

HANDBOOKS FOR DAOIST PRACTICE

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**YELLOW THEARCH'S BASIC QUESTIONS**

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**TRANSLATED BY LOUIS KOMJATHY**

## INTRODUCTION

# 書 序

## YELLOW THEARCH'S BASIC QUESTIONS

The *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問 (Yellow Thearch's Inner Classic: Basic Questions; DZ 1018), sometimes abbreviated as *Neijing* 內經 (Inner Classic) but more appropriately as *Suwen* 素問 (Basic Questions), is a central text of classical Chinese medicine. As one of the earliest received classics of Chinese medicine, the *Yellow Thearch's Basic Questions* is foundational for understanding the worldview and therapeutic approach to health and well-being underlying both classical Chinese medicine and specific Daoist traditions.

The *Yellow Thearch's Basic Questions*, usually translated as the *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine: Simple Questions*, is a seminal text of classical Chinese medicine, the standardized and systematized medical approach that developed under the Han dynasty (Early: 202 B.C.E.-9 C.E.; Later: 25-221 C.E.). As the title indicates, the text is associated with Huangdi 黃帝 (Yellow Thearch/Yellow Emperor). The Yellow Thearch is one of three ancient “thearchs” (*di* 帝) from China's pre-dynastic or pre-historical period, which in order of succession are as follows: (1) Fu Xi 伏羲; (2) Shen Nong 神農; and (3) Huangdi 黃帝 (Yellow Thearch). Mythologically speaking, the Yellow Thearch is said to have been the son of Shao Dian 少典. His family name was Gongsun 公孫 and his personal name was Xuanyuan 軒轅. He is also known by the name Youxiong 有熊.<sup>1</sup> Said to have reigned from 2696 to 2598 B.C.E., he was given the title

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<sup>1</sup> This “biographical information” appears in the first chapter of Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 B.C.E.) and Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (145-86? B.C.E.) *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian).

of “Yellow Di” because his reign rested on the forces of soil and because the color of soil is yellow. The Yellow Thearch has been ascribed various qualities during different periods of Chinese history, and is in turn many things to many people. In a more general sense, he is seen as the founder of Chinese civilization itself. As time went by, the figure of the Yellow Thearch became a representative of political philosophy, medical knowledge, longevity techniques, sexology lore, and divine sovereignty. In the context of the *Yellow Thearch’s Basic Questions*, the Yellow Thearch embodies each of these aspects of Chinese cultural memory as well as the search for knowledge, especially knowledge concerning health, healing, and longevity, more generally.<sup>2</sup>

Although the *Yellow Thearch’s Basic Questions* is traditionally ascribed to the Yellow Thearch, it is an anonymous work that clearly contains textual layers from a variety of historical periods. This is most likely true of not only the chapters themselves, but also various passages within each chapter. In his *Huang Di nei jing su wen: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text* (2003), Paul Unschuld traces the history of early editions and commentaries through the eventual establishment of the “textus receptus” of the extant *Basic Questions*. In terms of the various historical and textual layers, the *Basic Questions* is a compilation of fragmentary texts written, collected, and edited by an unknown number of individuals in a period lasting from about the second

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<sup>2</sup> The received *Yellow Thearch’s Basic Questions* contains a variety of textual and historical layers. The context of composition for the various chapters is unclear at the present time. For some insights see Unschuld 2003.

century B.C.E. to the second century C.E. The received text also contains philosophical strata, such as the yin-yang and Five Phases doctrine of systematic correspondence, whose beginnings are at least as early as the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. In addition as the text has been edited throughout Chinese history, it also contains material from probably as late as the eighth century C.E.

The *Yellow Thearch's Inner Classic: Basic Questions* is part of a family of texts that contain the primary title of *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 (Yellow Thearch's Inner Classic). In addition to the *Suwen* 素問 (Basic Questions),<sup>3</sup> the first two chapters of which are translated in the present handbook, the “Yellow Thearch's inner classics” include the *Huangdi neijing lingshu* 黃帝內經靈樞 (Yellow Thearch's Inner Classic: Numinous Pivot; DZ 1020), abbreviated as *Lingshu* 靈樞 (Numinous Pivot),<sup>4</sup> and the less well-known *Huangdi neijing taisu* 黃帝內經太素 (Yellow Thearch's Inner Classic: Great Foundations), abbreviated as *Taisu* 太素 (Great Foundations).<sup>5</sup> These are the earliest extant texts that express a standardized and

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<sup>3</sup> Selections of the *Suwen* have been translated into English by Veith 1972; Larre and Rochat de la Vallée 1987; Larre 1994; Ni 1995. There is also a forthcoming three-volume translation currently in preparation by Paul Unschuld and Hermann Tessenow (see Unschuld 2003, x).

<sup>4</sup> There are two available English translations of the *Lingshu*: Ki 1985 and Wu 1993. Chapter eight has also been translated by Larre and Rochat de la Vallée (1992).

<sup>5</sup> Selections from the *Taisu* have been translated in Unschuld 1985, which also includes selections from a wide variety of primary Chinese medical source material (see Komjathy 2003, 13, n. 35).

systematized medical and therapeutic approach.<sup>6</sup> In the Yellow Thearch's inner classics, we find a complex and integrated system employing a classical Chinese worldview and advocating preventative self-regulation as well as interventionist forms of therapy such as acupuncture, moxibustion (burning powdered mugwort on the skin), and herbs, although primary emphasis is placed on acupuncture. In addition to these texts, three other early important works must be mentioned in terms of classical Chinese medicine: the *Nanjing* 難經 (Classic of Difficult Issues), *Shanghan lun* 傷寒論 (On Cold-Induced Disorders), and *Shennong bencao jing* 神農本草經 (Shennong's Classic of Herbology). The *Classic of Difficult Issues*, composed in the first century C.E., consists of eighty-one "chapters" on eighty-one specific issues (*nan* 難), which are structured as dialogues of one or more sets of questions and answers. These questions often revolve around passages from the Yellow Thearch's inner classics. *The Classic of Difficult Issues* covers various aspects of Chinese medicine, including a codified system of correspondences focusing on yin-yang and the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行).<sup>7</sup> The *Shanghan lun*, composed and edited

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<sup>6</sup> We also have the "non-canonical" medical manuscripts found at Mawangdui 馬王堆 (near Changsha; Hunan), which are datable to at least 168 B.C.E. These manuscripts often employ a "demonological view" of disease and an "exorcistic approach" to therapy. They also provide early examples of concerns that were absorbed into the latter Daoist tradition, such as "abstinence from grains" (*quegu* 卻穀; *bigu* 避穀). A critical study and translation of the Mawangdui medical manuscripts may be found in Harper 1998.

<sup>7</sup> For an English translation and critical discussion of the *Nanjing* See Unschuld 1986a.



between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries C.E., is the oldest extant Chinese medical classic on externally contracted disease (*waigan bing* 外感病). It presents a systematized body of knowledge on the origin and development of such diseases and their treatments, specifically through the use of herbology and medicinal formulas. The title refers to illnesses contracted via external pathogenic factors, especially those relating to cold (*han* 寒) and wind-cold (*hanfeng* 寒風).<sup>8</sup> Finally, the *Shennong bencao jing* is the earliest extant work on herbology or “pharmacology.” Possibly composed as early as the first century C.E., but first attested to with certainty in the literature registry of the Sui (589-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, the received *Shennong bencao jing* was prepared by the famous Daoist Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536), most well-known in Daoist history for collecting and editing the *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected; DZ 1016) and establishing a quasi-monastic community on Maoshan 茅山 (Mount Mao; in present day Nanjing). The title refers to the mythological Chinese culture hero Shennong 神農, the Divine Husbandman, who is credited with the development of agriculture in China.<sup>9</sup>

All of Yellow Thearch's inner classics express and develop the systematization of what may be referred to as “classical Chinese cosmology.” Standardized during the Early Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-9 C.E), this system incorporates yin-yang 陰陽 and Five Phase (*wuxing* 五行) cosmologies. These originally-distinct cosmologies

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<sup>8</sup> An English translation of the *Shanghan lun* may be found in Mitchell et al. 1999.

<sup>9</sup> A translation of a text by this name appears in Yang 1998.

were reconciled into a complementary system by Zou Yan 鄒衍 (ca. 305-240 B.C.E.). Etymologically speaking, yin 陰 depicts a hill (*fu* 阜) covered by shadows (*yin* 衾), while yang 陽 depicts a hill (*fu* 阜) covered by sunlight (*yang* 暉). At the root-meaning level, yin and yang are ways of speaking about the same place at different times/moments of the day. Yin and yang are not “polar opposites” or antagonistic substances; they are in fact, complementary principles, aspects, or forces. As the characters suggest, yin and yang are used to represent different dimensions of the same phenomena or situation. By extension, there are various associations: yin/ female/ earth/ dark/ heavy/ turbidity/ rest and yang/ male/heavens/ light/ light/ clarity/ activity.<sup>10</sup> At times, “yin” is used to designate negative or harmful aspects of life more generally (immorality, ugliness, disease, etc.), while “yang” becomes related to positive or beneficial aspects of life (morality, beauty, health, etc.).<sup>11</sup> When a heart-mind conditioned by discrimination, absolutist thinking, and

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<sup>10</sup> In the context of a classical Chinese worldview, the human being was understood to consist of two “souls,” the ethereal or cloud soul (*hun* 魂) and the corporeal or white soul (*po* 魄). The former was yang in nature and associated with the heavens and spirit, while the latter was yin in nature and associated with the earth and the body/bones. That is, an eternal soul was not an ontological given. At death, the *hun* ascended and eventually dissipated into the heavens, while the *po* descended and eventually decomposed into the earth. Thus, early Daoist views of death involved a “disintegration” model, wherein the human being was understood to disappear into (merge with) the cosmos at death.

<sup>11</sup> Thus “ghosts” (*gui* 鬼) and “demons” (*mo* 魔) are categorized as “yin” and often considered “malevolent.” However, from a more encompassing perspective, these beings are simply unresolved or obstructed qi-patterns. They, too, have the possibility to be transformed (*bianhua* 變化).

hyper-critical approaches encounters a worldview based on yin-yang, much confusion may arise. The desire and conditioned expectation for this and not that, for good opposed to evil, obstructs the recognition of subtlety and interrelationship. Thus we find the following passage concerning debate in chapter two of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang):

“Suppose you and I have had an argument. If you have defeated me instead of me defeating you, then are you necessarily right and am I necessarily wrong? Is one of us right and the other wrong? If I have defeated you instead of you defeating me, then am I necessarily right and are you necessarily wrong? Is one of us right and the other wrong? If you and I don't know the answer, then other people are bound to be even more in the dark. Whom shall we get to decide what is right? Shall we get someone who agrees with you to decide? But if he already agrees with you, how can he decide fairly? Shall we get someone who agrees with me? But if he already agrees with me, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who disagrees with both of us? But if he already disagrees with both of us, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who agrees with both of us? But if he already agrees with both of us, how can he decide? Obviously, then, neither you nor I nor anyone else can decide for each other” (Watson 1968, 48)

Regarding yin and yang, what must be emphasized is that these are relative associations, not absolute characteristics. Just because women are considered “yin” in one respect or in one context, it does not

follow that they are also “immoral” or “turbid” There are also varying degrees of yin and yang in every phenomenon, in each moment or experience, and in every being. Moreover, in the context of a classical Chinese worldview in general and Daoism in particular, life is seen as depending on the mutually beneficial interaction of yin and yang.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we find the following passage in chapter forty-two of the *Daodejing* 道德經 (Scripture on the Dao and Inner Power):

The Dao generated the One (*yi* 一);  
The One generated the two (*er* 二);  
The two generated the three (*san* 三);  
The three generated the ten thousand beings (*wanwu* 萬物).  
The ten thousand beings carry yin 陰 and embrace yang 陽,  
And it is the empty qi (*chongqi* 沖氣) that harmonizes these.

Or in an alternative rendering:

The Dao generates unity;  
Unity generates duality;  
Duality generates trinity;  
Trinity generates all being,

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<sup>12</sup> This, of course, is an oversimplification. The Daoist tradition often identified certain aspects of existence, whether external or internal, as “yin” in the sense of harmful, and in turn viewed them as sources of dissipation and disruption. For example, there are the so-called Three Corpses/Death-bringers (*sanshi* 三尸) or Three Worms (*sanchong* 三蟲), often associated with the three elixir fields (*dantian* 丹田), which are said to feed on grains and deplete human vitality. Their primary motivation is to exhaust the adept and cause premature death.

The myriad beings carry yin and embrace yang,  
And it is the empty qi that harmonizes these.

This passage is often linked with a more elaborate description of cosmogony, or the origin of the cosmos, found in chapter three of the *Huainanzi*), 淮南子 (Book of the Masters of Huainan; DZ 1184), which is entitled “Tianwen xun” 天文訓 (Discourse on Celestial Patterns).

When Heaven and Earth were yet unformed,  
All was ascending and flying, diving and delving.  
Thus it was called the Great Inception.  
The Dao began in the Nebulous Void.  
The Nebulous Void produced spacetime;  
Spacetime produced the primordial qi.  
A shoreline (divided) the primordial qi.  
That which was pure and bright spread out to form Heaven;  
Then the heavy and turbid congealed to form Earth.  
(Major 1993, 62)

In terms of the origins of the manifest universe, or the present cosmic epoch, the Dao represents primordial undifferentiation or pure potentiality. In a pre-manifest “state,” the Dao is an incomprehensible and unrepresentable before. The Dao thus relates to original qi (*yuanyi* 元氣), the “energy” of “the beginning not yet beginning to be a beginning” (*you weishi you you shi* 有未始有有始; ZZ ch. 2).<sup>13</sup> Through a spontaneous, unintentional, and impersonal process of

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<sup>13</sup> This cosmological depiction also appears at the beginning of chapter two of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (Book of the Masters of Huainan).

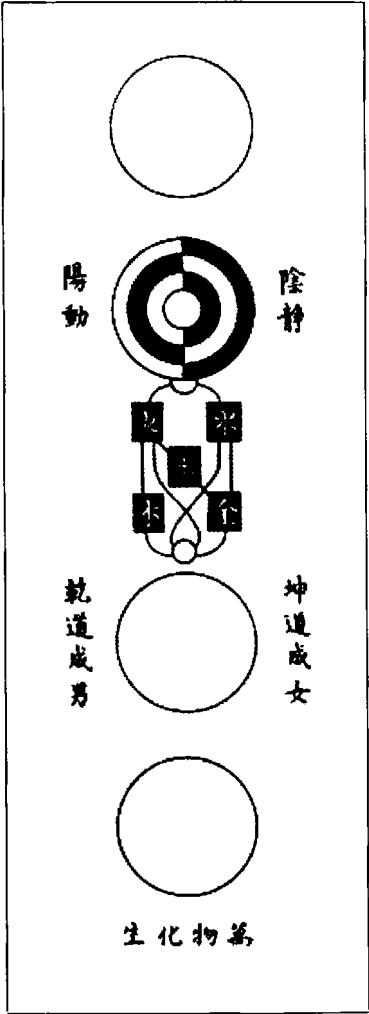
unfolding or differentiation, this undifferentiation became the One or unity. That is, even unity or the wholeness of Being-before-being is not the Dao in its ultimate sense. The One represents the first moment or stage of differentiation. From this unity, separation occurs. In the next phase of differentiation, the one divides into two, yin and yang. Here yin also relates to terrestrial qi or the qi of the earth (*diqu* 地氣), while yang relates to celestial qi or the qi of the heavens (*tianqi* 天氣). At this moment yin and yang have not yet formed patterns of interaction. The interaction of yin and yang is referred to as “three;” this moment involves yin and yang in dynamic and continual interaction, resulting in further differentiation.<sup>14</sup> This further differentiation leads to the emergence of materiality as well as more individualized beings and forces, including human beings (*ren* 人). Human beings, as *homo erectus*, are seen as the life-form with the clearest capacity to connect the heavens and the earth. In the later Daoist tradition, these three (the heavens, earth, and human beings) are referred to as the “Three Powers” (*sancai* 三才).<sup>15</sup> The emphasis on alignment (*zheng* 正) and throughness (*tong* 通) is clear in the reference to the dynamic interaction of yin and yang as Taiji 太極, which literally means the “Great Ridgepole,” or the “Great Ultimate”

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<sup>14</sup> In the later Daoist tradition, and in the contemporary Longmen 龍門 (Dragon Gate) sect specifically, “three,” as the primary yang number (thus 9 [3x3] as redoubled yang), also becomes represented/manifested in the “gods” of the Sanqing 三清 (Three Purities/Three Pure Ones).

<sup>15</sup> In the Daoist tradition, the *locus classicus* for the Three Powers is the *Yinfu jing* 陰符經 (Scripture on the Hidden Talisman; DZ 31): “Heaven and earth steal from the ten thousand beings;/The ten thousand beings steal from humanity;/Humanity steals from the ten thousand beings. When the Three Bandits are correctly ordered,/The Three Powers are then at peace” (1b).

by extension. Thus, we have the famous *Taiji tu* 太極圖 (Diagram of Taiji) attributed to the Neo-Confucian Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073).



Etymologically speaking, *ji* 極 is the “ridgepole” or the center beam in an architectural structure. Applied to yin and yang, it suggests both distinction/separation (a center dividing point) and connection/unification (a center meeting point). This cosmogonic and cosmological process, involving yin and yang in continual, creative interaction, is not just in the past; it also represents the context of being and becoming, the unending process which is the world and being-in-the-world. Such an “emanationist cosmogony/cosmology” also reveals how and why the Daoist belief in deities and spirits does not contradict the view of the Dao as unnamable mystery and original source. “Theologically speaking,” if the Dao is both immanent and transcendent, neither immanent nor transcendent, then there is no necessary distinction between “nature” and “gods.” 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 which is the Dao.

The Yellow Thearch's inner classics also employ, emphasize, and systematize Five Phase (*wuxing* 五行) cosmology. Conventionally rendered as “Five Elements,” *wuxing* literally means something like “five activities” or “five movements.” This dynamic and process-orientated aspect becomes more satisfactorily rendered in the designation of “Five Phases.” The Five Phases are Wood (*mu* 木), Fire (*huo* 火), Earth (*tu* 土), Metal (*jin* 金), and Water (*shui* 水). While these five do, in fact, relate to actual substances as well as



related phenomena and energetic qualities of the “phases,”<sup>16</sup> the system is much more complex and dynamic than “elements” would lead one to believe. The Five Phases are the centerpiece of the so-called “system of correspondences” or “systematic correspondence.” Also referred to as “naturalistic medicine,”<sup>17</sup> this system of correspondences consists of the following associations (phase/

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<sup>16</sup> In the context of a qi-based worldview, centering as it does on “energy” as the fundamental aspect of all phenomena, it is problematic to speak of “substance” in any way except as conventional and contingent. Everything consists of qi in varying degrees of differentiation and substantiation. Thus, everything may be mapped along a spectrum of qi, from the most substantial to the most subtle.

<sup>17</sup> Developing Paul Unschuld's typology of Chinese medical history (Unschuld 1985), one may identify a number of diverse approaches to illness and their related therapeutic responses in terms of distinct models. These include ancestral medicine, demonological medicine, naturalistic medicine, moralistic medicine, and soteriological medicine. Each one of these is associated with a particular cause of illness (ancestors, demons, climatic influences, moral transgression, suffering as an ontological given) and therapeutic response (recognition/pacification, exorcism/ritualistic intervention, harmonization/purgation, confession/religious intervention, elimination/liberation). Such approaches emerged during specific moments of Chinese history and are often associated with particular religious “traditions”: Shang dynasty (ca. 1550-1030 B.C.E.)/ancestor worship, Zhou dynasty (ca. 1030-222 B.C.E.)/wu 巫 (“shaman”)-oriented communities and *fangshi* 方士 (“formula master”) magico-religious practitioner lineages, Early Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-9 C.E.) Cosmologists and Ruists (Confucians), Later Han dynasty (25-221 C.E.)/early Daoism, and Six Dynasties (265-581)/Buddhism. Such a linear historical mapping may suggest progression, but these diverse approaches to illness continued to co-exist throughout Chinese history.

season/ emblem/ direction/ life-stage/ orientation/ climate/ orbs/  
spiritual dimension/ color/ flavor/ odor/ sound/ beneficial emotion/  
injurious emotion/ sense organ/ grain/ planet/ tissue):

(1) Wood: spring: Azure Dragon: east: birth: outward: wind:  
liver/gall bladder: ethereal soul (*hun* 魂) ; azure: sour: rancid:  
shouting: humaneness: anger: eyes: wheat: Jupiter: ligaments.

(2) Fire: summer: Vermillion Bird: south: adolescence:  
upward: heat: heart/small intestine: spirit (*shen* 神) ; red:  
bitter: scorched: laughing: respect: excessive joy: tongue:  
beans: Mars: arteries;

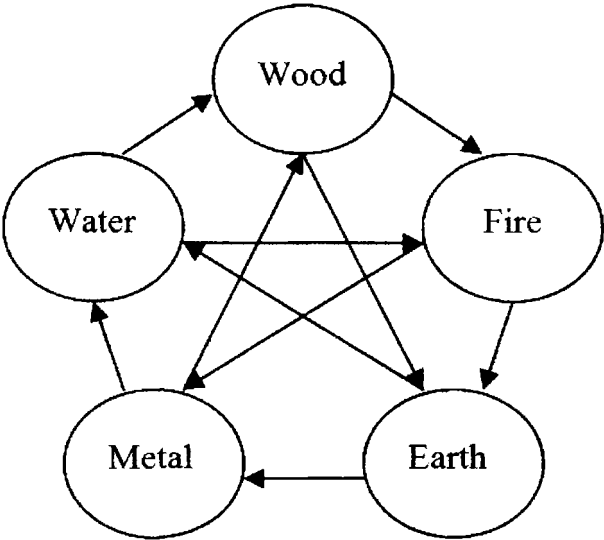
(3) Earth: late summer: —: center: adulthood: centering:  
dampness: spleen/stomach: intention (*yi* 意) ; yellow: sweet:  
fragrant: singing: honesty: worry: mouth: rice: Saturn:  
muscles;

(4) Metal: autumn: White Tiger: west: maturation: inward:  
dryness: lungs/large intestine: corporeal soul (*po* 魄) ; white:  
pungent: rotten: weeping: righteousness: grief: nose: oats:  
Venus: skin and hair;

(5) Water: winter: Mysterious Warrior: north: old-age:  
downward: cold: kidneys/bladder: vital essence (*jing* 精) ;  
black: salty: putrid: groaning: wisdom: fear: ears: millet:  
Mercury: bones.

The Five Phases, including their various associations, are, in turn,  
understood to relate to each other in patterns of dynamic  
interaction. The so-called “production cycle” is as follows: Wood->  
Fire-> Earth-> Metal-> Water-> Wood->. Then there is the  
“destruction cycle”: Wood-> Water-> Metal-> Earth-> Fire->

Wood->. Finally, there is the “control cycle”: Wood-> Earth-> Water-> Fire-> Metal-> Wood->. In contemporary Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM),<sup>18</sup> these sequences are most often represented as a circle (the production cycle) with a pentagram inside (the control cycle).



Generally speaking, the *Basic Questions* emphasizes a preventative approach to health and well-being, while the *Numinous Pivot* centers

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<sup>18</sup> Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is the contemporary form of Chinese medicine practiced in mainland China, other East Asian countries, and the West. It was created under the direction of the Chinese Communist government and attempts to “modernize” Chinese medicine to be more consistent with modern Western (allopathic/scientific) views on disease and viable therapeutic approaches.

on an interventionist response to disease. “Sages (*shengren* 聖人) do not regulate diseases (*bing* 病) after they are already a disease. They regulate them before they arise. They do not regulate disorder (*han* 亂) after it is already disorder. They regulate it before it is disorder. This is what we mean” (ch. 2). The *Basic Questions* provides principles, guidelines, and models for living in harmony with the larger seasonal and cosmic cycles. The text is fundamentally about how to live well, which herein means a regulated and harmonious life that recognizes the larger context of one's being. In some sense, the *Basic Questions* contains an ecological worldview, emphasizing interconnection and larger patterns of influence and dependency. The text advocates attentiveness to internal and external cycles, which affect one's overall health, well-being, and spiritual alignment. It is delusion to believe that one is unaffected by and independent from ever-expanding spheres of relationship: familial, communal, cultural, regional, national, global, and cosmological. For example, how can lunar cycles shift oceanic tides and not influence internal human conditions? The *Basic Questions* documents the basic constituents and subtle physiology of human beings and the ways in which these are affected by larger cycles. In terms of content, we find chapters on yin and yang, seasonal qi cycles, the organ and meridian systems, bodily substances (essence, qi, fluids, blood, etc.), disease typology and classification, etc. Developing the naturalistic view of health and well-being, the *Numinous Pivot* is a more technical manual for therapeutic responses to disease. From one perspective, the *Numinous Pivot* is about what physicians should do when people do not follow the guidelines advocated in the *Basic Questions* or when unexpected and unpreventable health problems occur. The text contains technical material on acupuncture, moxibustion, and rudimentary herbology.

Moreover, it provides information on types of needles and needling techniques. In terms of content, we find chapters on the organ and meridian systems, disease typology and classification, questions and recommendations for patients, disease transmission, bodily substances, various detrimental influences, types of needles and needling techniques, etc.

The *Yellow Thearch's Basic Questions*, as contained in the Ming-dynasty (1368-1644) Daoist Canon (DZ 1018), consists of fifty chapters. This version, with various layers of commentary, is based on the editions of Wang Bing 王冰 (fl. 760) of the Tang dynasty (618-906) and of Lin Yi 林億 (fl. 1050) and Sun Guangzhong 孫光重 (fl. 1050) of the Song dynasty (Northern: 960-1126; Southern: 1127-1279). According to Unschuld (2003), much of the primary editorial work and content analysis of the received *Basic Questions* originates with Wang Bing. Wang Bing not only rearranged the structure of the text, but also added more than five thousand commentaries, quoting a total of 536 passages from thirty-eight texts. Along with editors such as Quan Yuanqi 全元起 (fl. 620) and Yang Shangshan 楊上善 (fl. 670), Wang also brought dialogical and non-dialogical discourses together or rearranged them without attempting to superimpose one coherent structure on them. By the eleventh century, when Wang Bing's edition received its final editorial form, almost all of the commentaries were discernable through the use of large characters for the main text and small characters for the commentarial layers.<sup>19</sup> It is

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<sup>19</sup> The textual history of the received *Basic Questions* is much more complicated than this brief account suggests. For those with the interest, Unschuld provides a highly detailed discussion (2003, 22-75).

also interesting to note that Wang Bing, probably the most influential editor of the received text, had a strong interest in Daoism. In his preface, Wang Bing remarks, “In my youth I longed for the Dao. I continually strove to nourish life (*yangsheng* 養生).” He also quotes extensively from the *Laozi* 老子 (Book of Venerable Masters) and *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang), especially in his comments on the first few sections of the text (see Unschuld 2003, 48-51).

Of the seventy-nine discourses constituting the most standard edition of the *Basic Questions*, sixty-eight are structured as dialogues between Huangdi 黃帝 (Yellow Thearch) and a given adviser/teacher. In the received text, these include Qi Bo 岐伯 (60 dialogues), Lei Gong (7 dialogues), and Gui Yuqu (1 dialogue). A similar dialogic pattern is found in the *Numinous Pivot*. In addition to Qi Bo and Lei Gong, its dialogue partners include Bo Gao 伯高, Shao Shi 少師, and Shao Yu 少俞.<sup>20</sup> As the numbers indicate, Qi Bo is the central pedagogical figure in the *Basic Questions*.

In the first two chapters translated in the present handbook “Shanggu tianzhen lun” 上古天真論 (Discourse on Celestial Perfection of High Antiquity) and “Siqi diaoshen lun” 四氣調神論 (Discourse on

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<sup>20</sup> Following Tessenow, Unschuld argues that most of the dialogues were the work of compilers who constructed them as a device to link originally separate texts. “The questions and answers put in the mouths of Huang Di and his partners allowed them [these compilers] to provide introductions and transitions from one theme to another. Only in a few instances... should the dialogue be considered a structural characteristic of the primary text” (Unschuld 2003, 8-9). Nonetheless, there can be no denying the subsequent and enduring influence of the dialogue structure.

Harmonizing Spirit with the Four Qi), the text begins by emphasizing the Yellow Thearch's innate divine capacities and the divine context of the transmissions contained in the *Basic Questions*.

In ancient times, there was the Yellow Thearch. When born, he had spiritual numinosity (*shenling* 神靈). When an infant, he was able to speak. When a child, he was aligned and regulated. When older, he was sincere and pervasive. After he became completed (*cheng* 成), he ascended to the heavens (*dengtian* 登天). There he addressed the Celestial Master (*tianshi* 天師) saying...

This passage follows the opening statements in the “biography” of the Yellow Thearch found in the first chapter of the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian). Here the text suggests that the Yellow Thearch had innate capacities (“spiritual numinosity”) and that he actualized (“completed”) this potential or fulfilled this life-destiny (*ming* 命). The implication is that some type of practice/realization is involved. After this training, he ascends to the heavens. Note that the text does not say anything about “death” (*si* 死) or “departing” (*qu* 去). This immediately recalls the Daoist notion of “ascending to the heavens in broad daylight,” a form of immortality relating to “deliverance from the corpse” (*shijie* 尸解). After the Yellow Thearch arrives at this celestial location, he meets the Tianshi 天師 (Celestial Master) Qi Bo. On the most basic level, this opening passage establishes the context for the received *Basic Questions*: it contains divinely revealed and transmitted guidelines that emerge in and from the heavens. For anyone familiar with the history of the Daoist tradition, the reference to the “Celestial Master” invokes the Daoist Celestial Masters

movement, which originated in revelations from Laojun 老君 (Lord Lao) to Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (fl. 140 C.E.?) in 142 C.E. At the present time, due to questions concerning dating and issues of crosspollination, it is difficult to know the relationship of this passage of the *Basic Questions* to the Celestial Masters tradition. It is also difficult to know whether or not the phrase “Celestial Master” is an editorial or scribal interpolation. What is clear is that the parallels are undeniable in the above passage. Both traditions emphasize a narrative based in divine revelations to a foundering figure, who is, in turn, identified as a “listener” first and a “transmitter” second.<sup>21</sup>

As the titles suggest, the first two chapters of the *Basic Questions* center on one's inherent alignment (*zheng* 正) with the Dao and the necessity of harmonizing (*he* 和/*diao* 調) and according with (*cong* 從) larger seasonal and cosmological patterns (*wen* 文 / 理). The first chapter emphasizes “celestial perfection” (*tianzhen* 天真), which here means both one's original endowment from the Dao and one's commitment to self-regulation and realization. If one were to speak about this in terms of the later Daoist tradition, one could utilize the

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<sup>21</sup> Such a person is a *shengren* 聖人, most often rendered as “sage.” The character *sheng* 聖 (“sacred”) contains the radicals for “ear” (*er* 耳) and “mouth” (*kou* 口). With reference to this character, Izutsu has commented, “[The] term designates a man, endowed with an unusually keen ear, who is capable of hearing the voice of a super-natural being, god or spirit, and understands directly the will or intention of the latter” (1984, 301). 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 divine connection and such expression then resonates with others.



notions of “innate nature” (*xing* 性) and “life-destiny” (*ming* 命). Daoist cultivation lineages following a “quietistic approach” recognize that one is originally and fundamentally “perfect” (*zhen* 真). By embracing simplicity (*baopu* 抱樸) and abiding in suchness (*ziran* 自然), one recognizes that dissipation and disharmony only emerge when one neglects the self-regulating and self-rectifying capacity inherent in being. Both consciousness (“innate nature”) and corporeality (“life-destiny”) are inherently well.

The second chapter focuses on “harmonizing spirit” (*diaoshen* 調神) with the “four qi” (*siqi* 四氣). Here spirit (*shen* 神) relates to the most subtle or “divine” aspect of one's being. Spirit is associated with the heart-mind (*xin* 心) and “consciousness” in a more general sense. The heart-mind is often considered the center (*zhong* 中) or ruler (*zhu* 主 / *wang* 王) of human beings and relates to spirit, the “divine” or “sacred” capacity of human beings to connect with and manifest the Dao as Source. While the heart-mind in its habituated and desire-filled state is seen as a potential source of dissipation, in its more refined condition it contains the capacity for spiritual realization and mystical unification. Thus the *Basic Questions* provides the following instructions: “Abiding in calmness and contentment, emptiness and nonbeing, the perfect qi (*zhenqi* 真氣) is in accord. When vital essence (*jing* 精) and spirit (*shen* 神) are guarded internally (*neishou* 內守), how can disease arise?” The four qi refer to the energetic qualities and patterns of the “four seasons” (*sishi* 四時): spring, summer, autumn, and winter. While the *Basic Questions* only discusses these four time periods, one must also consider the importance of attending to the needs of the Earth phase, which is usually associated with the center and either the period between each

season or “Indian Summer” (late summer). Because of its association with the center, the Earth phase is often identified with stillness and rootedness. Attentiveness to the Earth phase recognizes its various associations, including the primary importance of the spleen-stomach network for digestion. The spleen and stomach in turn relate to “post-natal” or “posterior heaven” (*houtian* 後天) qi, which is differentiated from “pre-natal” or “anterior heaven” (*xiantian* 先天) qi. The latter is the qi that one receives from the universe and one's ancestors (pre-birth influences), while the former is the qi that one receives through one's own life (post-birth influences). In particular, air and respiration, associated with the lungs, as well as food and digestion, associated with the spleen, are the two primary sources of post-natal qi.

The first two chapters of the *Basic Questions* also emphasize conservation and harmonization. When expressed in a vague way like “be natural,” such guidelines can easily be scoffed at and dismissed out of hand or seen as justification for some unregulated (“spontaneous” [read: egocentric and libertine]) way of life. But when considered from an energetic and “astro-geomantic” perspective and knowledge-base,<sup>22</sup> various influences and networks become visible. In terms of the view expressed in the *Basic Questions*, the most fundamental form of harmonization begins with the body-self. One regulates one's eating, drinking, sexual activity, and sleeping. One

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<sup>22</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the phrase “astro-geomancy” was first coined by Peter Nickerson (1997) in his contribution to Stephen Bokenkamp's *Early Daoist Scriptures* (1997). See pages 239-46. “Astro-geomancy” as employed in the present discussion relates to the energetic qualities of place, from the perspective of both region and locality (Fengshui 風水/Geomancy) as well as space and time (astronomy/astrology).

also becomes attuned to the internal circulation of qi, the condition and tendencies of the orbs (organs), and the overall condition of one's being. The next sphere of influence is one's immediate place; this relates to relationships, communal influences, as well as locality and region. These involve the possibility of "invasion" and disruption by external pathogenic influences (EPs). The first two chapters of the *Basic Questions* clearly understand such causes of disease (*bing* 病) as relating to one's own way of life and naturalistic harmful influences.<sup>23</sup> The latter includes the so-called "six climatic influences" (*liuqi* 六氣): wind (*feng* 風), dryness (*gan* 乾), dampness (*shi* 濕), cold (*han* 寒), summer heat (*shure* 暑熱) or heat (*re* 熱), and fire (*huo* 火) (see also ch. 8; chs. 66-74). A more complete understanding also recognizes other influences, such as vacuity (*xu* 虛), noxious influences (*xie* 邪牙), injurious winds (*zeifeng* 賊風), and wind-cold (*hanfeng* 寒風). That is, specific natural phenomena have the capacity to disrupt one's internal equilibrium and health, giving rise to disease. From a practical perspective, this means that, in addition to self-regulation and energetic strengthening, one avoids exposure to such potentially harmful influences. For instance, Daoist

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<sup>23</sup> According to Unschuld, "*Illness* is defined here as the primary experience, that is, the subjectively perceived feeling of indisposition that can lead to changes in behavior. *Disease*, by contrast, is a socially determined product, a conceptual reshaping of the primary experience of illness. Therefore, I characterize disease as a clearly defined deviation, within a specific set of ideas concerning the causation, character, and treatment of illness, from a normal state of human existence, however that normal state may be conceived. As a result, certain manifestations of illness, may, in different societies, be comprehended as completely different diseases" (Unschuld 1985, 19; italics in original).

adepts frequently emphasize not exposing oneself to strong winds, heavy rain, and snow. If one must travel or move in such conditions, certain precautions are taken, such as covering the neck, lower back/kidneys, and shoulders with extra insulation. This involves the more general understanding that the lower body is associated yin and thus may be especially affected by cold and dampness, while the upper body is associated yang and thus may be especially affected by heat and wind.<sup>24</sup> More specifically, dampness may easily affect the feet and ankles, cold the knees and lower back, and wind the upper back, neck, and head.

In a more positive sense, one attempts to live in more nourishing environments, such as mountains, forests and near streams, and become aware of the energetic qualities of place. There are a number of dimensions to this, including “ecological” and cosmological aspects. With regard to the former, one recognizes the effects of “landscape,” the places within which one is located and the communities within which one participates. Generally speaking, “natural places” contain a cleaner and more refined energetic quality. Locations with specific attributes, mountains, streams, woods, wildlife, etc., are most beneficial for human flourishing and harmonization. More specifically, there are types of mountains, trees, birds, etc., which each have a particular quality and influence. For example, pine trees have a strong yang quality, including a powerful

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<sup>24</sup> These correspondences are, of course, contingent. The body is also mapped according to other yin-yang associations: the inside of the arms and legs as yin, the outside as yang; the front of the body as yin, the back as yang; etc.

upward movement. For someone with a tendency towards stagnation, it may be beneficial to live among pines. However, for someone with a tendency towards liver-yang rising and headaches, pine trees can exacerbate such conditions. Cosmologically speaking, the most easily observable and recognizable patterns involve the seasons and the sun and moon cycles. Following the seasonal cycles, means becoming attentive to and resonating with their energetic qualities. Spring is associated with birth (*sheng* 生) and an outward energetic direction. Summer is associated with development (*chang* 長) and an upward energetic direction. Autumn is associated with harvesting (*shou* 收) and an inward energetic direction. Winter is associated with storing (*cang* 藏) and a downward energetic direction. Agriculturally speaking, and note that the Daoist tradition frequently emphasizes “internal cultivation” (*neixiu* 内修), spring is the time to plant seeds, summer to allow maturation, autumn to harvest, and winter to store.

By extension, as spring is associated with the Wood phase and thus with anger, such “psychological” aspects of one's being often become manifest and more pronounced during spring. This is also true of excessive joy/hysteria in summer, grief in autumn, and fear/depression in winter. To neglect attending to these patterns is to “lose one's time.” Thus Daoists follow the seasonal cycles both externally and internally.

Similarly, the phases of the sun and moon occupy a central place in Daoist practice that is attentive to astro-geomantic influences. For instance, one becomes aware of and connected with the lunar cycles. In particular, the new and full moon are important energetic times in Daoist cultivation and ritual. Both moments have a refined and highly

beneficial frequency. When these “effluences” or “luminosities” are infused and circulated through the body, a more cosmological being develops. The seasonal and cosmological cycles may also be mapped according to the so-called “double-hours” or time associations of the “terrestrial branches” (*dizhi* 地支). These correspond to specific hours and related yin-orbs (*zang* 藏/臟; “storehouses”) and yang-orbs (*fu* 府; “receptacles”). Chinese medicine normally begins the time cycle with the double-hour *yin* (\*), the time of the lungs, as this is the beginning of “life” and the qi cycle.

Zi 子	11 pm-1 am	Gall Bladder
Chou 丑	1am-3am	Liver
*Yin 寅	3am-5am	Lungs
Mao 卯	5am-7am	Large Intestine
Chen 辰	7am-9am	Stomach
Si 巳	9am-11 am	Spleen
Wu 午	11 am-1pm	Heart
Wei 未	1pm-3pm	Small Intestine
Shen 申	3 pm-5pm	Bladder
You 酉	5pm-7pm	Kidneys
Xu 戌	7pm-9pm	Pericardium
Hai 亥	9pm-11pm	Triple Burner

During these hours and alternate poles (e.g., *mao* with *you*), one is able to observe the overall condition, whether of harmony or disruption, of a given orb. Thus, spirit (*shen* 神) disturbances, associated with the heart and with the branch *wu*, often manifest between 11pm and 1am as insomnia and restlessness. Cosmologically speaking, Daoists also observe the so-called twenty-

four seasonal periods (*ershisi jie* 二十四節) and Eight Nodes (*bajie* 八節).<sup>25</sup> These periods may also be given an approximate date based on the Gregorian (Western) calendar. “Asterisks” (\*) indicate the Eight Nodes.

*Lichun 立春	Spring begins	February 5
Yushui 雨水	Rain water	February 19
Jingzhi 驚蟄	Excited insects	March 5
*Chunfen 春分	Vernal equinox	March 20
Qingming 清明	Clear brightness	April 5
Guyu 穀雨	Grain rain	April 20
*Lixia 立夏	Summer begins	May 5
Xiaoman 小滿	Slight fullness	May 21
Mangzhong 芒種	Bearded grain	June 6
*Xiazhi 夏至	Summer solstice	June 21
Xiaoshu 小暑	Slight heat	July 7
Dashu 大暑	Great heat	July 23
*Liqiu 立秋	Autumn begins	August 7
Chushu 處暑	Limit of heat	August 23
Bailu 白露	White dew	September 8
*Qiufen 秋分	Autumnal equinox	September 23
Hanlu 寒露	Cold dew	October 8
Shuangjiang 霜降	Frost descends	October 23
*Lidong 立冬	Winter begins	November 7

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<sup>25</sup> “Observation” (*guan* 觀) is a fundamental practice in the Daoist tradition. Interestingly, this character consists of *jian* 見 (“to see”) with *guan* 雉 (“egret”). The quality of observation is clear in the unmoving stance of an egret peering into water in order to perceive subtle presences. It is perhaps no coincidence that Daoist monasteries also are referred to with the character *guan* 觀 (“observatory”). On the Daoist meditation practice of internal observation (*neiguan* 內觀) see Kohn 1989.

Xiaoxue 小雪	Light snow	November 22
Daxue 大雪	Heavy snow	December 7
*Dongzhi 冬至	Winter solstice	December 21
Xiaohan 小寒	Slight cold	January 6
Dahan 大寒	Severe cold	January 21

While there are particular, observable qualities to each of these periods, and while each refers to an important time in a traditional agricultural cycle, the Eight Nodes receive particular emphasis in Daoist practice. The Eight Nodes refer to the beginning of the four seasons, the solstices, and the equinoxes. The energetic qualities of each of these cosmological moments is especially pronounced and influential.

While the categorization of the *Yellow Thearch's Basic Questions* as Daoist or Daoistic may be problematic in certain respects, especially with regard to its “original context of composition,” there can be little doubt that it has exerted a profound influence on the later Daoist tradition. The foundational view of health and well-being in Daoist self-cultivation lineages considered more generally parallels that expressed in the *Basic Questions* and related texts. Emphasis is placed on conservation, regulation, harmonization, and alignment.

In terms of the first chapter of the *Basic Questions*, “Celestial Perfection of High Antiquity,” this naturalistic view of health, healing, and longevity has often been misunderstood and misinterpreted. Read in a negative light, the chapter seems to express a patriarchal perspective on women's health and beauty. In particular, the chapter appears to suggest that women's health and physical appearance



reaches its peak at 28, begins to decline at 35, and is fully exhausted at 49. This view may be interpreted as an example of “Chinese prejudices and patriarchal attitudes” towards women. However, such readings ignore the contextual meaning of the chapter. Qi Bo, the teacher of the Yellow Thearch, is here making a distinction between patterns of conservation/regulation/harmonization and of dissipation/recklessness/disruption. Emphasis is being placed on “celestial perfection” (*tianzhen* 天真) in contrast to ordinary or habituated ways of life. The former recognizes the importance of self-cultivation and maintaining a connection with the Dao as naturalistic patterning and cosmological process, while the latter ignores such an orientation. The ignore-ant fail to acknowledge the various potential sources of dissipation: self-indulgence, relational disharmony, familial and societal pressures, and larger atmospheric and climatic extremes. In terms of the passages on the “normal life-spans” of men and women, Qi Bo is here speaking about the ordinary human being, the human being engaging in patterns of dissipation and neglect. Thus, the chapter ends with the Yellow Thearch recalling the transmission that he received concerning the “perfected” (*zhenren* 真人), those beings who have consciously cultivated a harmonious way of life: “I have heard that in high antiquity there were perfected beings (*zhenren*). They carried the heavens and earth and held yin and yang in their hands. They exhaled and inhaled vital essences (*jing* 精) and qi. In seclusion, they established themselves in guarding spirit (*shoushen* 守神). In their own skin and flesh they accorded with the One. Thus they were able to attain a longevity resembling the heavens and earth, a longevity that knows no end. Such were those who lived in and through the Dao.” This section of the *Basic Questions* is one of the

most eloquent expressions of an approach based on “nourishing life” (*yangsheng* 養生).

There is also some technical terminology in the *Basic Questions* that deserves mention. The first aspect requiring comment is the title of the text, *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問. As mentioned, Huangdi 黃帝 refers to the Yellow Thearch, a mythological “thearch” or emperor from China's pre-dynastic period. In its earliest usage Di 帝 refers to Shangdi 上帝 (Supreme Thearch), the high god and supreme ancestor of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1550-ca. 1030 B.C.E.). During the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1030-222 B.C.E.), the conception of Di as a personal being was becoming replaced by *tian* 天 (“heavens”) as an impersonal cosmological and naturalistic process. A thearch (thē/ər̩k) is a divine ruler. Like theophany (divine manifestation) and theology (study of divinity), thearch is derived from the Greek *théos*, meaning “god” and relating to divinity more generally. I have translated Di as “Thearch” to indicate the divine connotation of the term; “cosmocrat” might be a more liberal equivalent. In the context of the *Basic Questions*, Huangdi is a “thearch,” divine sovereign, in the sense of having ascended to the heavens and, at the same time, being concerned with the harmonious governing of the country, as both terrestrial and corporeal landscape. Although *neijing* 內經 is often translated as “classic of internal medicine,” this seems to be an unjustified interpretative leap. The more literal rendering of “inner classic” suggests that it is text to be transmitted and studied *within* a given community; it requires instruction and communal interpretation to be thoroughly understood. Finally, in the translation of *suwen* 素問 as “basic questions,” “basic” is understood in the sense of

fundamental and foundational (*ben* 本) (see also Unschuld 2003,8-21).

The *Basic Questions* understands the human being as consisting of various psycho-physiological dimensions. Emphasis is placed on vital essence (*jing* 精), subtle breath (*qi* 氣), and spirit (*shen* 神). In the later Daoist tradition, these three aspects of the body-self are referred to as the Three Treasures (*sanbao* 三寶). The character *jing* 精 consists of *mi* 米 (“rice”) and *qing* 青 (“azure” but also “pure”). Etymologically, it refers to young or unprocessed rice. By extension, it refers to the essence of things. In classical Chinese medicine, vital essence is understood as a more substantial aspect of *qi*, and *qi* is understood as a more subtle aspect of vital essence. Here vital essence relates to the actual physical foundation of health and vitality: seminal fluids (*jing* 精) in men and blood (*xue* 血) in women. The connection between vital essence and *qi* may also be understood etymologically: *qi* 氣 consists of *mi* 米 (“rice”) with *qi* 气 (“vapor” or “steam”). Both the characters for vital essence and *qi* contain the component for “rice.” As vital essence is rice in grain form, *qi* is rice in vapor form. Through the “cooking” (refining) of rice grain, steam is produced; through the cooking of vital essence, *qi* is produced. Finally, *shen* 神 relates to “spiritual dimensions” (*shi* 示), omens and similar divine manifestations, and the establishment and attendance to such a connection (*shen* 申). Spirit relates to consciousness and “divine” capacities more generally. The *Basic Questions* also identifies other “substances”: blood (*xue* 血), *ye-fluids* (*ye* 液), and jin-fluids (*jin* 津). In terms of classical Chinese medicine, *ye-fluids* are distributed to the yin-orbs (*zang* 藏 / 臟; storehouses) and yang-orbs (*fu* 府 / 腑; receptacles), bones and joints, brain and marrow, but do not flow with

the qi and blood. They are thick and viscous, move slowly, and function as a moistening lubricant and supplement to the vital essence, especially in the deep yin areas of the body, such as the joints and marrow. *Jin*-fluids follow the circulation of the qi and blood, and assist their smooth flow, spreading throughout the surface of the body to warm and moisten the muscles, flesh and orifices, and flush the skin with nourishment. The *jin*-fluids are thin, clear and watery, and flow quickly and easily. These fluids are also related to saliva in particular. The primary emphasis in the *Basic Questions* is on conserving and storing these various psycho-physiological aspects of human being. One must do all that one can to protect against dissipation and disharmony, two of the primary causes of dis-ease.

Related to vital essence and sexual activity, the Celestial Water (*tiangui* 天癸) mentioned in the *Basic Questions* is seen as a downward infusion from the heavens, which initiates the onset of “puberty.” The descent of the Celestial Water is associated with the menses and menstruation in females, and semen and ejaculation in males. When the Celestial Water commences, the capacity for reproduction emerges. This indicates an early stage of life. When the vital essence is exhausted, sexual reproduction is no longer possible, and one's health and well-being become imperiled. This indicates a late stage of life. Here we see the association of vital essence and sexual function with the Water phase and thus with the kidneys. Interestingly, in addition to being associated the Water phase, *gui* 癸 is the tenth celestial branch (*tiangan* 天干) and is, in turn, related to the planet Mercury.

The *Basic Questions* contains important information on the orbs (*zangfu* 臟腑; “organs”) and meridian (*mai* 脈; *jingluo* 經絡) system as well.<sup>26</sup> The yin-orbs (*zang* 藏/臟) include the liver (*gan* 肝), heart (*xin* 心), spleen (*pi* 脾), lungs (*fei* 肺), and kidneys (*shen* 腎). The yang-orbs (*fu* 腑) include the gall bladder (*dan* 膽), small intestine (*xiaochang* 小腸), stomach (*wei* 胃), large intestine (*dachang* 大腸), urinary bladder (*panguang* 膀胱), and the triple burner (*sanjiao* 三焦). In order to make the systems consistent, the pericardium (*xinbao* 心包) was added to the yin-orbs. The triple warmer, associated with three locations in the body corresponding to upper, middle, and lower, and the pericardium, a sheath around the heart, have no recognized counterparts in Western anatomy. The *zang* are associated with yin because they are said to be situated in the interior parts of the body; their primary function is storage. The *fu* are associated with yang because they are said to be situated in the exterior parts of the body; their primary function is elimination.

These orbs are, in turn, connected with various channels that circulate qi throughout the body, referred to as the meridian (*mai* 脈) system. This system consists of twelve primary meridians, those of the twelve orbs, and Eight Extraordinary Vessels (*qijing bamai* 奇景八脈). The

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<sup>26</sup> In translating *zang* as “orb,” I am following Porkert 1974. Although *zang* has been translated in numerous ways (organ, viscera, depot, storehouse, etc.), orb seems the best choice as it includes the larger process-oriented qi theory. “The ambiguity of the technical ‘orb’ (*orbis*) reflects almost exactly that of the Chinese term *tsang*, which refers on the one hand to a bodily substratum with ill-defined material and spatial contours, and on the other hand to a physiological function associated with the substratum and qualitatively defined in time with precision and subtlety” (Porkert 1974, 107).

Eight Extraordinary Vessels include the Renmai 任脈 (Conception Vessel), Dumai 督脈 (Governing Vessel), Chongmai 德脈 (Thrusting Vessel), Daimai 帶脈 Belt Vessel), as well as two extra meridians along the arms and two along the legs. The Renmai follows the front centerline of the body, the Dumai the back centerline, the Chongmai the middle core, and the Daimai the beltline. On a more esoteric level, the Renmai and Dumai carry and connect the qi from the twelve primary orb meridians. The Chongmai maintains a connection between the heavens and earth; this occurs through the crown-point and the perineum. Finally, the Daimai is the only horizontal meridian, traversing all of the other meridians, and thus harmonizes the various conduits of qi circulation. The Eight Extraordinary Vessels receive special attention in Daoist internal alchemy (*neidan* 內丹) practice. Although still developing, future research on embryogenesis, as understood in Chinese medicine, may provide additional insights into the importance of the Eight Extraordinary Vessels. If the Chongmai, Dumai, and Renmai are the first meridians to develop, the Daoist adept would be accessing a more primordial moment in the differentiation of the self. In the first chapter of the *Basic Questions*, the Renmai, Chongmai, and an additional meridian, the Yangming 陽明 (Yang Brightness), receive special attention. The Yangming meridian is also considered the meridian that contains the largest capacity for yang; in this sense, it is closely associated with vitality and energetic aliveness.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> In Chinese medicine more generally, the Yangming is one of six combination meridians: Taiyang 太陽 (Greater Yang; small intestine and urinary bladder), Yangming 陽明 (Yang Brightness; stomach and large intestine), Shaoyang 少陽 (Lesser Yang; triple burner and gall bladder),

In chapter two, we also find references to Shaoyang 少陽 (Lesser [or Minor] Yang), Taiyang 太陽 (Greater [or Major] Yang), Shaoyin 少陰 (Lesser Yin), and Taiyin 太陰 (Greater Yin). I have amended the text to place Shaoyin in relation to autumn and Taiyin to winter, the most standard understanding. Traditionally speaking, Shaoyang (yang in ascendance) is associated with spring, Taiyang (yang at apex) with summer, Shaoyin (yin in ascendance) with autumn, and Taiyin (yin at apex) with winter. Here yang relates to movement and activity, while yin relates to stillness and rest. Thus chapter two of the *Basic Questions* contains the following: “Now then, the yin and yang of the four seasons (*sishi* 四時) is the root of the ten thousand beings. Because of this, the sages (*shengren* 聖人) nourish yang (*yangyang* 養陽) in the spring and summer, and nourish yin (*yangyin* 養陰) in the autumn and winter. Through this, they accord with the root. Thus, along with the ten thousand beings, the sages immerse themselves and drift through the gateway to birth and development.”

Finally, one may note the presence of technical terminology that parallels both classical Daoism as well as that found in the later tradition. With regard to the former, chapter one instructs, “The sages corral the will (*zhixian* 志閑) and lessen desires (*shaoyu* 少欲). They maintain a calm heart-mind (*xin'an* 心安) and are free from fear. They work hard but do not become exhausted. They allow the qi to

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Taiyin 太陰 (Greater Yin; spleen and lungs), Shaoyin 少陰 (Lesser Yin; heart and kidneys), and Jueyin 厥陰 (Ceasing Yin; liver and pericardium). Disease progression is also mapped along similar lines, from Taiyang to Jueyin.

follow what is beneficial. Then each person follows his own aspiration (*congyu* 從欲) and everyone arrives at contentment (*deyuan* 得願). Thus, they are content with their food and satisfied with their clothing. They are joyful under any condition. Whether elevated or debased, they remain free of concern. Such people are called 'simple' (*pu* 樸). Through this, craving (*shi* 嗜) and desire (*yu* 欲) are unable to tax their eyes. Excess (*yin* 淫) and deviation (*xie* 邪) 𠄎 are unable to mislead their heart-minds.” The emphasis here on lessening desires, calming the heart-mind, being content, and returning to simplicity or suchness recall numerous passages in the “Neiye” 內業 (Inward Training) chapter of the *Guanzi* 管子 (Book of Master Guan), *Laozi* 老子 (Book of Venerable Masters), and *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang). In terms of the later Daoist tradition, it is interesting that chapter two contains the following: “Considering the qi of the heavens (*tianqi* 天氣), it is clear and still (*qingjing* 清靜), radiant and luminous (*guangming* 光明). It stores its inner power (*de* 德) without ceasing; thus, it does not descend.” Here one immediately recalls the *Qingjing jing* 清靜經 (Scripture on Clarity and Stillness; DZ 620). The connection to the *Yellow Thearch's Basic Questions*, as well as earlier references in the *Yijing* 易經 (Classic of Changes), suggests that the Daoist adept who cultivates clarity and stillness eventually develops celestial luminosity (*tianming* 天明) and numinous pervasion (*lingtong* 靈通). He or she resides in a larger matrix of being, an ontological condition attuned to cosmological rhythms.

Various sections of the *Huangdi neijing suwen* have been translated. Chapters one to thirty-four have been translated in Ilza Veith's *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (1972 [1949]). A



translation of chapter one and two appears in *The Way of Heaven* (1987) by Claude Larre. *The Secret Treatise of the Spiritual Orchid* (1987) by Claude Larre and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée contains a translation of chapter eight. A general-audience translation has also been published by Maoshing Ni (1995), son of Ni Hua-ching, current leader of the Universal Society of the Integral Way (USIW), and president of Yosan University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Chapters one through ten have been translated by Paul Unschuld in his *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (1985). This work, along with Unschuld's recent study of the *Suwen* (2003), provide important information on the *Suwen* in particular and the history of Chinese medicine more generally. Finally, there is a forthcoming three-volume translation currently in preparation by Paul Unschuld and Hermann Tessenow (see Unschuld 2003, x).

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TRANSLATION

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## **YELLOW THEARCH'S INNER CLASSIC: BASIC QUESTIONS**

### **Discourse 1: Celestial Perfection of High Antiquity**

In ancient times, there was the Yellow Thearch. When born, he had spiritual numinosity. When an infant, he was able to speak. When a child, he was aligned and regulated. When older, he was sincere and pervasive. After he became completed, he ascended to the heavens.

There he addressed the Celestial Master saying, “Tradition has taught that the springs and autumns of human beings in ancient times amounted to one hundred years. Even at that age, their movement and activity were not in decline. Human beings of today only live to half of one hundred years. Even at that age, their movement and activity is in decline. Is this because the time and world are different? Or is it because human beings have lost something?”

Qi Bo responded, “Human beings of ancient times understood the Dao. They patterned themselves on yin and yang and harmonized themselves through techniques and reckoning. Their eating and drinking had regulation. Their rising and retiring had constancy. They avoided being reckless and disorderly, and so did not become exhausted. Thus, their bodies and spirits were able to remain united. Reaching the

culmination of the years allotted by the heavens, they departed at one hundred years of age.

“Human beings of today are not like this. They take alcohol as their drink of choice. They take recklessness as their constant. Intoxicated, they enter the bedchamber. Through desire, they drain their vital essence. Through dissipation, they scatter their perfection. They do not know how to preserve fullness. They do not know when to attend to spirit. Over-active, they strain their heart-minds. They go against the joy of living, and their rising and retiring lack regulation. Thus, at half of one hundred years of age, they decline.

“Now then, the sages of high antiquity disseminated their teachings. Each of them taught that vacuity, noxious influences, and injurious winds should be avoided at specific times.

“Abiding in calmness and contentment, emptiness and nonbeing, the perfect qi was in accord. When vital essence and spirit are guarded internally, how can disease arise?

“Therefore, the sages corralled the will and lessened desires. They maintained a calm heart-mind and were free from fear. They worked hard but did not become exhausted. They allowed the qi to follow what was beneficial. Then each person followed his own aspiration and everyone arrived at contentment.

“Thus, they were content with their food and satisfied with their clothing. They were joyful under any condition. Whether elevated or debased, they remained free of concern. Such people were called 'simple.' Through this, craving and desire were unable to tax their eyes. Excess and deviation were unable to mislead their heart-minds.

“Whether ignorant or wise, worthy or unworthy, there was nothing and no one to fear. They were merged with the Dao. Therefore, they could live to one hundred years of age without their activity declining. With their inner power preserved, they were free from danger.”

The Thearch inquired further, “When people become advanced in years they cannot have children. Is this because their strength has been exhausted through deviance? Or is it because celestial reckoning makes it so?”

Qi Bo responded, “When a girl is seven years old, the kidney qi is full. The teeth change and the hair grows longer. At two times seven, the Celestial Water (*tiangui*) arrives and the Renmai (Conception Vessel) is connected. The great Chongmai (Thrusting Vessel) is flourishing and the lunar affair descends for the first time. Thus she is able to have children. At three times seven, the kidney qi is even. Then the real teeth grow and physical growth ends. At four times seven, the muscles and bones are firm. The hair reaches its greatest length, and the body is flourishing and strong. At five times seven, the

Yangming (Yang Brightness) vessel declines. The face begins to become wrinkled and the hair begins to fall out. At six times seven, the three yang vessels decline in the upper body. The face is completely wrinkled and the hair begins to turn white. At seven times seven, the Conception Vessel is empty. The great Thrusting Vessel also declines slightly. The Celestial Water dries up and the Terrestrial Pathway is no longer connected. Thus, the body withers and she can no longer have children.

“When a boy is eight years old, the kidney qi is full. The hair is long and the teeth change. At two times eight, the kidney qi is flourishing and the Celestial Water arrives. Vital essence and qi flow in excess. Yin and yang are in harmony. Thus he is able to have children. At three times eight, the kidney qi is even. The muscles and bones are strong and firm. Thus the real teeth grow and physical growth ends. At four times eight, the muscles and bones are powerful and flourishing. His flesh is full and firm. At five times eight, the kidney qi declines. The hair falls out and the teeth decay. At six times eight, the yangqi declines and becomes exhausted in the upper body. The face becomes wrinkled, while the hair and sideburns whiten in places. At seven times eight, the liver qi declines and the muscles can no longer move. At eight times eight, the Celestial Water dries up. The vital essence is scarce, with the storing ability of the kidneys declining. The entire body is close to the end. Then the teeth and hair fall out.

“The kidneys rule the water. They receive and store the vital essence of the five yin-orbs and six yang-orbs. As long as the five yin-orbs are flourishing, one can produce emissions. When the five yin-orbs all decline, the muscles and bones become loose and weak. The Celestial Water is exhausted. Thus the hair and sideburns whiten and the body becomes heavy. One's movement and walking are no longer upright. One can no longer have children.”

The Thearch then asked, “There are some people well advanced in age who can still have children. Why is this?”

Qi Bo explained, “This is because celestial longevity is beyond the norm. The qi in their vessels is constantly connected, while their kidney qi is flourishing and abundant. Although this is the case, with regard to having children, men cannot exceed eight times eight years of age, while women cannot exceed seven times seven years of age. At these ages, the vital essence and qi of the heavens and earth are exhausted.”

The Thearch spoke, “Considering adepts of the Dao who are one hundred years old, are they able to have children?”

Qi Bo responded, “Adepts of the Dao are able, even when old, to preserve their physical form. Even when their bodies have achieved such longevity they are able to have children.”

The Yellow Thearch commented, “I have heard that in high antiquity there were perfected beings (*zhenren*). They carried the heavens and earth and held yin and yang in their hands. They exhaled and inhaled vital essences and qi. In seclusion, they established themselves in guarding spirit. In their own skin and flesh they accorded with the One. Thus they were able to attain a longevity resembling the heavens and earth, a longevity that knows no end. Such were those who lived in the Dao.

“In the time of middle antiquity, there were realized beings (*zhiren*). They were fertile in inner power and complete in the Dao. They harmonized with yin and yang and accorded with the four seasons. They abandoned the mundane world and separated from the ordinary. They gathered vital essence and preserved spirit. They wandered between the heavens and earth, attentively perceiving and listening to what lies beyond the eight boundaries. In this way they protected and increased their longevity and life-destiny and became vibrant. They truly returned to the condition of perfected beings.

“In the next period there were sages (*shengren*). They dwelled in the harmony of the heavens and earth. They followed the principles of the eight winds. Exposed to the craving and desire within the mundane world, they were free of heart-minds filled with irritation and anger. Their practice contained no desire to separate from the mundane world. Complete in themselves, they had no desire to observe the ordinary. They did not exhaust their bodies through various affairs. Internally, they were free

from the calamities of thinking and worrying. Through this, quiescence and contentment became their foundation. Through this, self-realization became their accomplishment. Their bodies were not exhausted; their vital essence and spirit were not dispersed. They truly could reach one hundred years of age.

“In the next period there were exalted beings (*xianren*). Through formulas they regulated the heavens and earth. They represented the sun and moon. They argued about the arrayed stars and planets. They rebelled against according with yin and yang. They divided and separated the four seasons. And yet, they progressed by following high antiquity, merging and identifying with the Dao. Even they could extend their longevity and reach an extreme age limit.

## **Discourse 2: Harmonizing Spirit with the Four Qi**

The three months of spring are called *fachen* (sending forth and spreading out). Together the heavens and earth bring forth life, and the ten thousand beings are enlivened. One should go to sleep at nightfall and wake up at dawn. [After waking up,] walk around the courtyard with broad strides. Let down the hair and relax the body. Allow the will to be productive. Live and do not kill. Give and do not take away. Reward and do not punish. This resonates with the vernal qi. It is the way of nourishing life (*yangsheng*). To act in opposition to this injures the liver. In

summer, it causes cold disturbances (*hanbian*). The ability to initiate developing is diminished.

The three months of summer are called *fanxiu* (luxuriant and flowering). The qi of the heavens and earth interact and commingle. The ten thousand beings flower and bring forth fruit. One should go to sleep at nightfall and wake up at dawn. Do not become exhausted by the sun. Allow the will to remain free from anger. Assist flowering and complete flourishing. Assist the qi in attaining circulation. It likes to move toward the exterior. This resonates with the summer qi. It is the way of nourishing growth (*yangchang*). To act in opposition to this injures the heart. In autumn, it causes intermittent fevers (*hainue*). The ability to initiate harvesting is diminished. At the beginning of winter (*dongzhi*), sickness will become more serious.

The three months of autumn are called *rongping* (enduring and regulating). The qi of the heavens becomes rushed, while the qi of the earth is clear. One should go to sleep early and wake up early. Get up when the rooster crows. Allow the will to be calm and serene. Through this, you inhibit the repressive tendency of autumn. Harvest and gather spirit and qi. Allow the qi of autumn to be regulated. Do not allow the will to scatter it towards the exterior. The lung qi becomes clear. This resonates with the autumnal qi. It is the way of nourishing harvesting (*yangshou*). To act in opposition to this injures the lungs. In



winter, it causes diarrhea (*sunxie*). The ability to initiate storing is diminished.

The three months of winter are called *bicang* (accumulating and storing). Water freezes and the earth splits open. There is no influence from yang. One should go to sleep early and wake up late. You must accord with the light of the sun. Allow the will to be as if concealed, as if hidden. Let it seem as though you have only personal concerns, as though you are self-contained. Avoid coldness and seek warmth. Do not allow anything to escape through the skin, so that the qi may be urgently grasped and preserved. This resonates with the winter qi. It is the way of nourishing storing (*yangcang*). To act in opposition to this injures the kidneys. In spring, it causes impotence (*weijue*). The ability to initiate generation is diminished.

Considering the qi of the heavens, it is clear and still, radiant and luminous. It stores its inner power without ceasing; thus, it does not descend. If the heavens released their full luminosity, the sun and moon would no longer appear bright. Then deviant influences (*xie*) would injure the hollows and cavities. The yangqi would be hidden and obstructed, while the qi of the earth would simulate brightness. Clouds and mists would no longer have vital essence. Through an upward resonance, white dew (*bailu*) would not descend. Interaction and commingling would not occur. The life-destiny of the ten thousand beings would no longer be bestowed. Without this bestowal, many of the most venerated trees would perish. As soon as perverse qi

(*eqi*) manifests, the winds and rains become disordered. The white dew does not descend. Then vegetation no longer flourishes. Injurious winds (*zeifeng*) would arrive in great numbers, and torrential rains would arise in great numbers. The heavens, earth, and four seasons would no longer support each other. Then the Dao would be lost equally by all. Even before being completed, everything would be disrupted and destroyed.

Only the sages (*shengren*), by according with such occurrences, would protect themselves from strange diseases. Through such beings, the ten thousand beings will not become lost, and the qi of life will not be dispersed.

Acting in opposition to the vernal qi prevents Shaoyang (Lesser Yang) from generating. The liver qi becomes injured internally.

Acting in opposition to the summer qi prevents Taiyang (Greater Yang) from developing. The heart qi becomes empty internally.

Acting in opposition to the autumnal qi prevents Shaoyin (Lesser Yin) from harvesting. The lung qi becomes scorched and congested.

Acting in opposition to the winter qi prevents Taiyin (Greater Yin) from storing. The kidney qi comes to perish alone.

Now then, the yin and yang of the four seasons is the root of the ten thousand beings. Because of this, the sages nourish yang in the spring and summer, and nourish yin in the autumn and winter. Through this, they accord with the root. Thus, along with the ten thousand beings, the sages immerse themselves and drift through the gateway to birth and development.

Acting in opposition to the root severs the foundation and ruins one's perfection. Thus, the four seasons as well as yin and yang are the beginning and end of the ten thousand beings, the root of death and life. Acting in opposition to these is a calamity that injures life. According with these ensures that disease will not arise. We refer to this as realizing the Dao.

Considering the Dao, it is what the sages practice. It is what the ignore-ant admire. One who accords with yin and yang will live. One who acts in opposition to them will die. One who accords with them is regulated. One who acts in opposition to them is disordered. To overturn accordance is to be in opposition. We refer to this as internal obstruction.

This is the reason why sages do not regulate diseases after they are already a disease. They regulate them before they arise. They do not regulate disorder after it is already disorder. They regulate it before it is disorder. This is what we mean.

Now then, waiting for disease to already develop before remedying it, and waiting for disorder to already develop before

regulating it, this is like waiting until one is thirsty before digging a well, like waiting until war comes before forging weapons. Is this not too late?

**CHINESE TEXT**

中

文

## 黃帝內經素問

### 上古天真論篇第一

昔在黃帝，生而神，’弱而能言，幼而徇齊，長而敦敏，成而登天。

問於天師曰：余聞上古之人，春秋皆度百歲，而動作不衰；今時之人，年半百而動作皆衰者。時世異耶？人將失之耶？

岐伯對曰：上古之人？其知道者，法於陰陽，和於術？數，食飲有節，起居有常，不妄作勞，故能形與神俱，而盡終其天年，度百歲乃去。

今時之人不然也，以酒爲漿，以妄爲常，醉以入房，以欲竭其精，以耗散其真，不知持滿，不時御神，務快其心，逆於生樂’起居無節，故半百而衰也。

夫上古聖人之教下也，皆謂之虛邪賊風，避之有時，恬儉虛無，真氣從之，精神內守，病安從來。

是以志閑而少欲，心安而不懼’形勞而不倦，氣從以順，各從其欲，皆得所願。故美其食，任其服，樂其俗，高下不相慕，其民故曰樸。

是以嗜欲不能勞其目，淫邪不能惑其心，愚智賢不肖，不懼于物，故合於道。

所以能年皆度百歲而動作不衰者，以其德全不危也。

帝曰：人年老而無子者，材力盡邪？將天數然也？

岐伯曰：女子七歲，腎氣盛，齒更髮長。二七而天癸至，任脈通，太沖脈盛，月事以時下，故有子。三七腎氣平均，故真牙生而長極。四七筋骨堅，髮長極，身體盛壯。五七陽明脈衰，面始焦，髮始墮。六七三陽脈衰於上，面皆焦，髮始白。七七任脈虛，太沖脈衰少，天癸竭，地道不通，故形壞而無子也。

丈夫八歲，腎氣實，髮長齒更。二八腎氣盛，天癸至，精氣溢瀉，陰陽和，故能有子。三八腎氣平均，筋骨勁強，故真牙生而長極。四八筋骨隆盛，肌肉滿壯。五八腎氣衰，髮墮齒槁。六八陽氣衰竭於上，面焦，髮鬢頰白。七八肝氣衰，筋不能動，天癸竭，精少，腎臟衰，形體皆極。八八則齒髮去。

腎者主水，受五臟六腑之精而藏之，故五臟盛，乃能瀉。

今五臟皆衰，筋骨解墮，天癸盡矣，故髮鬢白，身體重，行步不正，而無子耳。

帝曰：有其年已老，而有子者：何也？

岐伯曰：此其天壽過度，氣脈常通，而腎氣有餘也。此雖有子，男子不過盡八八，女子不過盡七七，而天地之精氣皆竭矣。

帝曰：夫道者，年皆百歲，能有子乎？

岐伯曰：夫道者，卻老而全形，身年雖壽，能生子也。

黃帝曰：余聞上古有真人者，提挈天地，把握陰陽，呼吸精氣，獨立守神，肌肉若一，故能壽敝天地，無有終時，此其道生。

中古之時，有至人者，淳德全道，和於陰陽，調于四時，去世離俗，積精全神，游行天地之間，視聽八遠之外，此蓋益其壽命而強者也。亦歸於真人。

其次有聖人者，處天地之和，從八風之理，適嗜欲於世俗之間，無恚嗔之心，行不欲離於世，被服章，舉不欲觀於俗，外不勞形於事，內無思想之患，以恬愉為務，以自得為功，形體不敝，精神不散，亦可以百數。

其次有賢人者，法則天地，象似日月，辨列星辰，逆從陰陽，分別四時，將從上古合同於道，亦可使益壽而有極時。



## 四氣調神論篇第二

春三月，此謂發陳。天地俱生，萬物以榮，夜臥早起，廣步于庭，被髮緩形，以使志生，生而勿殺，予而勿奪，賞而勿罰，此春氣之應，養生之道也；逆之則傷肝，夏謂實寒變，奉長者少。

夏三月，此謂蕃秀。天地氣交，萬物華實，夜臥早起，無厭于日，使志勿怒，使華英成秀，使氣得泄，若所愛在外，此夏氣之應，養長之道也；逆之則傷心，秋謂痲瘧，奉收者少，冬至重病。

秋三月，此謂容平，天氣以急，地氣以明，早臥早起，與雞俱興，使志安寧，以緩秋刑，收斂神氣，使秋氣平，無外其志，使肺氣清，此秋氣之應，養收之道也；逆之則傷肺，冬謂飧泄，奉藏者少。

冬三月，此謂閉藏。水冰地坼，勿擾乎陽，早臥晚起，必待日光，使志若伏若匿，若有私意，若已有得，去寒就溫，無泄皮膚，使氣極奪。此冬氣之應，養藏之道也；逆之則傷腎，春謂痿厥，奉生者少。

天氣，清淨光明者也，藏德不止，故不下也。

天明則日月不明，邪害空竅。陽氣者閉塞，地氣者冒明，雲霧不精，則上應白露不下。

交通不表，萬物命故不施，不施則名木多死。惡氣不發，風雨不節，白露不下，則菀卧不榮。賊風數至，暴雨數起，天地四時不相保，與道相失，則未央絕滅。

唯聖人從之，故身無奇病，萬物不失，生氣不竭。

逆春氣則少陽不生，肝氣內變。

逆夏氣則太陽不長，心氣內洞。

逆秋氣則太陰不收，肺氣焦滿。

逆冬氣則少陰不藏，腎氣獨沉。

夫四時陰陽者，萬物之根本也。所以聖人春夏養陽，秋冬養陰，以從其根；故與萬物沉浮于生長之門，逆其根則伐其本，壞其真矣。故陰陽四時者，萬物之終始也；生死之本也；逆之則災害生，從之則苛亥不起，是謂得道。道者聖人行之，愚者佩之。從陰陽則生，逆之則死；從之則治，逆之則亂。反順爲逆，是謂內格。

是故聖人不治已病，治未病不治已亂，治未亂此之謂也。夫病已成而後藥之，亂已成而後治之，譬猶渴而穿井，鬥而鑄錐，不亦晚乎？