

The Three Realms, the Four Domains, and the Five Elements:

An Investigation into Human Nature

by Elder Upasika Men Yi-ping

When you truly recognize your own mistakes, and you humble yourself to the ultimate point, then you bring forth yang water, and all of your illnesses will disappear. Do not hold grudges against others: that's yin water. If you always feel dissatisfied with your situation to the point that you are in a perpetual state of tears, you are wallowing in yin water. Yin water is unable to nourish the myriad things, even your children will not thrive in yin water, because it is turbid and unclean. The basic property of water is that it nourishes all things. However, if you try to water plants with salt water, or dirty water, or stinky water, will the plants thrive? Therefore, you must turn the yin into the yang. Be gentle and compliant like water. When you pour water into a square-shaped container, it assumes a square shape. When you pour water into a round container, it assumes a round shape. Water is yielding, compliant and agreeable. If you develop those qualities in yourself, then you have yang water.

Yang water is able to rinse away all filth. For example, suppose you have a rift with someone. When you truly recognize your own mistakes, you'll have the power to transform the other person. Your yang water will wash clean the grudge in his or her heart. If you feel people have not treated you fairly, you will get afflicted and upset. However, if you feel you haven't treated others fairly, you will have no reason to become self-righteous and upset. You will want to make it up to others. Therefore, you should look for other people's good points and also recognize your own mistakes. By looking at others' good points, we produce "clear, resonant metal (響亮金)." By admitting our own faults, we produce "wisdom water (智慧水)."

The wife of Virtuous Man Wang, Bai Shou Kwun (白守坤), was selected as the model teacher in the national meeting of the Path of Virtue Society. When she was thirty-eight, her husband sent her to school. After graduation, she went back to her own country and helped set up free women's schools. She was an extraordinary woman in that she was virtuous, filial and conscientious. When her students misbehaved, instead of scolding them, she would kneel at the back of the classroom and admonish herself, saying out loud, "It's because I lack the virtue that I haven't been able to teach my students well." Every time she would earnestly admonish herself. Her students were invariably moved to shame by her sincerity. They buckled down and became good students in the end. Virtuous Man Wang had plenty of virtue, and so the members of his family were all worthy and eminent people. His wife was a model wife and mother. Her two brothers, Bai Chin and Bai Jyan, were praised by the emperor as "filial sons and respectful brothers." Eminent and lofty people are eager to admit their own mistakes. However, this has to come straight from the heart; it cannot be just for show. If you truly admit your mistakes, the other person will be won over. The block between the two of you will melt of its own.

Virtuous Man Wang had an abdominal abscess for twelve years. When he was thirty-five, he heard the story of "the number three wife teaching her son," and suddenly he had an awakening. He exclaimed, "No wonder I had my abscess! Worthy people are eager to admit their faults, while stupid people argue their own cases. I've been a stupid person all along!"

Within the time it took to cook a meal of sorghum, his whole color changed. On his journey home, he kept questioning himself. He truly understood his own mistakes from the past. The next morning when he woke up, he felt there was an itchy feeling around his stomach. He took a look--the festering sore that had bothered him for twelve years had dried up within a single night! Within three days, the sore was completely healed. That was because he turned the yin back to the yang and truly admitted his own mistakes. After he recovered from this long illness, his character also changed. Shortly afterwards, he had a profound awakening in which he understood the workings of his own mind and saw his own nature.

Virtuous Man Wang developed yang water and opened up wisdom. He was like a kind father to all of his students, pointing out a clear path for us. He wanted all of us to open our wisdom, too. During that time in the Path of Virtue Society, many people "opened their nature" or "transformed their nature." Some developed an uncanny knack for diagnosing illnesses and curing people.

They worked on the simple premise that people get sick because of certain flaws or disharmony in their moral character or their personality. If the flaws are rectified, the person will heal himself without the use of medicine. Many sick people came for help. By simply taking a look at these people, these "healers" could tell the temperament or disposition of these patients, where they had gone wrong, and what karma they had created that brought on their particular illness. They understood the workings of cause and effect. And so, by exhorting the patients to put the cause and effect of their lives back into order, they helped "heal" these patients. Actually, the healing was a combination of aid from the outside, coupled with the intense desire to change and reform on the part of the sick person.

I had a teacher, Mr. Jang, who was very skilled in diagnosing illnesses. I want to relate an incident in which he diagnosed a "yin-water" disease. One time, the third mistress of the admiral of the navy under the Manchu Regime came to see Mr. Jang. This young woman had an unusual problem. She was pregnant, but the fetus had lodged itself outside her uterus, right within the fallopian tubes. That meant there would be severe hemorrhaging during childbirth, which could prove to be fatal. Mr. Jang took one look at the woman and told her, "You think it over yourself. Someone was clutching your photograph when he died. Do you know who that person was?"

The young woman broke out in tears. She said, "When I was eighteen, I fell in love with a classmate. Our relationship lasted three years. Then I rejected him and instead married the admiral and became his number three wife. My classmate was heartbroken. He was

truly in love with me. Subsequently he had tuberculosis. He died clutching my photograph in his hand..."

Mr. Jang said, "That resentful ghost has come to demand repayment for its life."

The admiral's wife said, "What can I do?"

"You should donate all of your wealth to do good works. Only then can you atone for your offense. All of your jewelry, your bonds, and so forth--donate them to charity. If you don't perform great acts of virtue, there will be no way to undo that karmic obstacle."

The young woman knew what she had to do. However, it's very difficult for people to give up their wealth. They would rather give up their lives than give up their money. And so the admiral's wife did not donate her money. In the end she did suffer severe hemorrhaging in childbirth. By the time they rushed her to the hospital, she had died from excessive bleeding.

Among the five viscera, the kidneys are related to the element water. Immoral sexual conduct often results in diseases of the kidney or the reproductive system. Sexual diseases, weakness of the reproductive organs, and so forth are all related to yin water.

Among the five moral obligations, the relationship between husband and wife belongs to the element water. Among the five major roles in a family, the position of wife and mother is associated with water. Among the five professions, the business profession--that is, merchants--is related to water. Among the five Buddhist precepts, the precept against taking intoxicants is related to water. Water types tend to have a weakness for wine and sex. When they get drunk, they revel in debauchery and do all sorts of upside-down things. For this reason, such individuals have to keep the precept against taking wine. In Taoism, water is related to the Primary Essence. Because yin people are fond of sex and also like to afflict others, they injure their own essence and come down with various kidney ailments. AIDS, which has expanded to epidemic proportions in recent years, is clearly a yin water disease. Illicit hetero--sexual relationships are bad enough, but homosexual relationships are even worse in that they directly oppose the natural laws of heaven and earth. By engaging in this kind of vile and immoral behavior, people damage their virtue and are destined to undergo severe repercussions in the future.

"The meshes of the net of heaven are large/But nothing escapes." The principle of cause and effect is infallible. If we violate natural law, we will have to pay the price. Most of us do not know how we will die. Only at a person's deathbed can you know the entire story. As it's said, "When the coffin has been covered, then one's deserts be properly judged." Only at the final moment can you pronounce judgment on a person's moral character, his cultivation, his offenses, and so forth. Therefore, cultivators must be watchful over themselves. A single wrong move, a single improper thought, can make you fall. You might even lose your human body, so how can you afford to be casual and sloppy?

If people wish to preserve all five of their primary energies--primary nature, primary spirit, primary breath, primary emotion, and primary essence--then they cannot afford to damage their spirit by the least bit. The Confucianist Dzeng Dz said,"Ten eyes are looking at you. Ten fingers are pointing at you. How severe!"

The eyes of the community are bright and clear. How do we dare to do immoral things? And even if people do not know, the spirits know, and they make a detailed record of the good and evil we do every day. Therefore, right when we give rise to an improper thought, we should wake up to it and immediately turn it around. That turning around is yang water. If we can be without the tiniest transgressions, even within our minds, we will be able to preserve our primary essence. The three internal treasures of essence, breath, and spirit will become full and perfect. Then we will have a chance to accomplish the Path. It's said,"The Tao cannot be separated from, even for a split second." It is my hope that all my fellow cultivators will hold tenaciously to the Path. You should cherish and respect yourselves and work hard. Only then can you face up to your ancestors, your parents, and your teachers. Gazing up at heaven, you will have no cause for shame; looking down to people, you will have no reason for remorse. Then you will be truly doing the work you were made to do."