at the same time one needs to turn inward and see to what extent critique also mirrors one's own unfinished business. If such a self-reflection does not take place, criticism may become counterproductive, as it compounds negative energy rather than that it helps to undo existing knots. Let us remember the authentic democratic roots of the Taoist tradition and its fierce opposition to any domesticating practices, especially of those by men vis a vis women. Hence the need to balance unceasingly within ourselves yin and yang, not just in the formal practice, but in all dimensions of daily life as the basic and main practice in which the Tao reveals itself. Then our daily life supports the practice and the practice daily life: they become one and indivisible. The more relaxed one is, the more clearly one can feel that the healing practices and formulas have not been invented and are not mental constructions, although we often have a tendency to reduce them to that out of fear to truly face ourselves. The formulas represent highly concentrated insights and techniques which contain the fruit of empirical and experientially gained insights and findings gathered over several thousand years: on the nature of our body, how it is structured, how its energies flow, on the universe and how we can connect and reconnect with its energies in which our lives have their source. So the formulas become an invitation to feel into our body, as Master Chia is not tiring of emphasizing. In this way the practice creates its very antidote and helps us to overcome the inclination towards fetishism, which is always around the corner, with a decline of awareness. In that sense I believe it is worthwhile to deeply look into ways we as Taoist practitioners can support each other not only in our work and in retreats but foremost at the deeper level of Taoist practice: what can help us to enhance our ability to feel and sense, what do we need to deal with the way we block our energy flow, how can we enhance both our practice and our theory and how can we support each other in this? In this respect I feel Taoist teachers need to be generous to each other and help each other to grow. Associations may be very useful for this purpose. They may help us to balance our more material short term concerns with growing into the depth of the practices through brotherly and sisterly support and care for each other. Above all, to grow, truthfulness with oneself, critical and loving self-awareness and modesty are great virtues, which need to be practiced unceasingly. Also it helps us to balance yang with yin. If not, Taoist practice turns into a theory is disconnected from real life and may feed pretension and arrogance. I love therefore the references in the Taoist literature to the Taoist sage who practices simplicity and because he/she is free from pretensions, he/she is connected with the whole cosmos. That quality of consciousness comes to us straight from Lao Tzu and we find it also in Buddha and Jesus. I value the Healing Tao practices as a great treasure as they have decisively helped me to overcome the deep duality, which I experienced in my whole life between consciousness and matter. Although on the one hand they make me more love the world of matter of which I am wholly part through my body, they have also helped me to feel more free to it and the process of transformation with more acceptance and joyfulness, as death has lost its sting. To speak in Master Chia's words: what is material transforms into what is material. I am happy with this Taoist insight, which is fully supported by the findings in quantum physics and relativity theory. They squarely challenge the arrogant and myopic assumptions on which the present dominant mode of science and culture are built. I love the Taoist teachings, which are transmitted to me by Master Chia, as I feel they are utterly sound and sane and responds to the very intuition and longing deep within me to fully celebrate and enjoy life. As such I do experience the Healing Tao practice as deeply liberating. I also see them as a major key to a new world culture, which will no more be rooted in the cultivation and exploitation of fear and exploitation of the body. It would bring to an end exploitation of sexuality by those who capitalize on it in the world of today both in business and institutionalized religion. In this new world love and sex, mind and chi, body and mind would again come together. Also a new unity would grow between being and doing, action and contemplation, what is inward and what is outward, play and work, inward and outward and a new balance would come about between competition and cooperation, self-reliance and togetherness, self responsibility and sharing and the unity and diversity and the diversity of ways of being and relations between peoples and people. Such a new world culture would be rooted in a renewed sense of the sacredness of the universe and of the body as a microcosmos which the marriage

between what is above and what is below can place and what is finite is transformed into infinity, by becoming aware and reconnecting with one's origin.