

CHAPTER 4

The Daoist Mystical Body

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Specific Daoist adherents and communities emphasize the importance of corporeality and physicality, specifically one's body as the Dao as sacred locale. But the "Daoist body," as those who are familiar with the work of such influential scholars as Kristofer Schipper, Livia Kohn, and Catherine Despeux know, is multidimensional. It is not simply the anatomical and physiological given of contemporary biomedicine. In the case of certain Daoist movements, one's body is understood to have subtle, esoteric dimensions that become activated through Daoist religious praxis. Here the body itself becomes the means through which the Dao manifests its own self-unfolding, and the means by which the Daoist adept experiences the Dao as numinous presences. This is what I mean by the "Daoist mystical body."

Daoist views of the human body that form the basis of the present discussion thus problematize ideas of "the body" as a static, immutable given, pointing rather to the way in which different bodies/selves are encountered and enacted in different sociohistorical and religio-cultural contexts. It is noteworthy that specific Daoist practices simultaneously recognize the importance of "material" bodily constituents (organs, fluids, etc.) and "energetic" or "divine" dimensions. The importance of the body in certain forms of Daoist religious praxis may thus represent a previously unacknowledged form of mysticism, namely, "somatic mysticism" (see Komjathy 2007). Here the "sacred" is experienced in/as/through one's own body, although what that body is deserves careful study.

Before discussing specific aspects of the Daoist mystical body, a few comments are in order regarding Daoist "theology" and comparative categories. First, I use "theology" as a critical comparative category, specifically in the more

inclusive sense of “discourse on the sacred.” While “dao-ology” may be a tempting alternative in the case of Daoism, limiting “theology” to only those discourse communities that consider *theos* inhibits comparative analysis, privileges certain accounts of sacrality, and marginalizes radically alternative visions. In short, it is protective in intent. When considering Daoist perspectives on the subtle dimensions of the cosmos, there is often confusion regarding what appears to be a classical Daoist monistic view and a later Daoist theistic view. In addition to neglecting historical context and textual evidence, such bifurcation fails to understand classical Daoist cosmogony and cosmology, which emphasizes emanation and immanence (see below).¹ Here the Dao, as primordial undifferentiation becoming transformative process, led to the manifest cosmos, which includes the possibility of multiple sacred realms and gods. From a Daoist perspective, there is no necessary distinction between “Dao,” “nature,” “gods,” and “humans”; they form an interrelated spectrum of differentiation. From this perspective, deities are simply differently differentiated aspects of the Dao, and worshipping deities is not, in and of itself, different than having reverence for the unnamable mystery that is the Dao, which is impersonal and incomprehensible. Second, as herein employed, “mysticism” involves an experience of, encounter with, or consciousness of that which a given individual or community identifies as sacred or ultimate. From the perspective of mystics, mystical experience involves a direct experience of a trans-human reality, an interaction between an individual and/or communal subject and a sacred dimension. This includes the possibility that conventional subject-object dichotomies disappear during certain mystical experiences. There is thus no single, perennial “mystical experience” or a particular mystical experience that can justifiably be labeled “the mystical experience”; “mystical experience” encompasses a wide variety of *experiences* identified as “mystical,” experiences that are, at least partially, historically and culturally determined. In contrast to some recent proposals, I would not limit the category “mystical experience” to only trophotropic or hyperquiescent states (e.g., PCEs [Hindu Vedanta], the so-called void- or zero-experience, and so forth), while excluding ergotropic or hyperaroused states (e.g., Jewish Merkabah, Hildegard of Bingen’s visions of Jesus, and so forth).²

With respect to the Daoist mystical body, in the present discussion I am most interested in the ways in which specific adherents and communities interact with corporeal space as the locus of sacrality. This involves attentiveness to the complex relationship among views of self, religious praxis, and religious experience. I am less concerned with a hyper-historical analysis of presumably distinct cultural moments. That is, I am looking at the panorama rather than the wetland. Here early and late-medieval Daoist sources are the focus, though I will occasionally make some additional connections.

Locating the Body and the Senses in Daoism³

Considering human embodiment and personhood, “the body” is not, as counterintuitive as it may be, simply an invariable, cross-cultural entity. Although some take the body as a biological given, or assume that this self sitting here is the same kind of self that undertook ascetic discipline and alchemical transformation in twelfth-century China, careful analysis reveals something else. Research on the social nature of the body⁴ and the radical diversity of conceptions of self/body⁵ suggests that in different cultures and in different religious traditions we are dealing with different bodies and different selves.

The kind of body to which we have been accustomed in scholarly and popular thought alike is typically assumed to be a fixed, material entity subject to the empirical rules of biological science, existing prior to the mutability and flux of cultural change and diversity and characterized by unchangeable inner necessities. The new body that has begun to be identified can no longer be considered as a brute fact of nature. In the wake of Foucault (e.g. Foucault 1979, 1980), a chorus of critical statements has arisen to the effect that the body is “an entirely problematic notion” (Vernant 1989: 20), that “the body has a history” in that it behaves in new ways at particular historical moments (Bynum 1989: 171), and that the body should be understood not as a constant amidst flux but an epitome of that flux

(A. Frank 1991: 40).⁶

The human body is simultaneously cultural construct, historical artifact, experiencing agent, and for some, soteriological locus. In addition, more reflection and reservation concerning reference to “the body” should probably be exercised. Is *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (Feher et al. 1989) really a history of “the human body”? Or is “the body” simply a reified entity like “the self”? It seems that such research is the history of specific “bodies” (persons) at specific times. Perhaps there is only myself as *experiencing agent* and *psychosomatic process*, and you as experiencing agent and psychosomatic process.⁷ This is to deny neither social and interpersonal dimensions of personhood nor the horror and violence inflicted on different individuals (specific “bodies”) throughout history.⁸

To say that there are different bodies in different cultural and religious contexts is not to deny certain morphological features or anatomical givens;⁹ it is, rather, to suggest that departures are as important as convergences. While it may be unproblematic, for instance, to note that the human body is composed of organs, skin, sinews, muscles, bones, blood, and so forth,¹⁰ the functions and associations of “anatomical and physiological

givens” as well as the *metaphors* through which the body and its constituents are understood often differ.¹¹ So when one sees the body as a “machine,” one may come to believe that “parts” can be removed and (sometimes) replaced without any lasting disruption. However, if one sees the body as a “country” or “universe,” one may recognize the interrelationship and interdependence among its “inhabitants.” It is also possible that philosophical reflection on and body-based practices employing alternative body-self models may reveal and/or actualize other aspects of human being.¹²

The study of self in Asian contexts¹³ begs the question of the relation between “self,” “body,” “consciousness,” and “mind.” There can be little doubt that the idea of a disembodied, metaphysical mind, so often assumed in philosophical contexts indebted to Rene Descartes’ (1596–1650) notion of *res cogitans* (ego-self as “thinking thing”),¹⁴ is absent from classical Chinese and Daoist views of self. However, is “self” synonymous with body in Chinese cultural and religious traditions? Expressed differently, when the body dies, does personal identity cease? In a Chinese context, this issue relates to further questions concerning death, dying as well as the afterlife, and immortality, in particular.

The relationship between Chinese views of self and body is discussed in Roger T. Ames’ contribution to *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*.¹⁵ Ames argues that in classical Chinese philosophy “person” (“self”) is properly regarded as a “psychosomatic process.” According to Ames, Chinese views of self, generally speaking, emphasize “polarism” over “dualism.” “By ‘polarism,’ I am referring to a symbiosis: the unity of two organismic processes which require each other as a necessary condition for being what they are,”¹⁶ and, “When we combine the process ontology of the early Chinese tradition with its polar conception of the psychical [heart-mind/spirit] and physical [body], it would appear that ‘person’ was seen holistically as a psychosomatic process.”¹⁷ Ames in turn suggests that there are three senses of “body” in classical Chinese philosophy, as expressed in three technical Chinese terms. First, *shen* 身, possibly a pictograph of the human physique, seems to be used most frequently to refer to one’s entire psychosomatic process. In passages where *shen* as “self” refers to the physical body, it is one’s “lived body” seen from within rather than “body as corpse” seen from without.¹⁸ The second character relating to Chinese notions of “body” is *xing* 形, which is the “form” or “shape,” the three-dimensional disposition or configuration of the human process. *Xing*-form has a morphological rather than genetic or schematic nuance.¹⁹ Finally, a third character designating “body” is *ti* 體, which relates to “physical structure” said to be a “combination of twelve groups” or parts. *Ti*-physical structure relates to the scalp, face, chin, shoulders, spine, abdomen, upper arms, lower arms, hands,

thighs, legs, and feet.²⁰ In addition to clarifying Chinese conceptions of body-self, Ames' study is helpful for revealing that concern over "self" is not foreign to Chinese culture, contra to facile and conventional feminist or postmodern critiques.²¹

Moving on to the Daoist tradition, Livia Kohn has provided one of the most systematic analyses of Daoist views of the body-self.²² In her article "Taoist Visions of the Body" (1991), Kohn identifies three major Daoist views of the body, corresponding to three distinct methods and "intellectual" traditions within Daoism: (1) the body as an administrative system, rooted in the worldview of the *Daode jing* (Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power), and realized in quietistic and medically oriented meditation; (2) the body as the residence of spirits or gods, associated with Shangqing (Highest Clarity) visualization practices; and (3) the body as immortal universe, a vision developed under the influence of Buddhist insight meditation (Chn.: *guan*; Skt.: *vipāṣyanā*).²³ Developing Kohn, and for the purposes of the present chapter and future research, I would identify seven primary Daoist views of the body, some of which often overlap: (1) Naturalistic; (2) Cosmological; (3) Bureaucratic; (4) Theological; (5) Ascetic (including demonological); (6) Alchemical; and (7) Mystical.

Naturalistic views, most clearly expressed in classical Daoist texts such as the *Zhuangzi* (Book of Master Zhuang), emphasize the body as part of Nature; here the fate of the body-self is to decompose, and death is dissolution into the cosmos.²⁴ Daoist cosmological views often overlap with naturalistic ones, as "nature" from a Daoist perspective is seen, first and foremost, as a cosmological process and as a manifestation of the Dao. On the most basic level, Daoist cosmological views of the body map psychosomatic experience in terms of Chinese correlative cosmology, which centers on yin-yang and the Five Phases (*wuxing*). This is the foundational Daoist worldview, and it parallels classical Chinese medicine as expressed in the *Huangdi neijing* (Yellow Thearch's Inner Classics) textual corpus.²⁵ From this perspective, living and dying are part of the same cosmological process. However, Daoist cosmological views of the body, specifically those expressed in early Daoist movements such as Taiping (Great Peace) and Tianshi (Celestial Masters), include microcosmic/macrocosmic correspondences.²⁶ From this perspective, the body is a miniature cosmos, and the inner universe directly corresponds to the outer universe. For example, the left eye is the sun and the right eye is the moon, while the spine and head are the Big Dipper. Here death is frequently seen as mystical union or cosmological reintegration; death, again, is not fundamentally different from life. Bureaucratic views, the third major position, claim that the body functions like a sociopolitical system. This view also parallels classical Chinese

medicine and became central to Daoism beginning at least as early as the Later Han dynasty (25–220 CE). Here, as Kohn points out,²⁷ the body is an administrative system that resembles the Chinese imperial bureaucracy. For example, the heart is the ruler/king, while the other yin-organs (liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys) are high officials. The ideal is harmony and benefit throughout the country that is the body. Death might be seen as geopolitical restructuring and/or as reappointment of ministers and relocation of inhabitants to other lands.

In terms of theological views, which are most clearly first expressed in early medieval Daoist movements such as Shangqing (Highest Clarity) and discussed below, the body consists of sacred realms inhabited by a diverse pantheon. The most distinctive dimension of theological views of the body involves the identification of body-gods. The body is populated by sacred presences. For example, each of the five yin-organs contains a specific spirit, based on correlative cosmological associations. We also find claims concerning gods who inhabit the brain and hair. Here religious practice, especially visualization and rarification, seems to contain the promise of some form of postmortem existence. The fifth major view, the ascetic view, emerged in early medieval Daoism as well, though more within the framework of external alchemy.²⁸ In contrast to mainstream Daoist tendencies, this perspective sees the mundane body in a negative light, as a source of dissipation and death. The ascetic view includes a demonological and exorcistic element. The body contains parasites, both spiritual and material in nature, which attempt to bring about premature death. The most famous of these are the Three Death-bringers (*sanshi*), Seven Po (*qipo*), and Nine Worms (*jiuchong*). From an ascetic perspective, the adept must expel these malevolent entities from the body in order to increase longevity and potentially attain immortality. As a development of cosmological, theological, and, to a lesser extent, ascetic views, the alchemical standpoint identifies the body as an alchemical crucible, a vessel in which radical transformation and self-divinization occurs. As discussed below, I am specifically thinking of late-medieval forms of Daoist internal alchemy. Through complex physiological, energetic, and often stage-based training, one refines the base aspects of self into their celestial counterparts. One endeavors *to create* a transcendent spirit that can survive death. Alchemical views tend to utilize complex maps of corporeal constituents and physiological patterns. Specifically, the body consists of a series of energetic networks, referred to as “meridians,” “vessels,” or “channels” (*jingluo mai*), through which qi, or subtle breath, flows. One endeavors to activate a subtle body, a divine or spiritual body beyond the mundane body of flesh, bones, materiality, and emotionality. Finally, the mystical body, the central subject of the present chapter,

includes dimensions from theological and alchemical views.²⁹ Here the body consists of hidden or invisible dimensions that can be discovered and/or actualized. It is “mystical” for a number of reasons. First, the body is seen as a manifestation of the Dao and a locale in which the Dao as numinous presence becomes directly experienced. Second, there are “divine” and nonspatial dimensions of corporeal embodiment. Daoist adepts utilizing this view and engaging in the corresponding practices might disappear into openings into infinitude in the body. However, the mystical view would claim that the experience of corporeality and subtle physiology is itself mystical, a direct encounter with the Dao. Coupled with a qi-based worldview, this view problematizes the modern Western mind-body / spiritual-material distinction. Qi bridges the gap between apparently “material” and apparently “immaterial” aspects of existence, and “materiality” or “corporeality” is itself understood as “divine” or “sacred.”

With respect to the emphasis of the present volume, namely, “mystical sensuality” and the place of the senses in religious traditions and mystical experience, Daoist views are complex and diverse.³⁰ Daoists frequently emphasize the importance of “matching” (*he*), “harmonization” (*he*), “attunement” (*tiaoyin*), and “resonance” (*ganying*). As these terms indicate, there is a strong emphasis on listening and musicality, on sound and tone. Here I would draw attention to another centrally important Daoist principle, namely, observation (*guan*). The character *guan* 觀 consists of “egret” (*guan* 萑) and “to perceive” (*jian* 見). *Guan* is the quality of an egret observing barely visible or unseen presences. On some level, egrets are a model for observation. Such observation is rooted in stillness, attentiveness, and presence. Interestingly, the character *guan* has been used to designate both Daoist monasteries and a specific type of Daoist meditation called “inner observation.”

One way of understanding religions involves giving attention to the way in which the senses are conceptualized and which sense receives primacy. In the case of Daoism, there is a tendency to privilege listening. This parallels the foundational Daoist emphasis on receptivity, on “guarding the feminine” (*shouci*).³¹ Thus we find the classical Daoist ideal of the sage (*shengren*), a concept also used in classical Confucianism with different characterizations. The character *sheng* 聖 (“sacred”) contains the radicals for “ear” (*er* 耳) and “mouth” (*kou* 口). The sage is the “receptive one,” the one who listens to the sonorous patterns of the cosmos and its varied subtle layers. This capacity for listening also leads to an additional ability: one’s speaking expresses such a sacred connection, and such expression then resonates with others. The sage is one who is listened to by others.

At the same time, Daoists have had reservations about the dissipation that occurs through sensory engagement. This view is already present in

classical Daoism (from the fourth to the second century BCE), in the inner cultivation lineages of the Warring States (480–222 BCE) and Early Han (206 BCE–9 CE).³² For example, according to Chapter 12 of the *Zhuangzi*,

There are five conditions under which innate nature is lost. First, the five colors confuse the eyes and cause vision to be unclear. Second, the five sounds confuse the ears and cause hearing to be unclear. Third, the five smells stimulate the nose and produce weariness and congestion in the forehead. Fourth, the five flavors dull the mouth and cause taste to be impaired and lifeless. Fifth, likes and dislikes unsettle the heart-mind and cause the innate nature to become unstable and disturbed. These five are all a danger to life.³³

The senses, in turn, receive a variety of technical designations in the Daoist tradition. These include the Seven Apertures (*qiqiao*), namely, the eyes (2), ears (2), nose (2), and mouth (1); and the Six Thieves (*liuzei*), namely, the eyes (seeing), ears (listening), nose (smelling), mouth (tasting), body (feeling), and mind (thinking). Such views inform the standard Daoist psychology, which emphasizes four primary dimensions of experience: external things, sense perception, intellectual and emotional activity, and consciousness or spirit. Such a psychology has a direct application in terms of Daoist contemplative practice and soteriology, which involves a movement inward. First, one withdraws one's concern from phenomenal appearances and disengages sensory perception. Then one stills and empties the heart-mind, the seat of emotional and intellectual activity from a traditional Chinese perspective. One gradually enters a state of clarity and stillness. This is returning to innate nature, the ground of one's being and innate connection with the Dao.

Thus, generally speaking, the senses, at least in their habituated state of hyper-engagement, tend to be deemphasized in Daoism. However, like emotionality and rationality, the senses have an appropriate application and expression in human life. In terms of mystical experience, one may make a distinction between a mundane expression and a soteriological application of the senses. While the senses may be a source of dissipation and disorientation, they also may be utilized in religious praxis. In that context, they take on a "spiritual" or "mystical quality"; they become a means to orient oneself toward and experience the sacred. As will become clear in the pages that follow, the senses, especially vision and aurality, have a place in Daoist mystical experience and mystical experiencing. With respect to vision, Shangqing (Highest Clarity) emphasizes both visualization and the importance of light.³⁴ There is a parallel use in Daoist introspection, often referred

to as “inner vision” (*neishi*).³⁵ This practice involves turning the light of the eyes, the corporeal sun and moon, inward. The combined “spirit radiance” (*shengguang*) of the eyes then illuminates the body as inner landscape. In terms of aurality, internal alchemy emphasizes the activation of the subtle body. Here one listens to a deeper layer of one’s being, specifically the subtle movement of qi throughout the organ-meridian system and throughout the world and cosmos. This is the “Daoist mystical body” that forms the centerpiece of the present chapter.

There is thus a more esoteric and mystical Daoist view that centers on subtle listening, a listening that does not involve actual aurality. This subtle and deep listening, sometimes referred to with technical terms like “mysterious perception” (*xuanlan*), involves qi as the deeper layer of one’s being and of all existence. It is a listening to the subtle dimensions of life, being attentive to the energetic qualities of each being and situation. In terms of the later Daoist tradition, it involves the activation of the subtle body, and living through spirit. Interestingly, this mystical being and energetic attentiveness is described as “listening to the inaudible,” “teaching without words,” and “listening to the stringless music.” There is an invisible composition and sonata occurring each moment, and one can train oneself to hear it. One can thus exist in greater degrees of dissonance or consonance, of distortion or harmonization. Such a condition may occur on the level of innate nature, interpersonal relationships, community, society, world, and cosmos. From a Daoist perspective, this is ultimately about the degree to which one is in attunement with the Dao as sacred. It is about one’s being and presence, about one’s connection with the Dao and the Daoist tradition. For Daoists, such a connection and commitment may allow one to transmit the Dao (*chuandao*): “As for one who can awaken to this [clarity and stillness], that one is able to transmit the sacred Dao.”³⁶

Before moving on to specific examples of Daoist somatic mysticism, of experiences of the Daoist mystical body, I would like to point out one additional characteristic of the Daoist tradition that may be unfamiliar to readers of the present book. This is the Daoist practice of mapping the Daoist body through diagrams and illustrations. Specifically, the Daoist religious tradition includes a variety of fascinating body maps. As contained in the Ming-dynasty Daoist Canon, Daoists began documenting the above-mentioned views of the body through diagrams and illustrations. Tentatively speaking, the earliest of these “Daoist body maps” were composed in the early medieval period (the third to seventh CE), in the context of Highest Clarity communities. However, Daoists continued to create and commission such corporeal diagrams throughout Chinese history, and many of the illustrations were used as prompts or visual aides for Daoist meditation practice.³⁷

Daoist Somatic Theology and Mystical Experience

As a comparative category, “theology” refers to discourse on or theories about the sacred, with “sacred” being another comparative term referring to that which a given individual or community identifies as ultimately real. To speak of “the sacred” may also be misleading because individuals may assume a singular or unitary reality; however, careful study reveals pluralistic conceptions of the sacred. From the perspective of religious adherents, the “sacred” is that which determines the ultimate meaning and purpose of human existence.

Although there is a tendency to conflate “theology” with Christian theology³⁸ and to privilege theistic views, there are, in fact, many forms of theological discourse and many types of theology. Theological discourse may be descriptive, historical, normative, and/or comparative. Bracketing truth-claims, one may simply provide a phenomenological account: “From the perspective of Hindu renunciants, Brahman refers to a unitary, impersonal, transcendent, and incomprehensible reality.” In terms of historical theology, one may document the emergence of specific theological views in specific contexts: “Before contact with Catholic missionaries, the Kumeyaay Indians of San Diego practiced a form of animism that recognized the landscape as alive with spiritual presences.” Finally, and most often, theology is a form of normative discourse, in which one claims knowledge concerning what is ultimately real: “There is no god but Allah.” Normative theological discourse most often privileges the speaker’s own inherited tradition and/or ingrained opinions; alternatively, it may engage other, “non-such-and-such” views to clarify the speaker’s own theological commitments. However, from a comparative theological perspective, there are mutually exclusive, equally convincing accounts of “reality.” Comparative theology may thus involve descriptive, historical, and/or normative approaches. If practicing normative, comparative theology, one must begin with openness to the views and claims of multiple theological traditions. The question inevitably emerges concerning which one is most accurate or viable. One possible response would appeal to experience, but mystical experiences provide evidential support and experiential confirmation of alternative theologies (see below).

Considering types of theology, we may identify at least the following: animistic, atheistic, monistic, monotheistic, panenhenic, pantheistic, panentheistic, polytheistic, and somatic. In the present chapter, these are used as comparative categories, with some deviation from a strict definition (e.g., theism). Animistic theology suggests that nature is populated by gods, spirits, or spiritual forces; the landscape is alive with unseen presences that have the potential to influence human life, both positively and negatively.

Examples include Japanese Shinto and many Native American religions. Atheistic theology, which is technically a-theological, is a form of secular materialism and reductionism; atheism denies the existence of God. It is expressed from various social locations, including economics, politics, psychology, sociology, and so forth. Influential “atheistic theologians” include Emile Durkheim (1858–1917; the sacred as idealization of society, with social functions), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939; the sacred as psychological projection and wish-fulfillment, with pathological dimensions), Karl Marx (1818–1883; the sacred as opiate for socioeconomic oppression), and so forth. More often than not, atheism assumes a normative Abrahamic theology and expresses a radical anti-monotheistic view of “reality.” Monistic theology suggests that the sacred is unitary in nature, but that “it” is impersonal, transcendent, and ultimately incomprehensible. Certain forms of Hinduism (e.g., Advaita Vedanta) and classical Daoism would be examples. Monotheistic theology argues that there is a single, personal, and transcendent god (“God”); this god is most often taken to have awareness, intention, agency, and personal concern for human beings. Monotheism is associated with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, though careful reflection might problematize such a reading, including the question of complementarity. Are polytheistic and perhaps alternative monotheistic (contradictory conceptions of “God”) views expressed in the Hebrew Bible? Is the Catholic conception of the Trinity monotheistic? Panenhenic theology identifies Nature, seen in a quasi-monistic but immanent way, as the sacred; here Nature is an impersonal, unitary reality that includes apparent diversity (species and individual ecosystems). At times, Japanese Shinto, certain forms of Japanese Zen (e.g., Dogen’s writings), and more modern movements (e.g., American Transcendentalism) seem to advocate panenhenic views. Pantheism considers the sacred to be within the world (world-affirming), while panentheism considers the sacred to be simultaneously within and beyond the world (both world-affirming and world-negating). Panentheism may be seen as an attempt to address a fundamental theological problem in pantheism: If the sacred is within all things, is its nature altered with loss and destruction? Polytheistic theologies identify “reality” as consisting of multiple gods in multiple sacred realms; there are alternative pantheons and maps of the cosmos. More often than not, these are not the spirits of animism (gods living in landscape), but more transcendent and cosmic deities. Examples of polytheistic theologies include mainstream Hinduism and organized Daoism. Finally, as explored in the present chapter, we may identify a new form of theology and mystical experience: somatic theology and mysticism. These terms do not simply refer to embodied experience; rather, I suggest that somatic theology and mystical experience locates the sacred *in and as the*

body. The sacred may be experienced in/as/through one's own anatomy and physiology, though the Daoist corporeal landscape includes hidden water-courses and nonspatial caverns.

Before moving on to the specific Daoist content of this chapter, two additional points should be made. First, some theological positions are complementary (e.g., panenhenism and somaticism), while others are contradictory or oppositional (e.g., atheism and monotheism). Second, outside of tradition-specific theologies, the dominant assumed theology is monistic, especially in the form of Perennial Philosophy or New Age spirituality. This is often the case in academic discourse about religion as well as in scientific discourse concerning the universe. That is, reality *is assumed to be* singular, rather than pluralistic, in nature.

For Daoists throughout Chinese history, the Dao, translatable as “the Way” and “a way,” has been identified as the sacred and ultimate concern. As expressed in classical Daoism, in the inner cultivation lineages of the Warring States period (480–222 BCE), and from a foundational Daoist theological perspective, the Dao has four primary characteristics: (1) Source; (2) Unnamable mystery; (3) All-pervading sacred presence (qi); and (4) Cosmological process that is the universe (“Nature”).³⁹ The primary Daoist theology is, in turn, monistic, panentheistic, and panenhenic; the secondary Daoist theology is animistic and polytheistic. Conventionally speaking, earlier inquires into Daoism, influenced by Christian views, have often unknowingly privileged the monistic side, while denigrating the polytheistic side.⁴⁰ This has been expressed in the Western construction and historical fiction of so-called *philosophical Daoism* and *religious Daoism* (sometimes appearing as “magical” or “folk Daoism”), the use of which should be taken ipso facto as evidence of inaccuracy and misunderstanding.⁴¹ In fact, as discussed briefly below, classical Daoist monistic theological views entail and frequently identify polytheistic elements. In any case, knowledge of foundational Daoist theological views is essential for our inquiry into the Daoist mystical body and somatic mystical experience.

According to the fourth-century BCE *Daode jing* (Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power),⁴²

There was something formed in chaos—⁴³
It existed before the heavens and earth.
Silent and formless,
It remained secluded and unchanging.
Circulating and moving without diminishment,
It then became the mother of the world.
We do not know its name.

Forced to name it, we call it “Dao.”
 Forced to name it further, we call it “great.”⁴⁴
 (*Daode jing*, ch. 25)

And

The Dao produced the One;⁴⁵
 The One produced the two;
 The two produced the three;
 The three produced the myriad things.
 The myriad beings carry yin and embrace yang.
 It is empty *qi* (*chongqi*) that harmonizes these.
 (Ibid., chap 42; see also *Zhuangzi*, ch. 2)

For present purposes, these lines provide evidence that foundational Daoist cosmogonic, cosmological and theological views are based on emanation and immanence. They add support for my claim that “Daoist theology” is primarily monistic, panentheistic, and panenhenic. A world-affirming religious commitment is expressed. This means that the phenomenal world, including its various inhabitants, are emanations or manifestations of the Dao. Less problematic for humanistically inclined moderns would be the belief that human beings have the capacity to reunite with the Dao. However, and this must be emphasized, classical and foundational Daoist views also encompass polytheistic theology. From a Daoist perspective, the invisible world is as diverse and complex as the visible one. There are multiple sacred realms inhabited by multiple gods. Although this type of Daoist theology is most prominent and well documented in the later organized religious tradition, there is also evidence from the Warring States period.⁴⁶

As though in clarification, Chapter 22 of the Outer Chapters (chs. 8–22) of the *Zhuangzi* (Book of Master Zhuang), which is associated with the Zhuangist school of classical Daoism,⁴⁷ explains,

Master Dongguo asked Zhuangzi, “Where does one find the Dao?”
 Zhuangzi said, “There’s no place it doesn’t exist.”
 “Come on,” said Master Dongguo, “Be more specific!”
 “It’s in these ants.”
 “As low as that?”
 “It’s in the grasses.”
 “But that’s even lower.”
 “It’s in those tiles and shards.”

“How can it be that low?”

“It’s in piss and shit!”

While this passage might be read as hyperbole, as an attempt of Zhuang Zhou to subvert his fellow adept’s attachment to conventional ideas about a hierarchy of being, I would suggest that it is consistent with classical and foundational Daoist views based on emanation and immanence. Viewed from “the perspective” of the Dao, everything contains and represents some aspect of its unfolding and manifestation. This, of course, must be qualified to some extent, as Daoists tend to utilize a qi-based worldview, wherein different things have different energetic qualities (the *chongqi* mentioned above). Some such qualities are enlivening and beneficial, while others are not. Although Daoists tend to identify degrees of human connection and actualization, there is, nonetheless, a clear vision of the cosmos and world as expressions of the Dao. This includes the human body in its myriad layers and transformations.

Early Medieval Daoist Somatic Mysticism

The early Daoist community that most thoroughly explored and mapped the Daoist mystical body was Shangqing (Highest Clarity). These Daoist somatic mystical experiences, which again refer to experiences of the Dao in/as/through one’s own body, occurred during the early medieval period, specifically during the so-called Period of Disunion (220–581). They are described in the texts of the early Highest Clarity movement. In terms of “mystical sensuality,” Highest Clarity emphasizes the soteriological application of vision, with a strong emphasis on visualization and “light mysticism.”

Originating in a southern Chinese aristocratic context in what is present-day Jiangsu province, Highest Clarity began with a series of revelations. In the 360s, members of the aristocratic Xu family, Xu Mai (b. 301), Xu Mi (303–373), and his son Xu Hui (341–ca. 370) hired the spirit medium Yang Xi (330–386) to establish contact with Xu Mi’s deceased wife Tao Kedou. Through a series of revelations from underworld rulers, divine officers, denizens of Huayang dong (Grotto of Brilliant Yang), and former leaders of the early Tianshi (Celestial Masters) community, Yang Xi described the organization and population of the subtle realms of the cosmos, particularly the heaven of Highest Clarity. Also deserving note is the presence of the deceased female Celestial Master libationer Wei Huacun (251–334) as a central figure in the early Highest Clarity revelations. These various celestial communications included specific methods for spirit travel

and ecstatic excursions, visualizations, and alchemical concoctions. A wide variety of texts are important for understanding the religious world of Highest Clarity, with two of the most important being the *Dadong zhenjing* (Perfected Scripture of Great Profundity; DZ 6) and the *Huangting jing* (Scripture on the Yellow Court; DZ 331; 332), a pre-Shangqing text that became canonical. The revelations were, in turn, written down by the Yang Xi and the Xu brothers in a calligraphic style that seemed divine. After some generations, the texts were inherited by Xu Huangmin (361–429) who disseminated them throughout the region. Then, Tao Hongjing (456–536), a descendent of Tao Kedou and an advanced Highest Clarity adept, came across an original manuscript and became inspired to collect them. Tao Hongjing had established a religious center on Maoshan (Mount Mao; present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu),⁴⁸ where he pursued alchemical and pharmacological studies. From there he traveled throughout southern China in search of the original Highest Clarity manuscripts. In the process, he developed a critical analysis of calligraphic styles for determining textual authenticity. His collection efforts resulted in the *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected; DZ 1016).⁴⁹

For the purposes of the present chapter, three Highest Clarity techniques and corresponding mystical experiences are most relevant: (1) visualization of body-gods; (2) absorption of astral effulgences, also known as qi-ingestion; and (3) accessing mystical cranial locations. The *locus classicus* for the human body as a residence of body-gods is the fourth-century *Huangting neijing jing* (Scripture on the Internal View of the Yellow Court; DZ 331), but one also finds reference to various body-gods throughout the early Highest Clarity textual corpus, specifically in the *Dadong zhenjing* (Perfect Scripture of Great Profundity; DZ 6). In the case of the *Scripture on the Yellow Court*, this text is particularly interesting in its description of the gods or spirits of the five yin-orbs, namely, liver (Wood), heart (Fire), spleen (Earth), lungs (Metal), and kidneys (Water). Here the Daoist adept is informed of the gods' specific names⁵⁰ as well as of the color and appearance of their ritual vestments. For example, “[The youth of the lungs] wears white brocade robes with sashes of yellow clouds . . . [The youth of the heart] wears flowing cinnabar brocade robes with a jade shawl, gold bells and vermilion sashes . . .,” and so forth.⁵¹ The corresponding visualization method thus incorporates Five Phase cosmology, wherein the yin-orbs are associated with specific colors, directions, seasons, and sometimes mountains and planets.⁵² Similarly, the *Perfect Scripture of Great Profundity* provides names and associations for the yin-orbs. As Isabelle Robinet has pointed out, “The whole corpus of the Mao-shan [Shangqing] texts emphasizes the divinization of the body even more strongly than the *Huang-t'ing*



Figure 4.1 Spirits of the five yin-orbs

ching. Almost every bodily point or location is inhabited and animated by a god” (1993, 100).

Through the cross-pollination of classical Chinese medicine and Highest Clarity visualization techniques, the yin-orbs eventually became illustrated according to indwelling spirits or numinous presences associated with the five directions.

In this illustration from the *Huangting yuanshen jing* (Scripture on the Original Spirits of the Yellow Court; as appearing in the eleventh-century *Yunji qiqian*, DZ 1032, 14.4b–11a), the yin-orbs have the following associations: lungs/white tiger (left); heart/vermilion bird (bottom); liver/azure dragon (right); spleen/golden phoenix (center); and kidneys/two-headed black deer (top). In later texts, the spleen is more commonly taken as the

center, without symbolic or emblematic associations, while the kidneys are associated with the Mysterious Warrior (snake-turtle). For present purposes, these texts reveal the body as a residence of gods, and the boundaries between internal and external become porous or interpenetrating. It is a cosmicized vision of the human body, wherein one's organs contain numinous presences that correspond to various dimensions of the larger cosmos. These numinous presences are in turn encountered as one's own internal structure. Here the mystical body becomes actualized through an interior descent that reveals a new body and a new cosmos.

The early Highest Clarity community also emphasized the ingestion of astral effulgences (*jing*). There are various absorption techniques, including ingesting the luminous essences of the sun and moon, stars, mists, and so forth. These methods often focus on the five yin-orbs, but there are also examples in which the “brain” occupies a central position. In summary of various early Highest Clarity visualization methods, the twelfth-century compilation *Yuyi jielin tu* (Diagrams of the Sun and Moon; DZ 435)⁵³ describes a specific method of ingesting solar essences. Here the adept is informed, “Make the light of the sun envelop your entire body, reaching inside as far as the corners of the stomach and evoking a sensation of being completely illuminated inside and out.”⁵⁴

In another practice known as the “Method of Mist Absorption,” mentioned in Tao Hongjing's fifth-century *Zhen'gao* (Declarations of Perfected; DZ 1016, 10.1b–2a, 13.5ab) and paralleling the fourth-century *Lingbao*



Figure 4.2 Ingestion of solar effulgences

wufu xu (Explanations on the Five Talismans of Numinous Treasure; DZ 388) and the fourth- or fifth-century *Mingtang xuandan zhenjing* (Perfect Scripture on the Mysterious Elixir and the Hall of Light; DZ 1381), the Highest Clarity adept is advised to absorb the luminous essences of the Five Qi, that is, the subtle essences of the five directions and cosmic poles. One is supposed to engage in this practice just before dawn, when the Five Qi are in their purest form. In some texts, the mists are also identified as the numinous presences of the Five Emperors of the five directions.

With respect to the ingestion of astral effulgences, Highest Clarity texts contain methods that also focus on the Big Dipper.

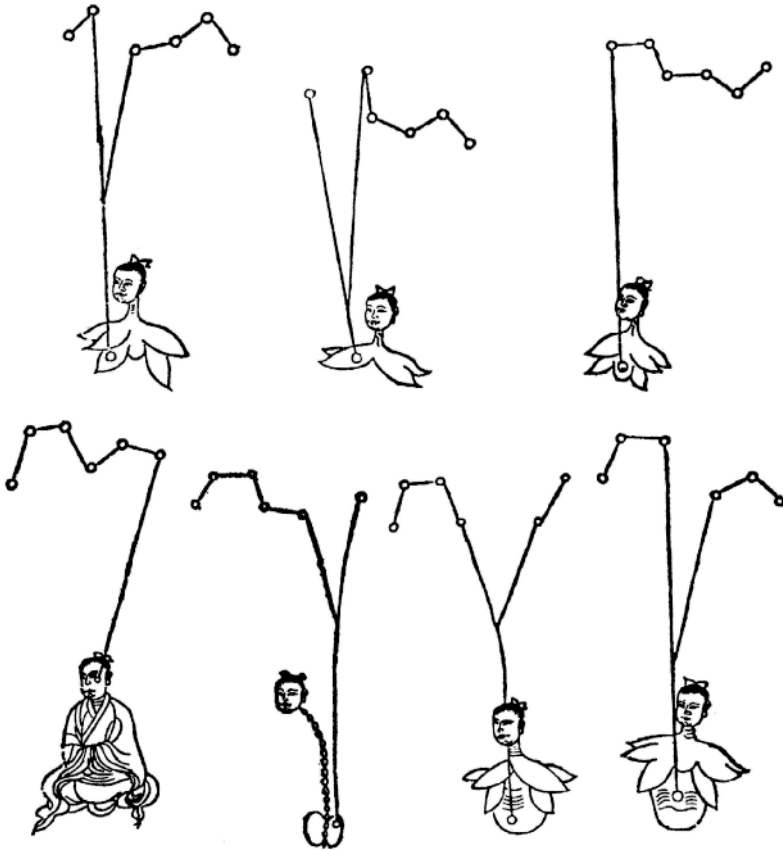


Figure 4.3 Locating the Northern Dipper in the body

These illustrations come from the twelfth-century *Yutang neijing yushu* (Jade Text on the Inner Luminosities of the Jade Hall; DZ 221, 2.13a–17b), which follows a method described in the fourth- or fifth-century *Dongfang jing* (Scripture on the Grotto Chamber; DZ 405, 13b). According to the “Instructions on Returning to the Origin” (*huiyuan jue*), the adept visualizes each star of the Northern Dipper in order (heart, lungs, liver, spleen, stomach, kidneys, and eyes), and locates its numinous qi in a corresponding corporeal location.⁵⁵ At the completion of this practice, the whole body becomes pure luminosity. As documented in this and similar Highest Clarity practices, the Big Dipper is simultaneously in the inner landscape and external cosmos. One may discover and actualize this by exploring the body or by observing the stars and constellations. Complete cosmic integration involves fusion and interpenetration.

In these various absorption practices, the mystical body is encountered as cosmic radiances. The Highest Clarity adept not only discovers the Dipper stars in his or her own body, but also looks outside to see aspects of the body visible in the nighttime sky. Here the body also becomes pervaded by astral effulgences, by luminous mists and cosmic vapors. These in turn circulate through the subtle corporeal networks; according to early Highest Clarity, the adept literally circulates primordial and numinous energies throughout the body. These are the essences of the Dao in a purer and more ancient manifestation.⁵⁶ In terms of mystical sensory experience, one might read Daoist ingestion practice as a form of dietetics. Here a spiritual sense of taste would be primary, assuming that one can not only absorb, but also taste light.

The final relevant Highest Clarity aspect of the Daoist mystical body centers on subtle brain cavities. Referred to as the Nine Palaces (*jiugong*), these are mystical cranial locations. One of the earliest appearances of these brain cavities occurs in the *Suling jing* (Scripture on the Pure Numen; DZ 1314; cf. *Yuandan shangjing*, DZ 1345, 2b–8a), a text containing material from the third to sixth centuries.⁵⁷ According to the second method in the *Scripture on the Pure Numen*, called “Guarding the Original Elixir” (*shou yuandan*), the Highest Clarity adept must explore the nine mystical brain cavities, which are identified as follows:

1. Palace of the Hall of Light (*mingtang gong*), located above the area between the two eyebrows and one inch (*cun*) in.
2. Palace of the Grotto Chamber (*dongfang gong*), located two inches in.
3. Palace of the Elixir Field (*dantian gong*), located three inches in. This palace is sometimes also called Niwan, literally meaning “mud-ball,” but possibly a transliteration of nirvana.
4. Palace of the Flowing Pearl (*liuzhu gong*), located four inches in.

5. Palace of the Jade Thearch (*yudi gong*), located five inches in.
6. Palace of the Celestial Court (*tianting gong*), located one inch above the Hall of Light.
7. Palace of Secret Perfection (*jizhen gong*), located one inch above the Grotto Chamber.
8. Palace of the Mysterious Elixir (*xuandan gong*), located one inch above the Elixir Field. This palace is sometimes also called Niwan.
9. Palace of the Great Sovereign (*taihuang gong*), located one inch above the Flowing Pearl.⁵⁸

Each palace is also associated with a specific god, and each god also occupies a corresponding external sacred realm in the complex, multidimensional Highest Clarity cosmology. The first four palaces are inhabited by male deities, while the last five are inhabited by female ones. For example, the Palace of the Celestial Court is inhabited by the Perfect Mother of Highest Clarity (*shangqing zhenmu*). Other texts also provide details on the color and style of their clothing as well as their specific appearance. As Isabelle Robinet has commented, “These nine cavities or palaces are only inhabited by deities if one practices the visualization exercise. Otherwise they remain vacant. The implication of this is that the visualization of these deities is, at the same time, their actualization” (1993, 127). Before stepping away from the mystical body in early Highest Clarity Daoism, I would note that the accessing of these cranial locations also leads to a mystical encounter with various deities in the Highest Clarity pantheon. One way of reading the Nine Palaces is that they are actual portals into the cosmos, into Daoist sacred realms. Such gods and their corresponding sacred realms simultaneously exist in the larger cosmos and the adept’s own body. They can, in turn, be accessed in/as/through one’s own corporeality. Here the brain contains a nonspatial or hyperspatial dimension—by assessing the Nine Palaces, which extend progressively inward, deeper, and beyond, one opens mystical spaces *within* the body.

Late-Medieval Daoist Somatic Mysticism

The early medieval Daoist concern with accessing and actualizing the mystical dimensions of the human body continued to occupy a central position in late-medieval Daoist communities. Here I am specifically thinking of the Tang-dynasty practice of inner observation (*neiguan*) and late-Tang and early Song lineages of internal alchemy (*neidan*). With respect to the former, one finds a vision of the body as cosmos in the eighth-century *Neiguan jing* (Scripture on Inner Observation; DZ 641). This is an anonymous text that also relates to a variety of Tang-dynasty meditation manuals, and specifically

to the religio-cultural milieu of Sun Simiao (581–672), Sima Chengzhen (647–735), and Wu Yun (d. 778), among other prominent Daoists.⁵⁹ Developed through the influence of Buddhist insight meditation (Pali: *vipassanā*; Skt.: *vipāśyanā*), the Daoist practice of inner observation emphasizes conscious introspection of one's entire psychosomatic experience. Like practitioners of Buddhist insight meditation, the Daoist adept engaging in inner observation focuses on stilling and stabilizing the heart-mind. This involves quieting emotional and intellectual activity, and realizing a state of serenity and equanimity. However, while Buddhist insight meditation most often involves maintaining an open awareness of all stimuli in an indiscriminating fashion or the confirmation of Buddhist doctrine through meditative praxis,⁶⁰ Daoist inner observation incorporates more specifically Daoist concerns. In particular, inner observation, sometimes also referred to as "inner vision" (*neishi*), integrates Daoist cosmological and mystical views of self. As expressed in Tang-dynasty manuals, the practice of inner observation involves a systematic exploration of the multidimensional layers of the Daoist body, including the various energies and divinities in the body. According to the *Neiguan jing*, the Daoist meditator must identify and explore the body's cosmological correspondences: the Five Phases with the five yin-orbs, the six pitches with the six yang-orbs, the seven essential stars (the five plants [Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, and Saturn] plus the sun and moon) with the Seven Cavities (*qiqiao*) [seven openings in the body], and so forth (*Neiguan jing*, DZ 641, 1b).⁶¹

Patterned on heaven and symbolizing earth, inhaling yin and exhaling yang, your body shares in the Five Phases and accords with the four seasons. The eyes are the sun and moon. The hair is the stars and the planets. The eyebrows are the Flowery Canopy (*huagai*) [Cassiopeia]. The head is Mount Kunlun. A network of palaces and passes, the body serves to keep essence and spirit at peace.

Among the myriad beings, humans have the most numinosity. With innate nature and life-destiny merged with the Dao, humans can preserve [this numinosity] by internally observing (*neiguan*) the body.

(*Ibid.*, 3a–3b)⁶²

Here one notes the body as microcosm and internal landscape. Through the practice of inner observation, closely associated with visualization methods, the Daoist adept becomes a cosmologically infused and mystically transformed being. Paralleling the above-mentioned Highest Clarity encounter with the multiple layers of somatic numinosity, the Daoist adept practicing *neiguan* emerges from the practice to discover cosmic interpenetration—one's body contains the landscape and universe, and the landscape and universe is

one's body.⁶³ In terms of the place of the senses in religious traditions and mystical experience, Daoist inner observation places primary emphasis on vision, and specifically the eyes as vessels of light. As the corporeal sun and moon, the combined light of the eyes, referred to as “spirit radiance” (*shenguang*) or “divine illumination” (*shenming*), can be turned inward to illumine the inner landscape of the human body.

The final aspect of the Daoist mystical body that I would like to mention is the place of vital substances and physiology in Song-dynasty internal alchemy lineages. In order to complete alchemical transformation, late-medieval Daoists sought to refine the various aspects of self into a pure or transcendent spirit. Here it is noteworthy that alchemical transformation focuses on the conservation of fluids and actual physiological processes: the internal alchemist *needs* the body's vital substances (vital essence, fluids, blood, and so forth) to create the elixir of immortality. One can actually chart this process in terms of classical Chinese medical theory.⁶⁴ Alchemical transformation takes place *inside* the body; the body is required for internal alchemy; and the completion of *neidan* praxis incorporates every somatic aspect.

Titled “Neijing tu” (Inner Landscape Map), this diagram is contained in the *Nanjing zuantu jujie* (Phrase-by-Phrase Glosses of the *Classic of Difficulties*; DZ 1024) by a certain Li Jiong (fl. 1269). Although conventionally categorized as a “medical text,”⁶⁵ this text is preserved in the Daoist Canon, incorporates earlier Daoist materials, and clearly influenced later



Figure 4.4 Inner landscape map

Daoist body maps (see Needham et. al 1983; Despeux 1994; Komjathy 2008; 2009). As documented in this diagram, there is substantial overlap between “medical” and “alchemical” views. Most importantly for the present discussion, this “Inner Landscape Map” identifies the Nine Palaces in the head, the Three Passes along the spine, as well as the movement of vital essence (*jing*) and qi from the base of the spine to the head. The latter practice is referred to as “reverting essence to repair the brain” (*huanjing bunao*), and it is often combined in a larger, stage-based process of alchemical transformation. In such systems, the Daoist adept transforms vital essence into qi. This qi is then circulated through the Waterwheel (*heche*), also known as the Lesser Celestial Cycle (*xiao zhoutian*; a.k.a. Microcosmic Orbit),⁶⁶ during which one connects the Governing and Conception Vessels, the meridians on the back and front centerlines of the body, respectively. Here one finds a clear depiction of the activation of the subtle, energetic dimensions of the human body.

There are various late-medieval *neidan* texts relevant for studying the Daoist mystical body, many of which incorporate the earlier Highest Clarity visualization and Daoist *neiguan* practices already discussed. Here I will be content to focus on the tenth-century *Chuandao ji* (Anthology of Transmitting the Dao; DZ 263, j. 14–16), one of the most influential early Zhong-Lü texts.⁶⁷ The last section of the text, titled “Lun zhengyan” (On Experiential Confirmation/Signs of Proof), informs the Daoist adept that specific training regimens may result in specific types of experiences. After one conserves vital essence, opens the body’s meridians, and generates saliva, one begins a process of self-rarification and self-divinization. At the most advanced stages of alchemical transformation, one becomes free of karmic obstructions and entanglements, and one’s name becomes registered in the records of the Three Purities. The embryo of immortality (*taixian*) matures, which includes the ability to manifest as the body-beyond-the-body (*shenwai shen*) and have greater communion with celestial realms. After the adept’s bones begin to disappear and become infused with golden light (*jinguang*), he or she may receive visitations from divine beings. This process of experiential confirmation is said to culminate as follows:

In a solemn and grand ceremony, you will be given the purple writ of the celestial books and immortal regalia. Immortals will appear on your left and right, and you will be escorted to Penglai. You will have audience with the Perfect Lord of Great Tenuity in the Purple Palace. Here your name and place of birth will be entered into the registers. According to your level of accomplishment, you will be given a dwelling-place on the Three Islands. Then you may be called a Perfected (*zhenren*) or immortal (*xianzi*).⁶⁸

In terms of the present discussion, I would emphasize a number of specific features of alchemical transformation. The adept opens the Three Elixir Fields (head, heart, and abdominal regions), the Three Passes (lower, middle, and upper spine), and the subtle corporeal networks (“meridians”). By refining the various yin aspects of self, the adept activates the perfect qi (*zhenqi*), which circulates as numinous currents throughout the body. This is so much the case that the *Chuandao ji* suggests that practitioners gain experiences in which the bones disappear and golden light infuses the body. In *neidan* lineages, this transcendent spirit is often referred to as the “immortal embryo” (*taixian*), “perfect form” (*zhenxing*), “body-beyond-the-body” (*shenwai shen*), “perfect numen” (*zhenling*), “yang-spirit” (*yangshen*), and so forth.

Through alchemical praxis, the mystical body becomes actualized—one feels the Dao pulsing through one’s body as a numinous presence, and one’s entry into the Daoist sacred realms as a pure yang-spirit is assured. With respect to the emphasis of the present volume, namely, “mystical sensuality” and the place of the senses in religious traditions and mystical experience,



Figure 4.5 Diagram of the emergence of the yang-spirit

This diagram comes from the anonymous, early seventeenth century *Xingming guizhi* (Authoritative Decrees on Innate Nature and Life-destiny; JHL 67; ZW 314). This is a late-Ming dynasty (1368-1644) encyclopedia of “nourishing life” and internal alchemy lore. It summarizes various earlier methods and elucidates many *neidan* technical terms.

alchemical praxis appears to deemphasize the senses in a way that parallels classical Daoist approaches to a certain extent (see above). Alchemical texts frequently emphasize the importance of attaining a state of “non-dissipation” (*wulou*). The precondition and foundation of such a state is sexual abstinence (sometimes temporary, sometimes permanent), sensory withdrawal, and the transformation of emotional reactivity. It involves conservation of one’s foundational vitality and actualization of energetic integrity. However, interestingly, the language of Daoist internal alchemy texts seems to indicate that there is a subtle aurality. This is a more esoteric and mystical Daoist view that centers on subtle listening, a listening that does not involve actual aurality. This subtle and deep listening involves qi as the deeper layer of one’s being and of all existence. Through the practice of Daoist internal alchemy, one discovers a subtle body within the physical body. At the same time, because the “material” and the “spiritual” are simply different expressions of qi, which may be charted along a spectrum from the most concentrated (e.g., rocks) to the most rarified (e.g., gods), the “physical body” may be transformed into the “mystical body.” This involves sublimation, refinement, rarification, and in certain cases, self-divinization. One trains oneself to listen to the subtle movements of qi throughout the organ-meridian system. This deep listening may then extend to every dimension of being and existence.

Sacred Embodiment and Anatomical Geography

These various dimensions of the Daoist mystical body, or Daoist mystical *bodies*, draw one’s attention to a number of things. First, in the Daoist communities discussed in the present chapter, mystical experiences of the Dao, whether as body-gods, numinous presences, corporeal spaces, interpenetrating landscapes, or transcendent spirit, take place in/as/through the body. One’s body is a manifestation of the Dao, and the Dao becomes manifested through one’s body. On the one hand, “the body” is one’s actual physicality or corporeality (fluids, organs, etc.), which creates the context or space required for mystical communion. On the other hand, “the body” has mystical dimensions that become actualized through Daoist religious praxis. That is, the body is the locus of mystical experience, the place where the Dao as sacrality becomes manifest. Such is what I am referring to as the “Daoist mystical body,” and its characteristics challenge dominant conceptions of “the body.”

Second, in terms of comparative mysticism, the forms of Daoist mystical experience (or experiencing) discussed in the present chapter represent a previously unidentified form of mysticism, which I would label “somatic

mysticism.” Here the sacred becomes experienced in/as/through one’s own body. While on some level every experience labeled “mystical” is “embodied” (are there any experiences where one *actually* does not have a body?), in somatic mysticism one encounters or actualizes the body as mystical space. With respect to other religious traditions, I also see parallels in certain forms of Tantra and classical Indian Yoga,⁶⁹ that is “somatic mysticism” is not only found in the Daoist tradition. However, scholars of mysticism, as this volume indicates, should give more attention to the place and conceptions of the body in mystical experience. This includes the relative degree to which mystics and mystical communities have body-affirming or body-negating worldviews, and the place of the senses in mystical experience and human existence.

Finally, the fact that Daoist cosmology is based on emanation and immanence, and that certain Daoist adherents and communities encounter the Dao in their actual corporeality and physiology, problematizes assumed dichotomies between “materiality” and “sacrality,” “body” and “mind,” and so forth. If physiology is itself “sacred,” then attempts to reduce mystical experience to brain chemistry (“neuroscientific reductionism”) may not prove so serious after all. Instead, they may rather force us to broaden our understanding of mystical experience, specifically by focusing on the relationship among the trigger (source), the actual experience (not reducible to physiology), its interpretation, and the context. This would include attentiveness to a given mystic as experiencing subject.⁷⁰ We need deeper reflection on the possible contributions and limitations of neuroscience to the study of mysticism and on the ways in which “physiology” is defined and interpreted.

In conclusion, I would return to classical Daoism, specifically Chapter 22 of the *Zhuangzi*, wherein one is informed that the Dao can even be discovered in excrement. More than urging us to become scatologists, this insight, viewed from a contemplative perspective, reveals the way in which the Dao as transformative process and cyclical pattern is manifested in the human body. From a Daoist perspective, our own digestion, absorption, and elimination patterns express the fundamental mystery and subtlety of the Dao.

Notes

1. While the Warring States period (475–221 BCE) is often read as a time of proto-rationalism (e.g., by A. C. Graham and Benjamin Schwartz), more work needs to be done on its religio-cultural characteristics. See, for example, Harold Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training (Nei-yeh) and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
2. On this distinction, see Roland Fisher, “A Cartography of the Ecstatic and Meditative States,” in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods (Garden City,

NY: Doubleday Image Books, 1980), 286–305. My historicist and comparatist views aim at inclusivity and stand in contrast to recent attempts to limit the category to trophotropic types of experiences (e.g., Robert Forman, Jordan Paper). I see such scholarly movements as unjustified and protective in intent. They presuppose a specific theology and soteriology, and there are political and ethical consequences involved. As the above definition indicates and as I have previously argued, examining the entire spectrum of mystical experiences does not involve uncritically grouping any and every religious or ecstatic experience under the category “mysticism.” See Louis Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection: Mysticism and Self-transformation in Early Quanzhen Daoism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007). There are various “anomalous experiences” that are distinguishable from mystical experiences, including shamanic and mediumistic experiences, hallucinatory experiences, synesthesia, lucid dreaming, out-of-body experiences, psi-related experiences, alien abduction experiences, past-life experiences, possession, channeling, near-death experiences, and anomalous healing experiences. See, for example, Etzel Cardeña, Steven Jay Lynn, and Stanley Krippner, eds., *Varieties of Anomalous Experience* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2004). Mystical experiences specifically refer to experiences of that which a given individual or religious community identifies as sacred or ultimate.

3. This section parallels the one provided in Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*.
4. See Michel Feher et al. (eds.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (New York: Zone Books, 1989, 3 vols.); Shigehisa Kuriyama, *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine* (New York: Zone Books, 1999).
5. See Leroy Rouner, ed., *Selves, People, and Persons* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); Thomas P. Kasulis, with Roger T. Ames and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Sarah Coakley, ed., *Religion and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); José Luis Bermúdez, Anthony Marcel, and Naomi Eilan, eds., *The Body and the Self* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Shaun Gallagher, and Jonathan Shear, eds., *Models of the Self* (Bowling Green, OH: Imprint Academic, 1999).
6. Thomas Csordas, ed., *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1–2. See also Feher et al., *Fragments*, 1.11–13.
7. Such considerations may lead to radical doubt concerning “the body” as an abiding and integrated entity. This is brought into sharper focus when one realizes that the cells that make up one’s body, and one’s bones themselves, perhaps the seemingly most solid aspect of the body, are completely different every seven years. See, for example, L. F. C. Mees, *Secrets of the Skeleton: Form in Metamorphosis* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1984).
8. See, for example, Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Un-Making of the World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Mary-Jo Good, Paul Brodwin, Byron Good, and Arthur Kleinman, eds., *Pain as Human*

Experience: An Anthropological Perspective (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

9. Kasulis et al., *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, xi.
10. This “anatomical view” of the body is, on a certain level, based in the Western practice of dissection. The cultural theorist or medical anthropologist is left to wonder if a dead body on a dissection table has any relationship to a living/lived body. That is, does an organ removed from the body tell us anything about the condition/vitality of that same body/person prior to death? On the “divergence” between Western and Chinese medical traditions see Kuriyama, *The Expressiveness of the Body*.
11. On the ways in which metaphors condition perception and consciousness see, for example, George Lakoff, and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Eliot Deutsch, “The Concept of the Body,” in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, 5–19; Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000 [1982]), 48–66. Specific ways of acting (practice) follow from specific ways of perceiving (worldviews). Seeing the world as “natural resources,” in contrast to a “sacred vessel,” leads to radical restructuring and exploitative patterns of interaction.
12. This insight comes from reading and reflecting on humanistic and transpersonal psychology.
13. See, for example, Kasulis et al., *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*; Douglas Allen, ed., *Culture and Self: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives, East and West* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997); Coakley, *Religion and the Body*.
14. See Allen, *Culture and Self*, 7–9. Recently, the concept of “embodiment” has become central in various studies of self. “For Merleau-Ponty, as for us, *embodiment* has this double sense: it encompasses the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms.” Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), xvi. Compare Csordas, *Embodiment and Experience*, 12. However, *embodiment* presupposes some distinction between my “self” (here meant as “conscious subjectivity”) and my body. There is some *thing* that is “embodied.” Thus, the claim that “[o]ne escapable fact of human existence is that it is experienced *in* a body” (Jane Marie Law, ed., *Religious Reflections on the Human Body* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995], ix; emphasis added) is by no means clear. Perhaps each human existence is experienced *as* or *through* the body that is oneself. Arguably, the construction of a “divided self” is, psychologically speaking, a pathological condition. See Gallagher and Shear, *Models of the Self*, section 4. This insight may, in turn, justify the claim that unity of mind and body is not to be discovered, but achieved. Kasulis, *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, xx. See also Deutsch, “The Concept of the Body.”

15. Roger T. Ames, "The Meaning of Body in Classical Chinese Philosophy," in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas P. Kasulis, 157–77.
16. *Ibid.*, 159.
17. *Ibid.*, 163.
18. *Ibid.*, 165.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Livia Kohn, *Living with the Dao: Conceptual Issues in Daoist Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Three Pines Press, 2002 [1991]), 74–75. Ames, "The Meaning of Body," 168–70. In the former (76–77), Kohn details technical connotations of the terms *shen*-self and *xing*-form in terms of Tang-dynasty (618–907) Daoist mystical literature: "[One] may come to understand *shen* as the 'personal body' or the 'extended self.' The term in this context obviously implies much more than the physical body . . . The personal body with its afflictions is evaluated critically by the Daoists. *Xing*, on the other hand, the shape one's body takes in the world, is understood very positively. It is an exact replica of the universe."
21. See, for example, Coakley, *Religion and the Body*, 1.
22. A number of publications have appeared on the "Daoist body." These include Kristofer Schipper, "The Taoist Body," *History of Religions* 17.3/4 (1978): 355–86; Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, trans. Karen C. Duval (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993 [1982]); Joseph Needham et al., *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. V.: *Chemistry and Chemical Technology*, part 5: *Spagyric Discovery and Invention: Physiological Alchemy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Jean Lévi, "The Body: The Daoists' Coat of Arms," in *Fragments for a History of the Body*, 1: 105–26; Catherine Despeux, *Taoïsme et corps humain. Le Xiuzhen tu* (Paris: Guy Trédaniel, 1994); Despeux, "Le corps, champ spatio-temporel, souche d'identité." *L'Homme* 137 (1996): 87–118; Poul Anderson, "The Transformation of the Body in Taoist Ritual," in *Religious Reflections on the Human Body*, 186–208; Muriel Baryosher-Chemouny, *La quiete de l'immortalité en Chine: Alchimie et paysage intérieur sous les Song* (Paris: Editions Dervy, 1996); Michael Saso, "The Taoist Body and Cosmic Prayer," in *Religion and the body*, 231–47; Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, "Mapping the Daoist Body: Part I: The *Neijing tu* in History," *Journal of Daoist Studies* 1 (2008), 67–92; Komjathy, "Mapping the Daoist Body: Part II: The Text of the *Neijing tu*," *Journal of Daoist Studies* 2 (2009), 64–108. The discussions by Despeux, Kohn, Schipper, and Komjathy are the most nuanced and germane.
23. Kohn, *Living with the Dao*, 68–69. See also Kohn, *The Taoist Experience* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 161–88.
24. The naturalistic and alchemical views of self have received the most research with respect to Daoism. That is, emphasis is placed on two primary Daoist claims concerning death: death as dissolution into the cosmos or the possibility of postmortem survival through the creation of a transcendent spirit. Here I attempt to provide some initial thoughts, as I believe that perspectives on dying and death as well as funeral practices are intricately connected with views of self. The matter is complicated by two factors. First, traditional Chinese culture

- recognizes the existence of ancestors (deceased relatives). Second, after Indian Buddhism became more influential from the fourth century CE onward, Daoists began using a Buddhist quasi-docetic view that included reincarnation.
25. See Paul Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Unschuld, *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
 26. See Schipper, “The Taoist Body”; Schipper, *The Taoist Body*; Livia Kohn, “Taoist Visions of the Body,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 18 (1991): 227–52.
 27. Kohn, *The Taoist Experience*. See also Unschuld, *Medicine in China*.
 28. See Stephen Eskildsen, *Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, “Corpse Deliverance, Substitute Bodies, Name Change, and Feigned Death: Aspects of Metamorphosis and Immortality in Early Medieval China,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001): 1–68; Robert F. Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong’s Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
 29. See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*; Komjathy, “Mapping the Daoist Body.”
 30. Unfortunately, to date very little research on the senses in Daoism has been undertaken. The present account must thus be understood as preliminary and tentative.
 31. See *Daode jing*, chap. 28. *Shouci* (“guarding the feminine”) refers to maintaining a state of open receptivity. It is not, as so often misinterpreted, a rigidly gendered category. Here *ci*, technically designating a female bird or animal, refers to the cosmological principle of yin and its various associations such as dark, quiet, inward, flexible, and so forth. “Guarding the feminine” is thus a Daoist principle and practice. The character *shou* (“to guard”), like its cognates such as *bao* (“to embrace”) and *bao* (“to protect”), is a classical Daoist technical term designating meditation, as in the phrase *shouyi* (“guarding the One”). See *Daode jing*, chaps. 5, 10, 15, 16, 19, 22, 42, 52; *Zhuangzi*, chaps. 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 31, 33. The earliest reference to *shouyi*, a phrase that becomes a more general designation for meditation in the organized tradition, appears in the fourth century BCE “Neiyè” (Inward Training) chapter of the *Guanzi* (Book of Master Guan). See Roth, *Original Tao*.
 32. Classical Daoism is referred to as **philosophical Daoism** in outdated and inaccurate accounts of Daoism. Like references to **religious Daoism**, the use of **philosophical Daoism**, even in scare quotation marks (i.e., “philosophical Daoism”), should be taken ipso facto as ignorance and misunderstanding concerning the religious tradition *that is* Daoism. See Louis Komjathy, *Daoism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: Continuum, forthcoming).
 33. See also *Zhuangzi*, chap. 7; *Daode jing*, chap. 12.
 34. See James Miller, *Daoism: A Short Introduction* (London and New York: OneWorld, 2003), 93–106; Miller, *The Way of Highest Clarity* (Magdalena, NM: Three Pines Press, 2008).

35. See Livia Kohn, "Taoist Insight Meditation: The Tang Practice of *Neiguan*," in *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1989), ed. Livia Kohn, 191–222.
36. *Qingjing jing*, DZ 620, 2a.
37. For some examples of these various illustrations, see Needham et al., *Science and Civilisation*; Despeux, *Taoïsme et corps humain*; Komjathy, "Mapping the Daoist Body."
38. Of course, historically speaking, Catholic theologies are probably the most developed and systematic, though that is changing in the contemporary period with a more transdenominational Christian theology and with the emergence of comparative theology. See, for example, David Tracy, "Comparative Theology," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit, MI: Macmillan, 2005), 9125–34.
39. A close reading of classical Daoist texts such as the *Daode jing*, *Zhuangzi*, as well as sections of the *Guanzi*, *Huainanzi*, and *Lüshi chunqiu* provides evidence for each of these characteristics.
40. This is generally true of most scholarship before the emergence of Daoist Studies from the 1960s onward. It is intricately tied to traditional Confucian prejudices, European and Japanese colonialism, Christian missionization, and Orientalism, which is the heir of the previous three. Such interpretations of Daoism generally privilege and provide selective readings of classical Daoist texts and mischaracterize classical Daoism as a "proto-rationalistic" or "philosophical" tradition. More recently, one finds appropriative agendas within American hybrid spirituality to identify classical Daoism as "spiritual" or part of some "universal wisdom tradition."
41. For more recent revisionist work, see Roth, *Original Tao*; Russell Kirkland, *Taoism: The Enduring Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).
42. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. Catalogue numbers for Daoist textual collections follow Louis Komjathy, *Title Index to Daoist Collections* (Cambridge, MA: Three Pines Press, 2002). Numbers for the Ming-dynasty canon parallel Kristofer Schipper et al.'s earlier index. For a survey of its contents, see Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, ed., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
43. I have rendered this line and the subsequent ones as referring to a cosmogonic process. They may also be read as a description of the present cosmological epoch. That is, they simultaneously refer to an unrepresentable and irretrievable before and an immediately accessible dimension of the present.
44. These lines are noteworthy for using different Chinese characters that refer to types of names. They contain *ming*, one's personal name given by one's parents, and *zi*, one's nickname given by oneself or one's associates. Read from a more technical perspective, the passage suggests that no one can know the former with respect to what is ultimately real. Instead, Chinese Daoists provided a provisional designation of *dao*, a Chinese character referring to "way" or "path." That is, ultimately *dao* is a placeholder for —, which is formless, unnamable,

and unknowable. Also noteworthy is the fact that, etymologically speaking, *da* (“great” or “big”) depicts a human being with outstretched arms. Read poetically, the Dao extends beyond the reach of human beings.

45. In terms of Daoist emanationist cosmogony, these lines are read as the movement from primordial undifferentiation (*wuji*) to differentiation (*taiji*) as expressed in the manifest world. Through a spontaneous, impersonal shift, the Dao, as unrepresentable before (*wu wuji*), transformed into an impersonal cosmological process characterized by yin-yang interaction. Here “oneness” or “unity” refers to the earliest cosmogonic moment, and the most theologically true and mystically accessible dimension of human existence. Thus, one finds frequent reference to “embracing the One” (*baoyi*), “guarding the One” (*shouyi*), and similar Daoist technical meditative terms in classical Daoism. See also Livia Kohn, ed., *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1989); Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Clarity*, trans. Julian Pas and Norman Girardot (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 119–27.
46. It is beyond the confines of the present discussion to demonstrate this. However, for example, one finds reference to Di (the high Shang god) and earth-shrines (*Daode jing*; chaps. 4 and 78) as well as to various ritual practices (e.g., Tailao sacrifice; *ibid.*, chap. 20; see also *Zhuangzi*, chaps. 18 and 19). Moreover, the *Zhuangzi* contains reference to various gods and spirits, while the “Neiyi” (Inward Training) chapter of the *Guanzi* mentions “ghosts and spirits.” These various details are, more often than not, either glossed over, ignored, and explained away or actually expunged from translations. The latter is especially evident in popular and general audience “translations” of the *Daode jing* by the likes of Wayne Dyer, Stephen Mitchell, and Ursula LeGuin.
47. See, for example, Victor Mair, “The *Zhuangzi* and Its Impact,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 30–52.
48. Because of Tao Hongjing’s centrality in Daoist history and his residence on Maoshan, Shangqing is sometimes incorrectly referred to as the “Maoshan sect.”
49. My knowledge of Highest Clarity is deeply indebted to Isabelle Robinet’s scholarship. See Isabelle Robinet, “Visualization and Ecstatic Flight in Shangqing Taoism,” in *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*, ed. Livia Kohn, 159–91; Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*; Robinet, “Shangqing—Highest Clarity,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn, 196–224. For a more recent study, from a Religious Studies perspective and including translations of three important Highest Clarity texts, see Miller, *The Way of Highest Clarity*.
50. The spirit of the heart is [called] Elixir Origin, given name Guarding the Numinous.
The spirit of the lungs is [called] Brilliant Splendor, given name Emptiness Completed.
The spirit of the liver is [called] Dragon Mist, given name Containing Illumination.

The spirit of the kidneys is [called] Mysterious Obscurity, given name Nourishing the Child.

The spirit of the spleen is [called] Continually Existing, given name Ethereal Soul Pavilion.

The spirit of the gall bladder is [called] Dragon Glory, given name Majestic Illumination.

51. DZ 331, 9.1b–14.1a.
52. A standardized discussion of correlative cosmology may be found in the *Huangdi neijing* (Yellow Thearch's Inner Classics), a series of texts related to classical Chinese medicine. Almost any foundational textbook of Chinese medicine also includes correspondence charts.
53. Yuyi (lit., “robust appearance”) and Jielin (lit., “coalesced phosphorescence”) are esoteric names of the sun and moon, respectively.
54. See Robinet, “Visualization and Ecstatic Flight,” 171–72; Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 190–91. Interestingly, in her contribution to *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*, Robinet shows the ways in which this Highest Clarity practice develops parallel concerns in the *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi*, and *Shanhai jing*.
55. Robinet, “Visualization and Ecstatic Flight,” 172–75; Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 208–25. A similar practice is found in the *Jinque dijun sanyuan zhenyi jing* (DZ 253) wherein the stars have the following names: (1) Yang Brightness; (2) Yin Essence; (3) True One; (4) Mystery Darkness; (5) Cinnabar Prime; (6) North Culmen; (7) Heavenly Pass. See Kohn, *The Taoist Experience*, 213.
56. The fact that modern astrophysics has found that energies from various moments in the formation of the cosmos continue to bombard the earth may add support for the efficacy of Highest Clarity ingestion practices. One actually can access these primordial energies.
57. Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 127–31.
58. DZ 1314, 12b–22a. See also *Jiugong zifang tu*, DZ 156.
59. See Livia Kohn, *Seven Steps to the Tao: Sima Chengzhen's Zuowanglun* (St. Augustin/Nettetal: Monumenta Serica Monograph 20, 1987); Kohn, “Taoist Insight Meditation.”
60. See, for example, the *Satipatthāna Sutta* (Scripture on the Foundations of Mindfulness), which is available in various English translations. For insights into the practice in China, see Neal Donner and Daniel Stevenson. *The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of the First Chapter of Chih-I's Mo-Ho Chih-Kuan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993. Michael Saso. *Zen Is for Everyone: The Xiao Zhi Guan Text by Zhi Yi*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001.
61. Kohn, “Taoist Insight Meditation,” 203–5.
62. Adapted from Kohn, “Taoist Insight Meditation,” 210–11.
63. See Schipper, “The Taoist Body”; Schipper, *The Taoist Body*; Kohn, “Taoist Visions of the Body.”
64. See Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*.
65. See, for example, Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, 772.

66. See *Chuandao ji*, DZ 263, 15.19b–23b.
67. See Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein, *Procédés secrets du joyau magique* (Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1984); Judith Boltz, *A Survey of Taoist Literature, Tenth to Seventh Centuries*. (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1987).
68. DZ 263, 16.30a.
69. See, for example, David White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
70. Religious adherents have mystical experiences within a sociohistorical context and religious community. Theologically conceived, such mystical experiences are simultaneously initiated by or derive from that which a given religious tradition identifies as sacred. The influencing pattern here is complex: mystical experiences are determined by one's subjective constitution, by the worldviews, practices, goals and ideals of one's community or other cultural influences, and by some source beyond egoistic identity and social construction. It is, of course, the latter, the "trigger", that is most controversial. If "mystical experiences" can be induced by certain drugs (e.g., Ketamine, Peyote, etc.) or "brain manipulation" (e.g., Persinger's "God Helmet"), then it would appear that such "experiences" are only occurring in the "mind" of the "mystic." In a traditional context, in contrast to a scientific laboratory, such physiological changes are *interpreted by* religious adherents and communities as being theologically and soteriologically significant. This interpretation is to reduce mystical experiences to physiology or neurochemistry. If, however, the context and trigger are as significant as the subjective indicators, then it may be that mystical experiences require first a transcendental source and second a religious community, a community that orients itself toward and remembers some sacred reality. That is, the transformational effect of mystical experiences may rest more in nonsubjective influences than in physiological changes.

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