

Destiny, Vital Force, or Existence? On the Meanings of *Ming* in Daoist Internal Alchemy and Its Relation to *Xing* or Human Nature*

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Abstract

Neidan or Internal Alchemy has developed two main modes of self-cultivation. The first is based on cultivating the mind and intends to remove the causes that prevent one from “seeing one’s true nature,” which is equated with the Elixir. The second is based on purifying the main components of the human being—Essence (*jing* 精), Breath (*qi* 氣), and Spirit (*shen* 神)—so that they may serve as ingredients of the Elixir. These two modes of self-cultivation are said to place an emphasis on *xing* 性 and on *ming* 命, respectively. However, Neidan texts repeat time and again that *xing* and *ming* can only be understood and realized in conjunction with one another.

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In Neidan, *xing* and *ming* are said to be the “foundation” (*ti* 體) and the “operation” (*yong* 用) of one another; they correspond to Spirit and Breath; and they are related to the “mind” (*xin* 心) and the “body” (*shen* 身), respectively. These views are at the basis of the discourses on *xing* and *ming* in the two main Neidan lineages. The Southern Lineage (Nanzong 南宗) gives precedence to the cultivation of *ming*, and the Northern Lineage (Beizong 北宗) emphasises the cultivation of *xing*. Despite this distinction, the “conjoined cultivation of Xing and Ming” (*xingming shuangxiu* 性命雙修) is a virtually omnipresent subject in Neidan. In this context, “priority” means which one between *xing* and *ming* is seen as the basis for cultivating the other in order to realize both.

Two final sections examine the views of two major Neidan masters. Li Daochun 李道純 (late 13th century) points out that *xing* and *ming* pertain to the “celestial mind” and the “dharma-body” instead of the ordinary mind and body, which harm and damage one’s *xing* and *ming*. Liu Yiming 劉一明 (1734–1821) similarly makes a fundamental distinction between the “false” and the “true” *xing* and *ming*. The false ones are one’s character and destiny (including one’s life span); the true ones are one’s innate nature and one’s embodiment of the One Breath (*yiqi* 一氣) of the Dao.

Keywords: Daoism, Neidan, Fate, Li Daochun, Liu Yiming

金丹者，性命之別名。

Golden Elixir is another name for *xing* and *ming*.

—Liu Yiming 劉一明 (1734–1821)¹

¹ *Zhouyi chanzhen* 周易闡真 (Uncovering the Truth of the *Book of Changes*), Introduction (“Juanshou” 卷首), 57a. In this article, quotations from texts in the *Daozang* 道藏 (Daoist Canon) include the numbers they are assigned in Kristofer Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-tsang* (Paris: EFEO, 1975), preceded by the abbreviation “DZ.” Works by Liu Yiming are quoted from the editions reproduced in *Daoshu shi'er zhong* 道書十二種 (Twelve Books on the Dao; Beijing: Zhongguo zhongyiyao chubanshe, 1990). This book, mostly consisting of a reprint of the 1880 Yihua tang 翼化堂 edition of Liu Yiming’s collected works, is in turn entirely reprinted in *Zangwai daoshu* 藏外道書 (Daoist Texts Outside the Canon [Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1992–1994]), vol. 8. Editions of other sources are cited in footnotes.

I. Introduction

In the course of its history, documented from the early 8th century, Neidan 內丹 or Internal Alchemy has developed two main emblematic modes of self-cultivation. The first is based on cultivating the mind and intends to remove the causes that prevent one from seeing one's "true nature." The second is based on purifying the main components of the human being; although the required practices differ among the various Neidan subtraditions, the process is said to be completed only when, in the final stage, one focuses on cultivating one's mind or spirit.

More details on these modes of self-cultivation, and a brief comment on why they are best seen as "emblematic," will be found later in the present article. The main point to underline here is that the two modes are traditionally said to give emphasis on *xing* 性 and on *ming* 命, respectively. Both of these terms are complex, of themselves and even more so in the context of Neidan. *Xing* can generally be understood and translated as "nature"—in the sense of "human nature," "inner nature," or "innate nature"—but Neidan texts also use this term in a sense identical or close to what certain Buddhist traditions call the Buddha-nature, in turn defined as one's fundamentally and constantly "awakened" state. *Ming* is in several respects an even more complex term. Even the three senses mentioned in the title of this article—destiny, vital force, and existence—do not exhaust its range of meanings; they suffice, however, to raise the question of how these and other senses are related to one another, within and possibly also outside of Neidan.

As we shall see, Neidan works written in different times and belonging to different lineages not only repeat time and again that *xing* and *ming* should be understood in conjunction with one another; they also define the *xing-ming* dyad as the very foundation of Neidan. *Xing* and *ming* are called, for instance, "the root and foundation of self-cultivation" (*xiuxing zhi genben* 修行之根本),² "the

² "Xing and ming are the root and foundation of self-cultivation." Wang Zhe 王嘉 (b. Chongyang 重陽, 1113–70), attr., *Chongyang lijiao shiwu lun* 重陽立教十五論 (Fifteen Essays by Wang Chongyang to Establish the Teaching, DZ 1233), 4b.

learning of the divine immortals” (*shenxian zhi xue* 神仙之學),³ “the essential for refining the Elixir” (*liandan zhi yao* 鍊丹之要),⁴ and even “the secret of the Golden Elixir” (*jindan zhi mi* 金丹之祕).⁵ The author of the statement quoted as epigraph to the present article writes elsewhere that cultivating *xing* and *ming* constitutes of its own “the Way of the Golden Elixir” (*jindan zhi dao* 金丹之道).⁶ A further indication of the prominence of *xing* and *ming* in Neidan is the presence of both words in the titles of several works, including the well-known *Xingming guizhi* 性命圭旨 (Directions on the Unity of *Xing* and *Ming*).⁷

A thorough study of the views of *ming* in Neidan should take both terms and both concepts into account. It should also discuss how the Buddhist and the Neo-Confucian discourses on *xing* and

³ “The learning of the divine immortals consists in nothing but cultivating and refining *xing* and *ming*.” Wang Jie 王玠 (z. Daoyuan 道淵, ?–ca. 1380), *Cuigong ruyao jing zhuji* 崔公入藥鏡註解 (Commentary on the *Mirror for Compounding the Medicine*, DZ 135), Preface. See Wang Jie, *Commentary on the Mirror for Compounding the Medicine: A Fourteenth-Century Work on Taoist Internal Alchemy*, trans. Fabrizio Pregadio (Mountain View: Golden Elixir Press, 2013), 3.

⁴ “The essential for refining the Elixir consists only in the words *xing* and *ming*. Anything separate from *xing* and *ming* is a side gate.” Li Daochun 李道純 (late 13th c.), *Zhonghe ji* 中和集 (Central Harmony: An Anthology, DZ 249), 3.30a. The “side gates” (*pangmen* 旁門) are teachings and practices that, in the view of Li Daochun and many other Neidan masters, do not grant complete realization.

⁵ “The secret of the Golden Elixir consists only in one *xing*, one *ming*.” Qiu Chuji 邱處機 (1148–1227), attr., *Dadan zhizhi* 大丹直指 (Straightforward Pointers on the Great Elixir, DZ 244), 2.10b.

⁶ “Indeed, the Way of the Golden Elixir consists in the Way of cultivating *xing* and cultivating *ming*.” Liu Yiming, *Wuzhen zhizhi* 悟真直指 (Straightforward Pointers on the *Awakening to Reality*), 2.40a (commentary on “Jueju” 絕句, poem no. 42). Chen Zhixu 陳致虛 (1290–ca.1368) similarly writes: “The Way of the Golden Elixir is the Way of *xing* and *ming*” 金丹之道，是性命之道也；*Jindan dayao* 金丹大要 (Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir, DZ 1067), 14.13b.

⁷ On the title of the *Xingming guizhi* (attr. Yin zhenren 尹真人, 17th c.) see note 36 below. Other works include: (1) *Xingming zongzhi* 性命宗旨 (Ultimate Pointers on *Xing* and *Ming*), by Qianguan shanren 乾貫山人 (identity unknown), Ming dynasty. (2) *Xingming zhenyuan zhizhi* 性命真源直指 (Straightforward Pointers on the True Source of *Xing* and *Ming*), by Xue Xinxiang 薛心香, 17th/18th c., ed. Min Yide 閔一得 (1748–1836). (3) *Xingming weiyan* 性命微言 (Subtle Words on *Xing* and *Ming*), by Liu Yuan 劉沅 (1768–1855). (4) *Xingming yaozhi* 性命要旨 (Essential Directions on *Xing* and *Ming*), by Wang Qihuo 汪啟濬 (1839–1917). (5) *Xingming fajue mingzhi* 性命法訣明指 (Model Instructions and Clear Pointers on *Xing* and *Ming*), by Zhao Bichen 趙避塵 (1860–after 1933).

ming contributed to form the Neidan views on both of these concepts; and it should look at this whole subject against the background of the ideas of *xing* and *ming* in the earlier Chinese tradition, both Daoist and Confucian.⁸ The scope of this article is much more limited. Although most of the sources that I quote also refer to *xing*, and this term therefore repeatedly comes forth in my discussion, my focus here is on the Neidan views of *ming*. In the first two sections, I look at the main terminological and doctrinal aspects of *ming*. Sections 3 and 4 are concerned with the function of *xing* and *ming* in the two forms of Neidan self-cultivation mentioned above. Sections 5 and 6 examine two major themes pertaining to the views of *xing* and *ming* in Neidan. In the conclusion, I try to show how the different senses of *ming* are related to one another in the Neidan views of the human being.

II. The Language of *Ming* in Neidan

The two main dictionaries of the Chinese language report altogether more than two dozen meanings for *ming* in premodern Chinese, the most important of which can be subsumed under four main groups:⁹

- (1) Order, command, mandate (in the context of government: decree, law, regulation, etc.); to order.
- (2) Name, both in the nominal sense and in the verbal sense (to call, name, designate, denominate); to call, call out, hail.

⁸ On Neidan and Buddhism, see Ge Guolong 戈國龍, *Daojiao neidan xue suyuan* 道教內丹學溯源 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2004), 184–237; and with regard to Chan Buddhism, his *Daojiao neidan xue tanwei* 道教內丹學探微 (Chengdu: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 2012), 110–30. On Neidan and Neo-Confucianism, see Isabelle Robinet, *Introduction à l'alchimie intérieure taoïste* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995), 165–95 (especially 179–84 on *xing* and *ming*); and Paul Crowe, “Dao Learning and the Golden Elixir: Shared Paths to Perfection,” *Journal of Daoist Studies* 7 (2014): 89–116. On the background of the Neidan views in early Daoism and Confucianism see Li Dahua 李大華, *Shengming cunzai yu jingjie chaoyue* 生命存在與境界超越 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 2001), 93–128.

⁹ *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典, ed. Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風 (Shanghai: Cishu chubanshe, 1986–93), 3:280–81; *Dai Kanwa jiten* 大漢和辭典, ed. Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次 (Tokyo: Taishūkan shoten, 1955–60), 2:2044.

- (3) Fate, destiny, either assigned or determined by Heaven or in the generic senses of chance and good or ill fortune, in the absence of any obvious intention or design by a superior entity.
- (4) Life, existence, either per se or in the more specific sense of life span, term/duration of life.

While there is at least a partial overlap between the first and the third main senses (“order” and “destiny”), as well as between the third and the fourth senses (“destiny” and “life”), the second sense of *ming* (“name,” “to name”) might at first seem to be incongruous. Yet, as I will suggest in the conclusion of the present article, this sense also is relevant to the overall conception of *ming* in Neidan.

A much more elaborate analysis of the different senses of *ming* is found in a study by Lisa Raphals, who has analyzed the semantic field of this term in the early Chinese tradition (drawing on sources dating, with few exceptions, through the 3rd century BCE), and has identified eight main topoi on the basis of terms and expressions used in discussions of “fate.”¹⁰ I will not attempt here to survey the semantic field of *ming* in Neidan using Raphals’ template, if only because the Neidan materials cannot match all of the categories that she has been able to identify. I will try, however, to point out which of the early views of *ming* distinguished in her study correspond to those found in Neidan texts.¹¹

(a) *Ming* as Life, Destiny, and Longevity

In addition to the ambiguous compounds *shengming* 生命 and *shenming* 身命 (two of the generic words for “life” or “existence,”

¹⁰ Lisa Raphals, “Languages of Fate: Semantic Fields in Chinese and Greek,” in *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture*, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005), 70–106. I refer especially to pp. 74–83 of this study, which continues with an analysis of comparable ideas in Han-dynasty sources and in early Greek thought.

¹¹ For this analysis, and for other parts of the present article, I have worked on a digital corpus of about 300 texts, consisting of virtually all Neidan sources found in the *Daozang*, and of a selection of major Neidan works dating from the Ming and the Qing periods. However, to avoid an overabundance of references, I will draw my examples mainly from authors and texts also quoted for other purposes in this article.

but also glossed as “destiny” in the standard dictionaries), Neidan texts use the term *ming* in nominal compounds that specifically refer either to destiny or to longevity. The former compounds include *tianming* 天命 (Heaven’s mandate) and *mingfen* 命分 (lit., “one’s decreed allotment” or “one’s mandated share”). The main and most frequent example of the latter compounds is *shouming* 壽命. This term fundamentally means “span of life” and not necessarily “longevity,” but it frequently appears in sentences stating that one’s *ming* can be prolonged (*chang* 長, *changjiu* 長久), increased (*zeng* 增), and extended (*yan* 延), and can even become “boundless” and “unlimited” (*wuqiong* 無窮, *wuji* 無極).

Taken per se, the senses of “destiny” and “longevity” respectively correspond to Raphals’ “*ming* as command” (destiny as determined by Heaven or by a deity) and “*ming ab initio*” (something predetermined at birth or inception).¹² However, Neidan texts make one point immediately clear: both the *ming* received by Heaven and the *ming ab initio* are subject to mutation, either in a negative sense (because of negligence, or of the inevitable shift from the *xiantian* 先天 to the *houtian* 後天, the precelestial and the postcelestial domains) or in a positive sense (mainly through the Neidan practice). This view bears a significant consequence: the possibility that something predetermined can be altered shows that the Neidan discourse on *ming* runs on two parallel but different routes. On the one hand, the subject of the discourse is *ming* as originally conferred by Heaven (or by the highest “superior entity,” the Dao itself) and as received *ab initio*; on the other hand, the subject is *ming* as it manifests itself during the course of one’s life, or—since that could be a tautology—*ming as* the course of one’s life. As we shall see, certain Neidan traditions also postulate a similar dual structure for *xing* or Nature.

These two aspects of *ming* are kept distinct in Neidan sources. This is shown, in particular, by the term *yuanming* 元命, which can be provisionally translated as “original mandate.” This term—sometimes paired with *benxing* 本性 or “fundamental nature”—

¹² Raphals, “Languages of Fate,” 74.

implies the view of a primal or initial *ming*, distinguished from a *ming* that is posterior to it either in time, or in status, or both—and that just for this reason is deemed to be secondary or inferior. In an even clearer way, Neidan texts insist on the necessity of “returning” to one’s *ming*, an expression discussed below that involves, in the first place, the possibility that one’s original *ming* is neglected, forgotten, or even lost.

(b) *Ming* Endangered

The third *topos* mentioned by Raphals is “choosing *ming*,” or “fate as subject to the exercise of human choice and free will.”¹³ The complex notion of “free will” does not seem to be an issue in Neidan—or in Daoism as a whole—at least in a literal sense or in an explicit way. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that “choosing *ming*” is by far the main subject that Neidan sources as a whole discuss with regard to *ming*.

It is probably not due to chance that “choosing *ming*” is the *topos* identified in Raphals’ study that contains the largest number of examples drawn from Daoist texts: five out of ten quotations or citations derive from the *Daode jing* 道德經 (Book of the Way and Its Virtue) or the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, and an additional example comes from the *Baopu zi* 抱朴子 (The Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature). These examples include terms meaning “conforming to” (*shun* 順), “grasping hold of” (or “attaining,” *da* 達), “understanding” (*zhi* 知), and “returning to” (*fu* 復) *ming*, all of which are also found in Neidan texts. The prominence of this subject in Daoism and in Neidan has not failed to attract the notice of scholars. One reason for its importance is clearly stated by Stephen Bokenkamp in a study concerned with the Han and Six Dynasties legacies of Daoist religion: “Heaven did decree fate, but that decree could be altered through the accomplishment of such practices” as confession of sins, various rituals, and the performance of good deeds.¹⁴ Bokenkamp here specifically refers to methods

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Simple Twists of Fate: The Daoist Body and Its *Ming*,” in *The Magnitude of Ming*, 151–68 (quotation from 156).

practiced by the early Celestial Masters (Tianshi dao 天師道) and their communities. One of the Neidan answers to the issue of “choosing *ming*” would be similar to this with regard to the importance of practice, but would differ significantly in one respect: practice is supposed in certain cases to alter (in particular, to “extend”) the *ming* decreed by Heaven, but in other cases to alter the conditions that cause the *ming* decreed by Heaven to be lost. In the latter view, Neidan enables one not only to alter one’s *ming*, but in the first place to “return” to one’s *ming*.

The language of Neidan texts includes several expressions that denote the endangering of *ming*, as well as the possible remedies. Verbs that have a negative import show that one’s *ming* can be shortened (*duan* 短), damaged (*shang* 傷), harmed (*hai* 害), forfeited (*sang* 喪), and lost (*wang* 亡). For instance:

The Yellow Emperor said: “The Heart (*xin*) lives in things and dies in things. Why is it so?” The Sovereign of Celestial Reality answered: “By using the Heart, the Intention (*yi*) is stirred. When the Intention is stirred, the Spirit (*shen*) moves; when the Spirit moves, the Breath (*qi*) is scattered; when the Breath is scattered, the *ming* is lost. This is why one dies.”¹⁵

黃帝曰：「心生於物，而死於物，何也？」天真皇人曰：「用心者，意動也。意動則神移，神移則氣散，氣散則命亡，故死也。」

In this passage, the loss of *ming* is the outcome of a process that begins with the Heart (or the mind, *xin* 心), which pursues objects and phenomena instead of maintaining itself in a state of quiescence. This causes the scattering or dispersion of *qi* 氣 (breath), which in turn is the reason of the loss of *ming* and of death. Liu Chuxuan 劉處玄 (1147–1203) similarly attributes the cause of forfeiting *ming* to attachment to desires and possessions:

He also inquired: “What is attachment?” I answered: “Attachment means that those who attach themselves to their desires forfeit their *ming*, and those who attach themselves to possessions forfeit their

¹⁵ *Yinfu jing sanhuang yujue* 陰符經三皇玉訣 (Jade Instructions of the Three Sovereigns on the *Scripture of the Hidden Agreement*, DZ 119), 3.2a. This anonymous work dates from the Southern Song period.

own persons: the deluded ones first experience the sweet and later experience the bitter. Those who eradicate their desires maintain their *ming* intact, and those who eliminate possessions maintain their own persons intact: the awakened ones first experience the bitter and later experience the sweet. Forfeiting one's *ming* and oneself is ignorance, keeping one's *ming* and oneself intact is wisdom."¹⁶

復詢：「貪者何也？」答曰：「貪者，貪於欲則喪其命也，貪於財則喪其身也，迷者先甘而後苦也。泯於欲則全其命也，絕於財則全其身也，悟者先苦而後甘也。喪命喪身則愚也，全命全身則賢也。」

Although in this passage Liu Chuxuan does not mention the term *qing* 情 (emotions, passions, etc.), attachments and desires pertain to its range. Liu Chuxuan himself says elsewhere:

By being constantly quiescent, one allows one's *xing* to shine; by constantly forgetting the emotions (*qing*), one protects one's *ming*.¹⁷

常清則明性，常忘情則保命。

In other cases, *qing* is deemed to harm *xing*, while *ming* is harmed by material existence as a whole (*se* 色, “forms”):

Xing is confused because of the emotions; *ming* wanes because of the forms (*se*). If *ming* flourishes, then Spirit is intact and *xing* blooms; if *ming* wanes, then *xing* is weak and Spirit faints.¹⁸

性因情亂，命逐色衰。命盛則神全而性昌，命衰則性弱而神昏。

¹⁶ *Wuwei qingjing Changsheng zhenren zhizhen yulu* 無為清靜長生真人至真語錄 (Most True Recorded Sayings of the Long-Lived Realized Man of Non-Doing and Clarity and Quiescence, DZ 1058), 21b–22a. Liu Chuxuan belonged to the Northern Lineage (Beizong 北宗) of Neidan.

¹⁷ *Huangdi yinfu jing zhu* 黃帝陰符經註 (Commentary on the Yellow Emperor's Scripture of the Hidden Agreement, DZ 122), 1b. See Peter Acker, *Liu Chuxuan (1147–1203) and His Commentary on the Daoist Scripture Huangdi yinfu jing* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 79–80.

¹⁸ Commentary to *Wuzhen pian* 悟真篇 (Awakening to Reality), in *Xiuzhen shishu* 修真十書 (Ten Books on the Cultivation of Reality, DZ 263), 28.20b; also in *Danjing jilun* 丹經極論 (Ultimate Discourses from the Scriptures on the Elixir, DZ 235), 5a.

(c) Accomplishing *Ming*

As the Neidan views on “accomplishing” or “fulfilling” *ming* (*liaoming* 了命) are the main subjects of this article, here it may suffice to mention only the most important ideas and terms used in this context. *Ming* should first of all be “established” (*li* 立), “stabilized” (*ding* 定), and “corrected, set right” (*zheng* 正). It should also be “defended” (*hu* 護), “guarded” (*shou* 守), and “protected” (*bao* 保), and one should “complete” it or—more exactly—make it “intact” (*quan* 全). From the point of view of the practice, “cultivating *ming*” (*xiuming* 修命) and “nourishing *ming*” (*yangming* 養命) are two of the most frequent positive expressions related to *ming*:

If one is able to empty his Heart and to sooth his Spirit, this is how to nourish one’s *xing*. If one is able to cherish his Essence and to care for his Breath, this is how to nourish one’s *ming*.¹⁹

人能虛心棲神，所以養性也；惜精愛氣，所以養命也。

Broadly, Neidan understands the expressions mentioned above in two main senses. In the first sense, *ming* should be “extended” or “prolonged” (*yan*, *chang*, etc.) by means of Neidan practices. This usually means enhancing or increasing one’s vital force (*qi*) in order to prolong one’s length of life. In the second sense, cultivating *ming* involves two different movements: a forward (or downward) movement whereby one conforms to and complies with *ming* as the course of one’s life, and “follows” it (*shun*, *sui* 遂); and a backward (or upward) movement whereby one “returns” (*fu*) to the original mandate.

With regard to the first movement (“following *ming*”), we read:

The upright noble man keeps his Heart undisturbed. When he is in service, he gives advice at court; when he is not in service, he betakes himself into mountains and forests. When he dwells among riches and honors, he is not proud of himself; when he resides in poverty and

¹⁹ *Yuxi zi danjing zhiyao* 玉谿子丹經指要 (Essential Pointers on the Scriptures on the Elixir, by the Master of the Jade Creek, DZ 245), 2.1b. This Quanzhen 全真 work dates from the 13th century. The relation of Spirit to *xing*, and of Essence and Breath to *ming*, is discussed in the next section of this article.

humility, he does not flatter anyone. In advancing and withdrawing he is always measured; in movement and quiescence he is always proper. As he constantly follows Heaven's mandate without deception, he can be called an upright noble man.²⁰

正人君子，坦然其心。用之則陳道朝廷，不用則隱拙山林。居富貴不驕，處貧賤不諂。進退合度，動靜合宜。常順天命而心不欺，可以為正人君子也矣。

The second movement (“returning to *ming*,” *fuming* 復命; or “reverting to *ming*,” *guiming* 歸命) is most important in Neidan. By far the most frequent expression concerning *ming* found in its literature,²¹ the term “returning to *ming*,” derives from the *Daode jing*:

Attain the ultimate of emptiness, guard the utmost of quiescence. The ten thousand things are brought about together: accordingly, I observe their return. Things are abounding and overflowing, but each of them reverts to its root. Reverting to the root is called quiescence, and this means returning to the mandate (*ming*); returning to the mandate is called constancy; knowing constancy is called brightness.²²

致虛極，守靜篤。萬物並作，吾以觀復。夫物芸芸，各復歸其根。歸根曰靜，是謂復命，復命曰常，知常曰明。

According to this passage, guarding “quiescence” (*jing* 靜) is the condition for “returning to *ming*.” This idea informs many of the later Neidan views of *xing* and *ming*: for several Neidan authors, it would only be natural to associate the quiescence of “reverting to the root” with the cultivation of *xing*, and the “return to the mandate” with the cultivation of *ming*, and to find in this *Daode jing* passage an authoritative statement on the priority of *xing* over *ming*: one “returns to *ming*” through the quiescence of *xing*. We shall examine these views later in the present article. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that the *Daode jing* passage quoted

²⁰ Wang Jie, *Daoxuan pian* 道玄篇 (Mysteries of the Dao, DZ 1075), 15b.

²¹ *Fuming* occurs in more than one third of texts in the corpus mentioned in note 11 above.

²² *Daode jing*, sec. 16.

above directly inspired two verses in the *Wuzhen pian*, a text cherished by many Neidan traditions from the Song period onwards:

The ten thousand things, abounding and overflowing, go back to the root; going back to the root and returning to the mandate, they are constantly preserved.²³

萬物芸芸各返根，返根復命即常存。

Drawing from the *Wuzhen pian*, dozens of later Neidan texts in turn contain the phrase *fan'gen fuming* 返根復命, “going back to the root and returning to the mandate.”

Concerning the expression “extending *ming*,” Yu Yan 俞琰 (1258–1314) clarifies that it can mean more than the mere extension of the life span, and can also denote the “return” to one’s *ming*:

The noble man knows that *xing* should not be injured, so he preserves it and nourishes it. He knows that *ming* should not be damaged, so he protects it and extends it. . . . Those who intend to seek long life should seek the causes whereby they have obtained this body even before their birth. Only then can one talk of the Way of cultivating *xing* and of extending *ming*.²⁴

君子知性之不可戕賊也，於是存而養之。知命之不可斷喪也，於是保而延之。……夫欲求長生，須求吾未生以前，此身緣何而得，然後可以論養性延命之道。

“Extending *ming*” therefore may refer not only to the “forward” process of increasing longevity, but also to the “backward” process whereby one’s ordinary *ming* is reconnected to one’s original *ming*. This point is stated in a poem of the *Zhouyi cantong qi*, to which Yu Yan’s words quoted above are a commentary:

²³ *Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem no. 51; Wang Mu 王沐, *Wuzhen pian qianjie* 悟真篇淺解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 112.

²⁴ *Zhouyi cantong qi fahui* 周易參同契發揮 (Elucidation of the *Seal of the Unity of the Three in Accordance with the Book of Changes*, DZ 1005), 6.11a–b. The first part of this passage alludes to *Mengzi* 孟子, 11:1 (text in *Mengzi zhuzi suoyin* 孟子逐字索引 [Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995]).

In order to nourish your nature,
 prolong your life and hold off the time of death,
 attentively reflect upon the end
 and duly ponder what comes before.²⁵

將欲養性，延命卻期，審思後末，當慮其先。

Yu Yan's note is also one of several indications found in Neidan sources that one's *ming*, as well as the "embodiment" that supports one's *ming*, are received before birth.

(d) *Ming* and the Human Body

Other *topoi* identified by Raphals in early Chinese sources do not play significant roles in Neidan. In particular, Neidan literature does not seem to contain examples concerning "transpersonal *ming*" (e.g. "the destiny of a state") and, not unexpectedly, "contra-*ming*" (the "explicit denial of fate"): "fate" as a predetermined sequence of events may not be the main object of the Neidan discourse, but other aspects or functions of *ming* are never open to question.

On the other hand, a major theme in Neidan texts is the association of both *xing* and *ming* with specific loci of the human body, which either have correspondent physical counterparts or are, in fact, incorporeal. The *Ruyao jing*, an influential work in verse that may date from the early 10th century but is probably later in its current main version, mentions both terms of the *Daode jing* seen above:

The Opening of reverting to the root,
 the Barrier of returning to the mandate.
 Pierce through the Caudal Funnel,
 pass through the Muddy Pellet.²⁶

歸根竅，復命關。貫尾閭，通泥丸。

²⁵ *Zhouyi cantong qi fabui*, 6.11a. See Pregadio, *The Seal of the Unity of the Three: A Study and Translation of the Cantong qi* (Mountain View: Golden Elixir Press, 2011), 100 and 192–93.

²⁶ *Ruyao jing zhujie*, 9a.

Like other poems in the *Ruyao jing*, these verses abridge a significant part of Neidan in as little as twelve characters. Wang Jie writes in his commentary:

In the wondrous operation of compounding the Elixir, it is essential to comprehend the One Opening of the Mysterious Barrier. In the true position of the One Nature, the ten thousand things revert to their root. The way of returning to the mandate necessarily revolves through the Three Barriers.²⁷

作丹妙用，要明玄關一竅。一性正位，萬化歸根。復命之道，必由三關而轉。

This is followed by technical explanations on the practice, but Wang Jie's point is already clear. He identifies the "Opening of going back to the root" with the One Opening of the Mysterious Barrier (*xuanguan yiqiao* 玄關一竅), the non-spatial center of the human being, and calls this "the true position of the One Nature," or *xing*.²⁸ This requires no practice—or rather, it requires the practice of "non-doing" (we shall return to this point). The "Barrier of returning to the mandate," instead, is the object of the Neidan practice per se: it corresponds to the three "barriers" that Breath must go through in its cyclical ascent from the bottom of the spine (the "caudal funnel") to the upper Cinnabar Field (the "muddy pellet") along the back of the body, followed by its descent to the lower Cinnabar Field along the front of the body. As Wang Jie points out, this practice is concerned with "returning to the mandate"—that is, with one's *ming*—and this is the part of Neidan that requires "doing."

In addition to these, Neidan texts establish several other

²⁷ *Ruyao jing zhujie*, 9a-b; Pregadio, trans., *Commentary on the Mirror for Compounding the Medicine*, 39. The "three barriers" are located in the lowest section of the spine; in the back, across from the heart; and behind the head, across from the mouth.

²⁸ The One Opening is mentioned in many other Neidan texts. In one of his poems, Wang Jie writes: "The One Opening of the Mysterious Barrier is the exact and correct Center. / It is not in the back, not in the front—it reclines solitary onto Emptiness. / Silently revert your Light and let it dwell there. / Spirit and Breath will merge into Mysterious Unity." *Huanzhen ji* 還真集 (Returning to Reality: A Collection, DZ 1074), 1.1b.

associations between *xing* and *ming* and the body. Briefly, these associations include the following:

- (1) *Ming* resides in the point between the kidneys; it corresponds to *xing*, which resides in the heart.²⁹
- (2) *Ming* is the “Water in the kidneys”; it corresponds to *xing*, which is the “Fire in the heart.”³⁰
- (3) *Ming* resides in the navel; it corresponds to *xing*, which resides in the sinciput.³¹
- (4) Both *xing* and *ming* reside in the breathing (*huxi* 呼吸).³²

Neidan sources also mention several terms based on the word *ming*. The respective bodily correspondences are not always consistent, but these terms usually refer to the “lower center” of the human being (defined with respect to the “upper center” in the head, and to the center itself, the Heart). Terms like Gate of *Ming* (*mingmen* 命門), Stem of *Ming* (*mingdi* 命蒂), Barrier of *Ming* (*mingguan* 命關), Bridge of *Ming* (*mingqiao* 命橋), and Origin of *Ming* (*mingyuan* 命元) all variously denote the lower Cinnabar Field, the space between the kidneys and the spleen or navel.³³ *Xing*, instead, corresponds primarily to the Heart (the seat of Spirit [*shen* 神]) but is also located in the head, the region of the upper Cinnabar Field.

Once again, Neidan displays here its continuity with earlier Daoist traditions. Discussing the meditation practices of the Shangqing 上清 tradition of Daoism, Bokenkamp remarks that “Daoist control of life span also depended on a somatic locus of *ming* and deployed psychosomatic techniques to alter it.”³⁴ This

²⁹ E.g. *Daoshu* 道樞 (Pivot of the Dao, DZ 1017), 5.14b (“Baiwen pian” 百問篇); *Huangdi yinfu jing zhu* 黃帝陰符經註 (Commentary to the *Scripture of the Hidden Agreement*, DZ 121), 2.12a (commentary by Tang Chun 唐淳, dated 1229).

³⁰ E.g. *Daoshu*, 7.14b (“Shuihuo pian” 水火篇).

³¹ E.g. *Dadan zhizhi*, 2.10b.

³² E.g. *Daoshu*, 24.17a (“Jiuzhuan jindan pian” 九轉金丹篇).

³³ Some of these terms have additional other referents. Gate of *Ming*, for example, also denotes the right kidney alone, as well as the nose and the eyes. Barrier of *Ming* also denotes the feet.

³⁴ Bokenkamp, “Simple Twists of Fate,” 157.

remark also applies to Neidan with a possible restriction: just as the ordinary mind obscures one's true *xing*, for some Neidan authors the purely "somatic" body obscures one's true *ming*. The relation of *xing* to "mind" and *ming* to "body" is best seen in the context of other concepts that indicate their underlying unity, to which we shall now turn.

III. Unity and Interdependence of *Xing* and *Ming*

One of the two terms mentioned by Raphals as emblematic of "*ming ab initio*" in early Chinese texts is the compound *xingming* 性命, defined as "the two overlapping factors that together determine life's course."³⁵ This compound—and the relation between the two words that form it—in Neidan is a *topos* of its own, and often becomes the subject of a whole discourse.

Several Neidan works emphasize that *xing* and *ming* are a single principle, or two aspects of the same principle. This view is at the basis of the "conjoined cultivation" of *xing* and *ming*, a fundamental Neidan doctrine that we shall examine later in this article. Here I briefly survey a few matching sets of concepts commonly used in Neidan texts that, when applied to *xing* and *ming*, express their unity and interdependence.

(a) *Xing* and *Ming* as "Foundation" and "Operation"

The above-mentioned *Xingming guizhi* discusses the original oneness of *xing* and *ming* in its "Discourse on *Xing* and *Ming*" ("Xingming shuo" 性命說). In particular, we read:

What is *xing*? It is what truly is as it is (*zhenru*) since the Original Commencement; it is the One Numen, luminous and bright. What is *ming*? It is the precelestial perfect Essence; it is the One Breath, provided with its generative force. Therefore when there is *xing* there is *ming*, and when there is *ming* there is *xing*. *Xing* and *ming* at the origin cannot be divided from one another. It is only that with regard to its residence in Heaven it is called *ming*, and with regard to its residence in the human being it is called *xing*. *Xing* and *ming* in

³⁵ Raphals, "Languages of Fate," 77. The other term is *shouming* (span of life) discussed above.

reality are not two. Even more, *xing* cannot be established without *ming*, and *ming* cannot be preserved without *xing*.³⁶

何謂之性？元始真如，一靈炯炯是也。何謂之命？先天至精，一氣氤氳是也。然有性便有命，有命便有性，性命原不可分。但以其在天，則謂之命，在人，則謂之性。性命實非有兩，況性無命不立，命無性不存。

The common origin and the interdependence of *xing* and *ming* are asserted in several other Neidan works. According to Li Daochun, the distinction between *xing* and *ming* is owed to, and correlated with, the division of the One into the Two:

As the One Breath divides itself, the two principles (i.e. *yin* and *yang*) are established. This is why *xing* and *ming* are [separately] established in the human being.³⁷

一炁判而兩儀立焉，即人之立性立命故也。

Both Li Daochun and Zhang Ziru 張自如 (ca. 1240) also point out that once *xing* and *ming* are established, they become the basis (or “foundation,” *ti* 體) and the operation (*yong* 用), respectively, of the same principle. Zhang Ziru briefly states:

Xing is the foundation of *ming*; *ming* is the operation of *xing*.³⁸

性是命之體，命是性之用。

³⁶ *Xingming guizhi* (ed. of 1793), “Yuan” 元, 8a–b. The “Discourse on *Xing* and *Ming*” is translated in Martina Darga, *Das alchemistische Buch von innerem Wesen und Lebens-energie* (München: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1999), 69–76. The initial part of this excerpt draws from a poem in Li Daochun’s *Qing’an Yingchan zi yulu* 清庵瑩鑿子語錄 (Recorded Sayings of Master Qing’an Yingchan, DZ 1060), 6.15a: “What truly is as it is (*zhenru*) since the Original Commencement is called *xing*. The precelestial One Breath is called *ming*” 元始真如謂之性，先天一炁謂之命。The *Xingming guizhi* illustrates the unity of *xing* and *ming* even in its own title. While the compound *guizhi* 圭旨 could mean “clear directions,” the paired “soils” (土) in the graph *gui* 圭 are deemed in Neidan to represent the *yin* and *yang* aspects of Unity, on the basis of the central position of Soil among the five agents (see, for instance, *Yuxi zi danjing zhiyao*, 1.4b–5a). Read in this light, the title of the *Xingming guizhi* refers to the oneness of *xing* (*yin*) and *ming* (*yang*).

³⁷ *Quanzhen jixuan miyao* 全真集玄祕要 (Collecting the Mysteries of Complete Reality: The Secret Essentials, DZ 251), 2a.

³⁸ Zhang Ziru, Postface to commentary to *Jindan sibai zi* 金丹四百字 (Four Hundred

Li Daochun gives a more elaborate explanation:

What is above the form is devoid of form and substance; what is below the form has a foundation and an operation. What is devoid of form and substance pertains to *xing* and to Mercury; what has a foundation and an operation pertains to *ming* and to Lead.³⁹

形而上者無形質，形而下者有體用。無形質者，係乎性汞也。有體用者，係乎命鉛也。

The alchemical emblems mentioned by Li Daochun are traditional: Mercury is the standard image of the True Yin principle (*zhenyin* 真陰), to which *xing* is related, and Lead is the standard image of the True Yang principle (*zhenyang* 真陽), to which *ming* is related. More important, according to this passage *xing* pertains to the formless domain, where no distinction occurs between foundation and operation. *Ming*, instead, emerges after the division of the One into the Two and pertains to the world of form. It is within this dual context that *ming* represents the operation of *xing*, which is its foundation.

(b) *Xing* and *Ming* as Spirit and Breath

Despite remarkable varieties among different sub-traditions and authors, one of the points about which Neidan texts are substantially unanimous concerns the association between *xing* and *ming*, on the one hand, and the three main components of the cosmos and the human being—Essence (*jing* 精), Breath, and Spirit—on the other. The tie between the dyad of *xing* and *ming* and the triad of Essence, Breath, and Spirit is established by integrating Essence and Breath into a single principle, which is referred to as Breath and is associated with *ming*. Spirit, instead, stands on its own and is associated with *xing*. The rationale for subsuming Essence under Breath is that, since Essence emerges from Breath

Words on the Golden Elixir), in *Xiuzhen shishu*, 5.11b. This postface is followed by five additional poems by Zhang Ziru, four of which are concerned with *ming*, and the last one with *xing*. Zhang Ziru belonged to the Southern Lineage (Nanzong 南宗) of Neidan.

³⁹ *Zhonghe ji*, 3.9b.

during the cosmogonic process, it is originally found within Breath and is fundamentally one with it, even though the two eventually separate from one another.⁴⁰ It is likely on the basis of the close relation between *ming* and Breath that, in Western studies of Neidan, *ming* has often been translated or explained as “vital force” or “life force.” However, the expression “vital force” applies to *qi* per se more than it does to *ming*.

The view that *xing* and *ming* are equivalent to Spirit and Breath is reiterated with few variations in many Neidan texts. Statements similar to the following are frequent:

Xing is Spirit, *ming* is Breath.⁴¹

性者神也，命者氣也。

Spirit is *xing*, Breath is *ming*.⁴²

神是性兮氣是命。

In short, form and spirit, body and mind, Spirit and Breath, *xing* and *ming* are actually a single principle.⁴³

以要言之，形與神也，身與心也，神與氣也，性與命也，其實一理。

In other cases, the relation of *xing* and *ming* to Spirit and Breath is not one of complete equivalence: Spirit and Breath are also said to be either the principles of *xing* and *ming* or, vice versa, their

⁴⁰ A clear statement about this is found in Wu Shouyang's 伍守陽 (1574–1644) *Tianxian zhengli zhilun* 天仙正理直論 (Straightforward Essays on the Correct Principles of Celestial Immortality; *Chongkan Daozang jiyao* 重刊道藏輯要 ed.), Preface, 1a. See Paul van Enkevort, “The Three Treasures: An Enquiry into the Writings of Wu Shouyang,” *Journal of Daoist Studies* 7 (2014): 119. Wu Shouyang's statement is not the first of this kind in Neidan literature; see, for instance, the Yuan-dynasty *Guizhong zhinan* 規中指 南 (Compass for Peering into the Center, DZ 243), 2.7b–8a, and the passage quoted above from the *Yuxi zidanjing zhiyao*. One could also trace it to earlier sources, both within and outside Daoism.

⁴¹ Wang Zhe, attr., *Chongyang lijiao shiwu lun*, 4b.

⁴² Cao Wenyi 曹文逸 (ca. 1125), *Lingyuan dadao ge* 靈源大道歌 (Song of the Great Dao, the Numinous Source); quoted in Li Daochun, *Zhonghe ji*, 3.30a.

⁴³ Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾 (1194–1229?), “Zhuyun tang ji” 駐雲堂記, in *Xiuzhen shishu*, 37.5b.

manifestations. These different views reflect the two aspects taken by Spirit and Breath in the precelestial (*xiantian*) and the postcelestial (*houtian*) domains, respectively. For Li Daochun, the unmanifested Spirit and Essence/Breath are the roots of *xing* and *ming*:

Xing is what we call the perfect precelestial Spirit and the One Numen. *Ming* is what we call the perfect precelestial Essence and the One Breath. Essence and Spirit are the roots of *xing* and *ming*.⁴⁴

夫性者，先天至神，一靈之謂也。命者，先天至精，一氣之謂也。精與(神)，性命之根也。

The language used in this passage shows that Li Daochun is looking at Spirit and Essence/Breath from the point of view of the precelestial state (“precelestial Spirit,” “precelestial Essence”) and of the unmanifested state of Unity (“One Numen,” “One Breath”). The Spirit and Essence/Breath of the Dao, therefore, are the roots of *xing* and *ming* in the human being. The opposite view has its most authoritative statement in the *Ruyao jing*:

It is *xing* and *ming*,
it is not Spirit and Breath.⁴⁵

是性命，非神氣。

Wang Jie—who was a second-generation disciple of Li Daochun—comments on these lines by saying:

Xing is Spirit, *ming* is Breath. The inchoate merging of *xing* and *ming* is the precelestial foundation; the cyclical transformations of Spirit and Breath are the postcelestial operation. Therefore it says, “It is *xing* and *ming*, it is not Spirit and Breath.”⁴⁶

性即神也，命即氣也。性命混合，乃先天之體也。神氣運化，乃後天之用也。故曰：「是性命，非神氣也。」

⁴⁴ *Zhonghe ji*, 4.1a. The *Daozang* text erroneously omits the graph “神” in the last sentence.

⁴⁵ *Ruyao jing zhujie*, 8b.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*; Pregadio, trans., *Commentary on the Mirror for Compounding the Medicine*, 35.

In other words, *xing* and *ming*, still joined to one another, are the “foundation” in the formless precelestial domain, while Spirit and Breath are the “operation” of the same principles in the postcelestial domain of form.

(c) *Xing* and *Ming* as “Mind” and “Body”

Several Neidan texts, as we saw earlier, situate *ming* in different loci of the physical or non-physical body. In addition, *ming* is related to *shen* 身 (“body”) as a whole, while *xing* is related to *xin* (“mind”). This relation is particularly important but also especially complex, since neither *xin* nor *shen* precisely correspond to the terms “mind” and “body.” I will refer below to the views of Li Daochun, who seems to be the first Neidan author to have developed an elaborate discourse on this subject. His discourse is also the first important statement in Neidan of the view that both *xing* and *ming* have a precelestial and a postcelestial aspect.⁴⁷

In his “Essay on *Xing* and *Ming*” (“Xingming lun” 性命論), Li Daochun says:

The creations and transformations brought about by *xing* pertain to the mind. The creations and transformations brought about by *ming* pertain to the body.⁴⁸

性之造化系乎心，命之造化系乎身。

In this passage, Li Daochun does not associate *xing* and *ming* with “mind” and “body” in their ordinary senses (and even less so, as he clarifies below, with *xin* as the physical heart). In particular, he does not refer to the psychological and the physiological facets of the human being. Elsewhere, Li Daochun gives this definition of “mind” and “body”:

⁴⁷ Li Daochun’s views of *xing* and *ming* are examined in several studies. See especially Sun Gongjin 孫功進, “Li Daochun neidan xingming sixiang tanxi” 李道純內丹性命思想探析, *Jimei daxue xuebao (Zhaxue shehui kexue ban)* 集美大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 12.3 (2009): 5–10; and Wang Wanzhen 王婉甄, *Li Daochun Daojiao sixiang yanjiu* 李道純道教思想研究 (Taipei: Hua Mulan wenhua chubanshe, 2008), 83–112. With regard to his views of *xing* see Paul Crowe, “Nature, Motion, and Stillness: Li Daochun’s Vision of the Three Teachings,” *Journal of Daoist Studies* 5 (2012): 61–88.

⁴⁸ *Zhonghe ji*, 4.1a.

What I call “body” and “mind” are not the illusory body (*huanshen*) and the heart made of flesh (*rouxin*). They are the invisible body and mind. Let’s see—what are the invisible body and mind?

The clouds from the top of the mountain,
the moon towards the heart of the waves.⁴⁹

This body is the body that has been clear and quiescent for countless eons: it is the wondrous Being within Non-Being. This mind is the foundation that has been numinous and wondrous “apparently since before the time of the [Celestial] Emperor”:⁵⁰ it is the true Non-Being within Being. Being within Non-Being is represented by Kan ☵; Non-Being within Being is represented by Li ☲.⁵¹

予所謂身心者，非幻身肉心也，乃不可見之身心也。且道如何是不可見之身心？「雲從山上，月向波心。」

身者，歷劫以來清靜身，無中之妙有也。心者，象帝之先靈妙本，有中之真無也。無中有象坎 ☵，有中無象離 ☲。

The body meant by Li Daochun therefore is the precelestial body, to which *ming* pertains; it is the True Yang (☰) body concealed by the postcelestial *yin* body, and it is constantly “clear and quiescent.” In their works, Li Daochun and other Neidan authors often call this the “dharma-body” (*fashen* 法身, *dharmakāya*), using the Buddhist expression that denotes the unmanifested body of the Buddha. Similarly, by “mind” Li Daochun means the precelestial mind, to which *xing* pertains; this is the True Yin (☷) mind constantly “numinous and wondrous,” but concealed by the postcelestial *yang* mind. In Neidan, this is often called the “celestial mind” (*tianxin* 天心) or the “mind of the Dao” (*daoxin* 道心).

⁴⁹ These verses are inspired by analogous Chan Buddhist sayings or “public cases” (*gongan* 公案). Li Daochun seems to mean here that the clouds that appear to be on the top of a mountain disappear when they are seen from the top of the mountain itself; this is an example of true Non-Being concealed within illusory Being (☷). Vice versa, the moon reflected on the waves of the sea appears to be an unreal phenomenon, but the reflection is only possible because there is a moon in the sky; this is an example of true Being concealed within illusory Non-Being (☵).

⁵⁰ This expression derives from *Daode jing*, sec. 4, which says of the Dao: “I do not know whose child it is; it seems to be earlier than the [Celestial] Emperor.”

⁵¹ *Zhonghe ji*, 3.29b–30a.

Xing and *ming*, in this view, pertain to the “true” precelestial mind and body. The “Essay on *Xing* and *Ming*” continues by saying that both of them are obfuscated and endangered by the activity of the ordinary, postcelestial mind and body:

Understanding and cognition emerge from the mind: with thoughts and cogitations, the mind yokes the *xing*. Responses and reactions emerge from the body: with speech and silence, with sight and hearing, the body burdens the *ming*. It is because *ming* is burdened by the body that there are birth and death. It is because *xing* is yoked by the mind that there are coming and going.⁵²

見解智識出於心也，思慮念想心役性也。舉動應酬出於身也，語默視聽身累命也。命有身累，則有生有死。性受心役，則有往有來。

Therefore, according to Li Daochun, *xing* is harmed by mental activity—thoughts and cogitations—and *ming* is harmed by physical activity—perceptions and responses that occur through the physical body and the senses.

These few passages suffice to show that, in Li Daochun’s view, the subject of *ming* is not the body that is born and dies, just like the subject of *xing* is not the mind that produces psychological phenomena. As we shall see in the following sections of this article, the same distinction that he draws between two types of body and mind, and two corresponding types of *xing* and *ming*, will become an essential point in certain later traditions of Neidan. This in turn is closely related to the idea of the “conjoined cultivation” of *xing* and *ming*. Before approaching this subject, I will try to place it in a historical perspective.

IV. Neidan Models of Cultivating *Xing* and *Ming*

As I mentioned at the beginning, Neidan intends to compound the Elixir in one of two main ways: (1) By purifying the mind of attachments, passions, and other defilements in order to reveal one’s “true nature” (*zhenxing* 真性), which is equated with the Elixir itself; (2) By refining the main components of the human being—

⁵² *Zhonghe ji*, 4.1a–b. “Coming and going” (*wanglai* 往來) here refers to continuous mental activity.

Essence, Breath, and Spirit—so that they may serve as ingredients of the Elixir, which in one of several possible definitions represents the state prior to their separation. Within the Neidan tradition, these two modes of cultivation are said to give priority to *xing* and *ming*, respectively, and to be associated with the two main lineages that emerged during the 12th and the 13th centuries: the first mode is representative of the Northern Lineage, and the second one, of the Southern Lineage.⁵³ As the difference between them has been not only a subject of debate in the history of Neidan, but also a disputed point in present-day Neidan studies, a brief remark is appropriate before we continue.⁵⁴

⁵³ The originator of Nanzong is Zhang Boduan 張伯端 (987?–1082), the author of the *Wuzhen pian*. However, as is now understood, this lineage was historically established in the early 13th century, apparently by the above-mentioned Bai Yuchan, who formulated the sequence of its masters and may even have written some of their works.

⁵⁴ With regard to present-day studies, an example of the points at issue is found in the anonymous introduction to the Quanzhen corpus in *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, ed. Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 2:1131: “Some scholars have tried to distinguish between the ‘Northern’ (original Quanzhen) and ‘Southern’ schools on the basis of their different emphases regarding *xing* 性 and *ming* 命 (mind and body) cultivation; this has been put into perspective by more recent research.” In fact, as shown below, the different emphases on cultivating *ming* and *xing* are reflected in texts belonging to both schools (and especially to the Northern Lineage, or Quanzhen itself). Moreover, emphasis in these texts is not on “mind” or “body,” but on *xing* or *ming* per se, and the Neidan discourse revolves around which of them is the key to cultivating both. The single example of “more recent research” cited in the *Companion* is a chapter contributed by Chen Bing 陳兵 to *Zhongguo Daojiao shi* 中國道教史 (History of Chinese Daoism), ed. Ren Jiyu 任繼愈 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1990), 517–45. Here Chen Bing actually states: “As Quanzhen takes the True Nature (*zhenxing*) to be the foundation for achieving immortality and for realizing the true, obviously the experience of the True Nature constitutes its main task” (536). To document this point, Chen Bing provides several examples, some of which I will quote below. Isabelle Robinet also suggested that “le différences qui séparaient l’école du Nord de celle du Sud . . . ne correspond pas à ce que disent le textes eux-mêmes.” She referred, in particular, to the theme of the “conjoined cultivation” of *xing* and *ming*; see her *Introduction à l’alchimie intérieure taoïste* (Paris: Le Cerf, 1994), 44–46. Here the different Neidan schools effectively tied the two cultivation modes to one another; yet, as we shall see, the different views on the priority of *xing* or *ming* emerge especially within this context.

While the two forms of self-cultivation are mentioned in a large number of Neidan sources, neither rejects or ignores the other; in fact, each one is said to lead to the other or to include the other, and the discourse focuses on their respective priority, or precedence, within the practice as a whole. “Priority” and “precedence” mean, in this context, which one between *xing* and *ming* is seen as the basis for cultivating the other in order to realize both. For this reason, the two forms of self-cultivation are best seen as emblematic modes of Neidan teaching and practice, placed at the two ends of a spectrum that consists of different ways of integrating them with one another. At the same time, lack of attention to these modes—often due to emphasis given to the Neidan views of the “body” per se, or to the influence of present-day forms of practice only partly related to Neidan—would involve disregard for the variety of discourses created during the history of Neidan: the two lineages have distinguished themselves with respect to their different models of cultivation, and these models in turn have defined much of the range of Neidan for several centuries. Without paying attention to the different modes of self-cultivation, moreover, it would be impossible to take account of the roles played by Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism within both lineages and on Neidan as a whole: the Buddhist and Neo-Confucian elements seen in Neidan concern precisely the concepts of *xing* and *ming* and their functions in self-cultivation.

(a) The Zhong-Lü Corpus

As far as we know, Neidan developed from around 700 AD. For the first two centuries of its history, it seems impossible to identify with certainty sources belonging to definite traditions or textual corpora. The earliest recognizable group of texts is the Zhong-Lü 鍾呂 corpus—so named after the two immortals, Zhongli Quan 鍾離權 and Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓—which apparently originated in the 9th century but probably reached final form around the 10th or even the early 11th century. The two main Zhong-Lü texts present an elaborate doctrinal discourse and describe advanced forms of practice.⁵⁵ While both texts mention *xing* and *ming*, neither the

⁵⁵ I refer to the *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji* 鍾呂傳道集 (Memories of the Transmission

discourse nor the practice emphasizes these concepts, with the single exception of this passage:

Among the ten thousand things, the human being is the most intelligent and most honored. Only a human being inquires into the principles of the ten thousand things, and achieves its own *xing*. “Inquire into the principles and achieve your *xing*, and thereby accomplish your *ming*”; maintain your *ming* intact and protect life, and thereby join with the Dao. Then you can be as solid and firm as Heaven and Earth, and you can live as long as they do.⁵⁶

萬物之中，最靈最貴者，人也。惟人也，窮萬物之理，盡一己之性。窮理盡性，以至於命，全命保生，以合於道。當與天地齊其堅固，而同得長久。

Significantly, this passage gives priority to *xing*: quoting a famous sentence of the “Shuogua” 說卦 (Explanations of the Trigrams) appendix to the *Yijing* 易經 (*Book of Changes*), it maintains that knowledge of *xing* leads one to attain one’s *ming*; after one’s *ming* is “intact,” one can join with the Dao. The same “Shuogua” sentence is quoted in later Neidan texts to support the precedence of *xing* in self-cultivation.⁵⁷

(b) Southern Lineage

Discourses and practices clearly focused on *xing* and *ming* emerge

of the Dao from Zhongli Quan to Lü Dongbin) and the *Lingbao bifa* 靈寶畢法 (Complete Method of the Numinous Treasure), respectively. A non-technical and often loose translation of the *Chuandao ji* is found in Eva Wong, *The Tao of Health, Longevity, and Immortality: The Teachings of Immortals Chung and Lü* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 2000). The *Lingbao bifa* was translated by Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein in the first major Western-language scholarly work on a Neidan text: *Procédés Secrets du Joyau Magique: Traité d’Alchimie Taoïste du XIe siècle* (Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1984).

⁵⁶ Zhong-Lü *chuandao ji*, in *Xiuzhen shishu*, 14.8b; Wong, *The Tao of Health*, 34.

⁵⁷ The sentence derives from “Shuogua,” sec. 1 (text in the *Zhouyi yinde: Fu biao jiao jingwen* 周易引得：附標校經文 [Beijing: Beiping Yanjing daxue tushuguan yinde bianzuan chu, 1935]). It is translated within quotation marks in the passage quoted above. Yuan Kangjiu 袁康就, *Zhong-Lü neidan daodeguan yanjiu* 鍾呂內丹道德觀研究 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2005), 197–207, assigns passages of Zhong-Lü texts to cultivation of *xing* or *ming*, but his quotations do not include these terms.

with the creation of the two main Neidan traditions. The Southern Lineage, or Nanzong, frames its practices according to the sequence Essence → Breath → Spirit → Emptiness (*xu* 虛, or Dao).⁵⁸ This arrangement is meant to reproduce, in a reverse order, the stages of the generation of the cosmos, when the Dao successively brings forth Spirit, Breath, and Essence, and finally through its own Essence generates the “ten thousand things.” At each stage of the practice, each component is gradually reintegrated into the previous one, and finally into “emptiness.” For our present subject, the main point to notice is that the first two stages are based on refining Essence and Breath, and focus on the cultivation of *ming*; the third and last stage is based on refining Spirit, and focuses on the cultivation of *xing*.

It is not entirely clear whether Zhang Boduan, who is placed at the beginning of the Southern Lineage, disguised this model of self-cultivation within the different poems of his *Wuzhen pian*. While the Nanzong model of practice may have been framed at a later time, it has provided a template for many traditions of Neidan.

(c) Northern Lineage

The other emblematic mode of Neidan self-cultivation is associated with the Northern Lineage, or Beizong, which is the original core of Quanzhen Daoism. Since the ordinary mind, in the conditioned state, is the main agent that obscures one’s *xing*, emphasis here is given to such principles as “emptying the mind” (*xuxin* 虛心), “extinguishing the mind” (*miexin* 滅心), and “having no thoughts” (*wunian* 無念) in order to see one’s *xing* (*jianxing* 見性).

A few examples may be useful to show how this view is formulated. Wang Zhe, the originator of the lineage, is credited with the following words (in the quotations that follow, I translate *xing* as “Nature”):⁵⁹

⁵⁸ These three stages are usually defined as “refining the Essence to transmute it into Breath” (*lianjing huaqi* 鍊精化氣), “refining the Breath to transmute it into Spirit” (*lianqi huashen* 鍊氣化神), and “refining the Spirit to revert to Emptiness” (*lianshen huanxu* 鍊神還虛).

⁵⁹ Here and below, I draw several examples from Chen Bing’s study cited in note 54 above, and from the essay by Yokote Yutaka 橫手裕, “Daoist Internal Alchemy,” that I translated for the *Modern Chinese Religion. Part 1: Song-Liao-*

A scripture says: “When the mind is born, Nature is extinguished; when the mind is extinguished, Nature is manifested.” The extinction of the mind is the treasure.⁶⁰

經云：「心生則性滅，心滅則性現也。」心滅者是寶。

Wang Zhe’s main disciple, Ma Yu 馬鈺 (*b.* Danyang 丹陽, 1123–84), is deemed to have given this teaching:

Someone asks: “What is the meaning of ‘seeing one’s Nature’?” I reply: “When there is no mind and there are no thoughts, when you are not attached to anything, when all is clear and pure, when there is no thing either inside or outside, then only the One Nature is manifested. This is ‘seeing one’s Nature’.”⁶¹

問：「如何是『見性』？」答曰：「只那無心無念，不著一物，澄澄湛湛，內外無物，孤然只顯一性，此乃是『見性』也。」

Given these premises, immortality—or rather, the state beyond “birth and death”—has little to do with the ordinary body, or even with the “alchemical body”; instead, it pertains only to one’s Nature, or *xing*, and is attained through the state of “no-mind” or “no-thinking.” Works attributed to Ma Yu and Tan Chuduan 譚處端 (*b.* Changzhen 長真, 1123–85, another disciple of Wang Zhe) contain these passages, respectively:

Jin-Yuan, ed. John Lagerwey and Pierre Marsonne (Leiden: E. J. Brill, forthcoming). See also Zhang Guangbao 張廣保, *Jin Yuan Quanzhen dao neidan xinxingxue* 金元全真道內丹心性學 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1995), esp. 77–96; and Stephen Eskildsen, *The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 21–38. The authorship of several texts by the early Beizong masters is uncertain; hence the dubitative language that I use in introducing several quotations.

⁶⁰ *Chongyang zhenren shou Danyang ershisi jue* 重陽真人授丹陽二十四訣 (Twenty-Four Instructions Transmitted by the Realized Man Wang Chongyang to Ma Danyang, DZ 1158), 4b.

⁶¹ *Ma Danyang zhenren zhiyan* 馬丹陽真人直言 (Straightforward Words by the Realized Man Ma Danyang), in *Qunxian yaoyu* 羣仙要語 (Essential Words of the Immortals; *Daoshu quanji* 道書全集 ed.), 2.6a. A slightly variant version is found in *Jin zhenren yulu* 晉真人語錄 (Recorded Sayings of the Realized Man Jin, DZ 1056), 7a. See Eskildsen, *The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters*, 31; on the basis of the former text, these would be Ma Yu’s own words.

What lives long and is free from death is the One Numinous True Nature.⁶²

長生不死者，一靈真性也。

When not a single thought is born, you are free from birth and death.⁶³

若一念不生，則脫生死。

In this view, Nature or *xing* itself is the Elixir. According to a verse attributed to Wang Zhe:

The original True Nature is called Golden Elixir.⁶⁴

本來真性喚金丹。

Even these few passages suffice to make clear that the discourse of self-cultivation in sources associated with the early Northern Lineage makes use of Buddhist views and terminology. This should not be seen as an influence of Buddhism over an original “alchemical” core made up of Neidan practices in the strict sense of the term. In fact, as shown below, it is unclear whether the Northern Lineage at its origins had an “alchemical” core at all.

V. “Conjoined Cultivation” and the Priority of *Xing* or *Ming*

The “conjoined cultivation of *xing* and *ming*” (*xingming shuangxiu* 性命雙修) is a virtually omnipresent subject in Neidan. Since *xing* and *ming* are deemed to have a common origin and to be interdependent, the purpose of the practice is the cultivation of both and their reconjunction. This point is witnessed by a large number of statements essentially identical to the following ones:

Join *xing* and *ming* and cultivate them in conjunction.⁶⁵

合性命而雙修之。

⁶² *Jin zhenren yulu*, 7b; this passage is not found in the *Ma Danyang zhenren zhiyan. Shuiyun ji* 水雲集 (Anthology of Water and Clouds, DZ 1160), 1.20a.

⁶⁴ *Chongyang quanzhen ji* 重陽全真集 (Complete Reality: A Collection by Wang Chongyang, DZ 1153), 2.7b.

⁶⁵ *Xingming guizhi*, “Li” 利, 8a.

Xing and *ming* must be cultivated in conjunction.⁶⁶

性命必須雙修。

“Conjoined cultivation of *xing* and *ming*,” however, does not only mean that both *xing* and *ming* should be cultivated; it also implies that one of them is the clue for cultivating the other. Which one is given priority in order to fulfill both is the actual point of distinction between the two models of Neidan outlined above. In the Southern Lineage model, cultivating *ming* leads to cultivating *xing*; in the Northern Lineage model, cultivating *xing* encompasses cultivating *ming*. This has resulted in defining the respective models of Neidan as “first *ming*, then *xing*” (*xianming houxing* 先命後性) and “first *xing*, then *ming*” (*xianxing houming* 先性後命)—two phrases that have been frequent in Neidan literature from the Qing period onwards, and are equally current in Chinese-language studies on Neidan.⁶⁷

(a) “First *Ming*, Then *Xing*”

The Southern Lineage model of Neidan practice prioritizes the cultivation of *ming*, but it assigns the last and highest portion of its three-stage process to the cultivation of *xing*. A poem in the *Wuzhen pian* asserts this point by drawing two expressions from the *Daode jing*:

Empty the heart, fill the belly: the meanings are both profound.
It is just in order to empty the heart that you should know the heart.
Nothing is better than first filling the belly by refining Lead.
Then, by guarding and collecting, you load the hall with gold.⁶⁸

虛心實腹義俱深，只為虛心要識心。不若煉鉛先實腹，且教守取滿堂金。

⁶⁶ Liu Yiming, *Wuzhen zhizhi*, 2.40a (commentary on “Jueju,” poem no. 42).

⁶⁷ On the “conjoined cultivation” of *xing* and *ming* see Ge Guolong, *Daojiao neidanxue tanwei*, 83–110; and Yang Yuhui 楊玉輝, “Lun Daojiao de xingming shuangxiu” 論道教的性命雙修, *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 社會科學研究 2 (2001): 75–78. For a summary of the main points, see Guo Jian 郭健, “Xianxing houming yu xianming houxing: Daojiao Nanbeizong neidanxue yanjiu” 先性後命與先命後性：道教南北宗內丹學研究, *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 2 (2002): 95–99.

⁶⁸ *Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem no. 10; Wang Mu, *Wuzhen pian qianjie*, 45.

According to commentators and later Neidan authors, “emptying the heart” (or “the mind,” *xuxin* 虛心) and “filling the belly” (*shifu* 實腹) in this poem refer to cultivating *xing* and *ming*, respectively: the heart and the abdomen, as we have seen, are symbolic locations of *xing* and *ming* in the human being. The poem as a whole maintains that both *xing* and *ming* should be cultivated, but the third line shows that one should begin by cultivating *ming*.

Another poem in the *Wuzhen pian* hints at a major point that we shall encounter again below. The Nanzong practice begins with “action” (*youzuo* 有作), needed to cultivate *ming*, and ends with “non-doing” (*wuwei* 無為), needed to cultivate *xing*:

It begins with action, and hardly can one see a thing,
when it comes to non-doing, all begin to understand.
But if you only see non-doing as the essential marvel,
how can you understand that action is the foundation?⁶⁹

始于有作人難見，及至無為眾始知，但見無為為要妙，豈知有作是根基。

In his commentary, Weng Baoguang 翁葆光 (fl. 1173) uses this poem to counter the classic Buddhist objection to Neidan, namely that Neidan focuses on cultivating *ming* and fails to look after *xing*:

In the world there are those who study the Way of the Buddha of cultivating *xing*; they hold the view that any form of “doing” is empty and vain, and thus they desecrate the Way of Laozi of cultivating *ming*. . . . How can they know that, in the Way of cultivating *ming*, at the beginning there is “action” (*youzuo*) and one refines the External Medicine (*waiyao*) in order to transform one’s [bodily] form; in the middle there is “doing” (*youwei*) and one refines the form in order to transmute it into Breath; and at the end there is “non-doing” (*wuwei*) and self-existence (*zizai*). This is what we call “protecting Unity,” and it serves the purpose of knowing one’s mind and seeing one’s Nature.⁷⁰

Compare *Daode jing*, sec. 3: “Thus the Saint in his government empties their (i.e. the people’s) hearts, fills their bellies, weakens their wills, and strengthens their bones.”

⁶⁹ *Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem no. 42; Wang Mu, *Wuzhen pian qianjie*, 99. “Action” is a synonym of “doing” (*youwei* 有為), by I translate this term with a different word in light of the commentary quoted below.

⁷⁰ *Wuzhen pian zhushi* 悟真篇注釋 (Commentary and Exegesis to the *Awakening to Reality*, DZ 145), 2.35a. The version in *Ziyang zhenren Wuzhen pian zhushu*

世有學釋氏修性之道，執一切有為皆是虛妄之語，以毀老氏修命之道。……焉知修命之道，始則有作，鍊外藥而化形；中則有為，鍊形而化炁；終則無為自在。謂之「抱一」，以識其心，以見其性。

For Weng Baoguang, cultivating *ming* requires active practice; when one reaches the stage of cultivating *xing*, instead, one shifts to “non-doing” and lets one’s *xing* reveal itself. This, in his view, shows that the *Wuzhen pian* also incorporates the Buddhist teachings on “seeing one’s Nature.”

In a way, Weng Baoguang’s view is hardly disputable: the *Wuzhen pian* contains a final portion made of poems devoted to the cultivation of *xing* and abounding in Buddhist terminology. Zhang Boduan’s *Wuzhen pian* preface—likely to be spurious, but authoritative because of its attribution—even presents the origins of Neidan as tied to the teachings of not only Laozi, but also the Buddha. Having said that “Laozi and the Buddha used the learning of *xing* and *ming* to open the gates of expedient methods,” the preface ends as follows:

After I had finished writing my work, I noticed that in it I had only discussed the arts of nourishing *ming* and of making the [bodily] form firm, and I had not investigated the fundamental and original Nature of true awareness. Therefore I carefully studied Buddhist texts, including the *Chuangdeng lu (Transmission of the Lamp)*, until I found the story of the Patriarch who awakened himself on hearing the sound of a pebble striking a stalk of bamboo. Then I framed this into 32 pieces consisting of songs, hymns, poems, and mixed sayings. Now I append them at the end of the scroll. I hope that the way of attaining the foundation and comprehending *xing* is all in here.⁷¹

及乎篇集既成之後，又覺其中惟談養命固形之術，而於本源真覺之性有所未究。遂翫佛書及《傳燈錄》，至於祖師有擊竹而悟者。乃形於歌頌詩曲雜言三十二首，今附之卷末，庶幾達本明性之道盡於此矣。

紫陽真人悟真篇註疏 (Commentary and Sub-Commentary to the *Awakening to Reality* by the Realized Man Ziyang, DZ 141), 4.20a, contains important variants. The External Medicine, as we shall see in the next section, is obtained by the cultivation of *ming* in the first part of the practice.

⁷¹ Ziyang zhenren *Wuzhen pian zhushu*, Preface, 16b. The Patriarch referred to in this passage is Zhixian 智閑. Not all editions of the *Wuzhen pian* contain this final portion, and in some editions this part of the preface is shortened.

Whether the additional poems were written by Zhang Boduan himself—who according to tradition became a Buddhist monk late in life—or by someone else in his name, the purpose of the final portion of his work is clear: acknowledging the importance of cultivating *xing*, and ensuring that the *Wuzhen pian* contains teachings on this subject.⁷²

(b) “First *Xing*, Then *Ming*”

Concerning the Northern Lineage model, Ma Yu is ascribed with a significant answer to the question, “Master, are there ‘action’ and ‘doing’ (*zuowei* 作為) in your Way” 僕問曰：吾師之道有作為否？ It will be remembered that “action” is the term used in the *Wuzhen pian* to describe the initial stages of the practice, concerned with cultivating *ming*. Ma Yu’s answer leaves little space to ambiguity:

No. Every lyric chants of the Dragon and Tiger, of the Boy and the Girl, but these are merely words used to express an idea. Therefore the wondrousness of the essential Way consists in nothing beyond nourishing Breath. Just by yearning for profit and fame, one incessantly squanders one’s Breath. In the learning of the Way there is nothing else: the only task is nourishing Breath. The Liquor of the heart descends and the Breath of the kidneys ascends, until they reach the spleen. If the generative force of the Original Breath is not dispersed, the Elixir coalesces. As for liver and lungs, they are the thoroughfares. After you have practiced quiescence for a long time, you will know this by yourself.⁷³

無也。雖歌詞中每詠龍虎嬰姤，皆寄言爾。是以要道之妙，不過養炁。人但汨沒利名，往往消耗其炁。學道者無他，務在養氣而已。夫心液下降，腎氣上昇，至于脾。元炁氤氳不散，則丹聚矣。若肝與肺，往來之路也，習靜至久，當自知之。

⁷² On the final portion of the *Wuzhen pian* see Sun Yiping 孫亦平, “Zhang Boduan ‘Dao Chan heyi’ sixiang shuping” 張伯端「道禪合一」思想述評, *Zhongguo zhhexueshi* 中國哲學史 1 (2000): 101–8; and Miura Kunio 三浦國雄, “Shin to sei: *Goshinben zenshū kaju shōron*” 身と性：「悟真篇」禪宗歌頌小論, in *Sōdai zenshū no shakaiteki eikyō* 宋代禪宗の社會的影響, ed. Suzuki Tetsuo 鈴木哲雄 (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 2002), 453–62.

⁷³ *Danyang zhenren yulu* 丹陽真人語錄 (Recorded Sayings of the Realized Man Ma Danyang, DZ 1057), 4a–b.

Ma Yu's emphasis on Breath means that not only the stage of cultivating the Essence, but the whole three-stage process of Nanzong is excluded from this model. For him, the way of causing the Liquor of the heart (in alchemical terms, Fire) and the Breath of kidneys (Water) to join with one another is simply "quiescence," which as such does not require any "doing." In fact, in the same work quoted above, Ma Yu displays a rather critical attitude towards both physical cultivation and alchemy as a whole:

The thirty-six *daoyin* ("guiding and pulling") exercises and the twenty-four Reverted Elixirs are but gradual gateways for entering the Dao. Do not mistake them for the Great Dao itself. When you investigate the Stove and Furnace or take the images of the Turtle and Snake as a model, you are giving rise to affairs where there are no affairs, and adding falseness to your Nature. All this is extremely misleading! Therefore the Daoist alchemical scriptures and the books of the various masters, the thousand scriptures and the ten thousand treatises, can all be covered up with one phrase—"clarity and quiescence."⁷⁴

三十六道引，二十四還丹，此乃入道之漸門，不可便為大道。若窮於爐竈，取象於龜蛇，乃無事生事，於性上添偽也。此皆悞人之甚矣。故道家留丹經子書，千經萬論，可一言以蔽之，曰清靜。

According to Ma Yu, "only clarity and quiescence (*qingjing* 清靜) and non-doing are the methods of the highest vehicle" 但清淨無為，最上乘法也。⁷⁵ In saying this, Ma Yu follows his master, Wang Zhe, for whom clarity and quiescence are the key to self-cultivation:

The only important things are the words "clarity and quiescence," which are found within one's Heart. Anything else is not a self-cultivation practice.⁷⁶

只要心中清淨兩箇字，其餘都不是修行。

These views accept that the Beizong model of "conjoined cultivation" gives priority to cultivating *xing* in order to realize

⁷⁴ *Danyang zhenren yulu*, 8a; translation based on Eskildsen, *The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters*, 25.

⁷⁵ *Danyang zhenren yulu*, 4a.

⁷⁶ *Chongyang quanzhen ji*, 10.20b.

one's *ming*. Wang Zhe himself is attributed with this saying:

The guest is *ming*, the host (or: lord, ruler) is *xing*.⁷⁷

賓者是命，主者是性也。

Qiu Chuji 邱處機 (1148–1227, another disciple of Wang Zhe) is credited with the following discourse, which ends by quoting the “Shuogua” sentence seen above:

The Master said: “Those who begin their studies do not know *xing* and *ming*. They just recognize the everyday speeches and activities as *xing*, and the breath going in and out of one’s mouth and nose as their *ming*. This is wrong. How can *xing* and *ming* be two separate principles? You should first exert your mind (*jinxin*) and recognize your true *xing* even before your father and mother gave birth to you; then you will understand the *ming* that has been bestowed to you by Heaven. The *Yijing* says: ‘Inquire into the principles and achieve your *xing*, and thereby accomplish your *ming*.’”⁷⁸

師曰：「初學之人，不知性命，只認每日語言動作者是性，口鼻出入之氣為命，非也。性命豈為二端。先須盡心，認得父母未生前真性，則識天之所賦之命。《易》曰：『窮理盡性，以至於命。』」

In fact, one could trace the origins of the Beizong views on *xing* and *ming* back even earlier—to the *Daode jing* passage that takes “quiescence” as the key for “returning to the mandate” quoted earlier in the present study.

(c) “Quanzhen Alchemy” and the Longmen Tradition: A Brief Note

As both Wang Zhe and Qiu Chuji are credited with the authorship of a Neidan work, the status of Neidan practices in early Quanzhen might appear to differ from what the passages quoted above would

⁷⁷ *Chongyang zhenren shou Danyang ershisi jue*, 1b.

⁷⁸ *Qinghe zhenren beiyong yulu* 清和真人北遊語錄 (Recorded Sayings of the Journey to the North by the Realized Man of Clarity and Harmony, DZ 1310), 1.9a. See above, note 57.

suggest.⁷⁹ Many indications, however, support the view that neither attribution is trustworthy, and that both works essentially describe Zhong-Lü teachings and practices later ascribed to Quanzhen patriarchs.

The relation of the work attributed to Wang Zhe to the Zhong-Lü corpus begins from its title.⁸⁰ Correspondences with earlier Zhong-Lü sources are too numerous to be mentioned here, but they include doctrines, methods, and technical terms; several explanations, moreover, concern subjects discussed in Zhong-Lü texts.⁸¹ On the other hand, the discourse is not based on *xing* or *ming* and does not give priority to either of them. Views on this subject attributed to Wang Zhe in other texts (included those quoted above) are ignored.⁸²

⁷⁹ Wang Zhe is ascribed with the *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* 重陽真人金關玉鎖訣 (Instructions on the Gold Barrier and the Jade Lock by the Realized Man Chongyang, DZ 1156); translated in Louis Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection: Mysticism and Self-Transformation in Early Quanzhen Daoism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007). Qiu Chuji is ascribed with the *Dadan zhizhi*; translated in Paulino T. Belamide, “Self-Cultivation and Quanzhen Daoism, with Special Reference to the Legacy of Qiu Chuji” (PhD diss., Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002).

⁸⁰ The terms *jinguan* and *yusuo* derive from the *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji* (*Xiuzhen shishu*, 16.28b). The *Chuandao ji* is also mentioned in one section of the text (Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*, 337).

⁸¹ Doctrines comprise the three degrees of the practice and their names (Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*, 299), and the classification of immortals into five ranks (337–38). Methods include the classic Zhong-Lü practice called “Causing the Essence (or: the Crystal) of Metal to ascend on the back of the body” (*zhoubou fei jinjing* 肘後飛金精 / 晶), mentioned in the *Chuandao ji* and described in the *Lingbao bifa* (Baldrian-Hussein, *Procédés*, 136–37; see Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*, 314, where the name is translated as Method of Flying the Gold Crystal Behind the Elbow; “behind the elbow” refers to the part of the body that one can touch by bending the arm behind oneself). Typical Zhong-Lü terms include the “three islands” (311), the “three fires” (326), the “purple water chariot” (348), the “four oceans” (359), and several others.

⁸² In his book, Komjathy maintains that the *Jinguan yusuo jue* “more than likely preserves some authentic teachings of Wang Chongyang” (*Cultivating Perfection*, 265). Without providing other evidence on this point besides its format of “dialogic treatise,” he defines this work as “a compilation of oral instructions transcribed during Wang’s various public talks,” “compiled by one or more of Wang’s first-generation disciples” (277 and 273). He notes, nevertheless, that the text displays “characteristics paralleling those of other late Tang dynasty and Song dynasty works, specifically internal alchemy literature indebted to the

The work ascribed to Qiu Chuji is even more obviously tied to the Zhong-Lü tradition. To give one example, the text deals with the Liquor of the heart and the Breath of the kidneys, precisely the subjects on which Ma Yu bases his criticism of “action” in the passage quoted above:

The Dragon is the Breath of Correct Yang within the Liquor of the heart. Control it so that it would not rise out; if it meets the Breath of the kidneys, they would naturally mix. The Tiger is the Water of True Unity within the Breath of the kidneys. Control it so that it would not descend; if it encounters the Liquor of the heart, they would naturally be united. When the Dragon and the Tiger conjoin, a pill shaped like a millet grain is formed. This method is called the Mating of the Dragon and the Tiger.⁸³

龍是心液上正陽之氣，制之不上出；若見腎氣，自然相合。虎是腎氣中真一之水，制之不下走；若見心液，自然相交。龍虎交媾，得一粒如黍米形。此一法，號曰龍虎交媾。

Zhong-Lü textual tradition” (271). In a footnote, he finally admits: “There is also evidence that the *Chuandao ji* may have played some role in the Quanzhen formulation of internal alchemy” (290n16). Komjathy also maintains that “the concerns and technical terminology [of the *Jinguan yusuo jue*] clearly parallel that of the poetry collections, that is, the least controversial early Quanzhen texts” (272). When one follows the opposite procedure and tries to find in the *Jinguan yusuo jue* traces of statements attributed to Wang Zhe (or other Quanzhen masters) about the cultivation of *xing* and *ming*, the result is quite different. Komjathy does not take those statements into account. He deals with the subject *xing* and *ming* in one paragraph, only to note that these “are two of the most frequently appearing technical terms” in early Quanzhen literature (133–34). Nevertheless, Komjathy defines the *Jinguan yusuo jue* as “the most detailed extant text on technical aspects of early Quanzhen practice” (265). On the other hand, he provides evidence of issues in the attribution of the *Dadan zhibi* to Qiu Changchun and calls this text “perhaps the most problematic work of the [Quanzhen] early textual corpus” (410). Recently, his views have reversed; see *The Way of Complete Perfection: A Quanzhen Daoist Anthology* (New York: SUNY Press, 2013), 115–16. Invalidating much of the discourse in his earlier book, he now says that the *Jinguan yusuo jue* is one of the Quanzhen works of “uncertain date and questionable attribution.” Vice versa, the *Dadan zhibi* becomes “the only early Quanzhen text that can be accurately categorized as a manual of alchemical practice and transformation.” Unfortunately, as shown below, this work presents the same issues as the *Jinguan yusuo jue*.

⁸³ *Dadan zhibi*, 1.6a; translation based on Belamide, “Self-Cultivation and Quanzhen Daoism,” 188.

This passage derives from one of the main Zhong-Lü texts.⁸⁴ Here again, we find other clear signs of relation to this corpus, including the illustrations.⁸⁵ This and other evidence has suggested that the attribution of this work to Qiu Chuji is not credible.⁸⁶

Connections of both works with earlier Zhong-Lü texts are sufficiently strong and clear to question whether they are authentic Quanzhen texts or Zhong-Lü texts written (or rewritten) in the names of two major Quanzhen masters. If the second hypothesis is correct, one may wonder whether Quanzhen had at its origins a distinctive “alchemical” core in addition to its views on the cultivation of *xing*. While this issue remains open, one question that can be answered with sufficient certainty is why both works describe a Zhong-Lü and not a Nanzong type of Neidan. One reason may be the fact that both Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin are legendary patriarchs of Quanzhen. The issue, however, is not merely “sectarian”: more importantly, the Nanzong model of self-cultivation, with its priority on *ming* and “doing,” could not fit the

⁸⁴ Compare the *Lingbao bifa*: “The True Dragon is the Breath within the Liquor of the heart. The True Tiger is the Water within the Breath of the kidneys. Breath and Water joining one another is called the Mating of the Dragon and the Tiger” 真龍者，心液中之氣；真虎者，腎氣中之水。氣水相合，乃曰：龍虎交媾也。 The version of the *Lingbao bifa* closest to the *Dadan zhizhi* passage is the one found in the different editions of the *Lüzu quanshu* 呂祖全書, 33.5a; here I have quoted the 33-juan edition, reprinted in *Zhonghua xu Daozang* 中華續道藏 (Taipei: Xin Wenfeng, 1999), vol. 19. For the corresponding passage in the *Daozang* version see Baldrian-Hussein, *Procédés*, 219 and 221.

⁸⁵ Pictures in the *Dadan zhizhi* bear clear analogies with those found in another Zhong-Lü text, the *Xiuzhen taiji hunyuan zhixuan tu* 修真太極混元指玄圖 (Charts of the Inchoate Origin of the Great Ultimate Pointing to the Mystery for the Cultivation of Reality, DZ 150). Other shared traits include the discourse on “demons,” which draws on the *Chuandao ji* (Belamide, “Self-Cultivation and Quanzhen Daoism,” 208–10), and the mention of Shi Jianwu 施肩吾, who is credited with the authorship of Zhong-Lü texts (190).

⁸⁶ The non-authenticity of this attribution is discussed in Ge Guolong, “*Dadan zhizhi* fei Qiu Chuji zuopin kao” 《大丹直指》非邱處機作品考, *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 3 (2008): 43–50. Belamide also notes: “There are indications that this work was not written personally” by Qiu Chuji (“Self-Cultivation and Quanzhen Daoism,” 154). The *Dadan zhizhi* mentions *xing* and *ming* (for two examples, see notes 5 and 31 above), and Belamide includes a valuable discussion of the Quanzhen views on these subjects in his dissertation (54–64).

Quanzhen model, with its emphasis on *xing* and “non-doing.”

Not surprisingly, the two works attributed to Wang Zhe and to Qiu Chuji did not exert any visible influence on the later history of Quanzhen itself and of Neidan as a whole. While the Zhong-Lü tradition appears to have faded, the Longmen 龍門 (Dragon Gate) lineage—originally created as a branch of Quanzhen, and believed to have been founded by none other than Qiu Chuji—developed in different ways. Its first major codifier, Wang Changyue 王常月 (?–1680), in particular, associated the Buddhist set of “precepts, concentration, and wisdom” (*śīla*, *samadhi*, and *prajña*) with three progressively higher stages in the Longmen ordination. As was shown by Monica Esposito, these stages represent “a process of gradual practice corresponding to different levels of control of body (*shen* 身), mind (*xin* 心), and Intention (*yi* 意).”⁸⁷ Noticing that Wang Changyue regarded the cultivation of *xing* as the “fundamental practice” in his Most High Supreme Great Vehicle (*zuishang wushang dasheng* 最上無上大乘), Esposito adds: “Wang saw this vehicle as congruent with the original meaning of Quanzhen, an orthodox meditative path that regards ‘purity, tranquility and non-action’ (*qingjing wuwei*) as the key to self-cultivation. Compared to this, the various alchemic techniques are seen as belonging to the ‘small vehicle’ (*xiaosheng* 小乘) or the ‘small path’ (*xiaodao* 小道) as they fail to provide insight into one’s own Nature.”⁸⁸

By giving priority to *xing* and to “purity and tranquility” (or “clarity and quiescence”), Wang Changyue continues the discourse of the early Quanzhen masters. However, his discourse should also

⁸⁷ Monica Esposito, “Longmen Taoism in Qing China: Doctrinal Ideal and Local Reality,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001): 191–231 (quotation from 194–95). The three stages correspond to the Precepts for Initial Realization (*chuzhen jie* 初真戒), the Intermediate Precepts (*zhongji jie* 中極戒), and the Precepts for Celestial Immortality (*tianxian jie* 天仙戒). On the triad of “body,” “mind,” and “intention” in the context of cultivating *xing* and *ming* see also Robinet, *Introduction à l’alchimie intérieure taoïste*, 191–95.

⁸⁸ Esposito, “Longmen Taoism in Qing China,” 196. Her source for these statements is the *Biyuan tanjing* 碧苑壇經 (Platform Sutra of the Jasper Garden), a work compiled by Wang Changyue’s disciples and also known as *Longmen xinfa* 龍門心法 (Core Teachings of Longmen).

be seen in the context of the numerous views that, both before and after him, the Neidan tradition has formulated about the “conjoined cultivation” of *xing* and *ming*. Below, I will give a few examples of the concepts used in this context, drawing from the works of three well-known masters. All of them claim affiliation to Quanzhen, by which they do not mean the monastic order in the strict sense, but the teachings on self-cultivation that we have surveyed above.⁸⁹

VI. Two Approaches to Neidan

Among other ways of conceiving their “conjoined cultivation,” for some Neidan masters the integration of *xing* and *ming* essentially consists in looking at the two models of self-cultivation as different degrees or stages in the practice. While both degrees or stages are required and are said ultimately to lead to the same state of realization, they take account of the qualities and attitudes of those to whom they are addressed. The earliest major discourse on this subject is by Li Daochun who, writing four centuries before Wang Changyue, describes the cultivation of *xing* as based precisely on precepts, concentration, and wisdom. In doing so, he also proposes a model for its integration with the cultivation of *ming* that has left clear marks on the later Neidan tradition.

In his “Essay on *Xing* and *Ming*,” already quoted in part above, Li Daochun gives an elaborate example of the functions of *xing* and *ming* in the framework of their “conjoined cultivation.” Maintaining that both *xing* and *ming* should be cultivated, Li Daochun begins by criticizing adepts who only attend to one or the

⁸⁹ I cannot refer to other models of “conjoined cultivation” in detail here; additional subjects that would require attention include, for instance, the Neidan views on “immediate” (*dun* 頓) and “gradual” (*jian* 漸) realization. To cite only two Western-language studies that describe other models, for the period prior to Wang Changyue see the article by Yokote Yutaka cited above (note 59), which surveys the views of Niu Daochun 牛道淳 (fl. 1299), Mu Changzhao 牧常晁 (late 13th c.), Xiao Tingzhi 蕭廷芝 (fl. 1260–64), Chen Zhixu 陳致虛 (1290–ca. 1368), Wang Jie, and He Daoquan 何道全 (1319?–1399). For the later period, see Esposito, “Longmen Taoism in Qing China,” 203–13, where she discusses the important Longmen recodification by Min Yide, which involved naming the famous *Secret of the Golden Flower* (*Jinhua zongzhi* 金華宗旨) as the exemplary text for the cultivation of *xing*.

other, qualifying them as “Buddhist” or “Daoist,” respectively. To make his point clearer, Li Daochun uses two expressions that typify Buddhism and Daoism, saying that only by realizing *xing* can Daoist adepts also “escape the cycles” of kalpas, and only by knowing *ming* can Buddhist adepts also “revert” to the origin:

Xing cannot be established without *ming*, and *ming* cannot be preserved without *xing*. While the names are two, the principle is one. Alas! The Buddhist and Daoist disciples of the present day divide *xing* and *ming* into two, taking one side and criticizing the other. They just do not know that neither the “lone *yin*” (*guyin*, here meaning *xing*) nor the “solitary *yang*” (*guayang*, i.e. *ming*) can fully accomplish the great undertaking. If those who cultivate their *ming* do not comprehend their *xing*, how can they escape the cycles of kalpas? If those who see their *xing* do not understand their *ming*, how can they finally revert [to the origin]?⁹⁰

性無命不立，命無性不存，其名雖二，其理一也。嗟乎！今之學徒，緇流道子，以性命分為二，各執一邊，互相是非，殊不知孤陰寡陽皆不能成全大事。修命者不明其性，寧逃劫運？見性者不知其命，末後何歸？

Thus, according to Li Daochun, Daoist practice should be completed by incorporating elements ordinarily deemed to pertain to Buddhism (cultivation of *xing*), and vice versa for Buddhist practice (cultivation of *ming*).

(a) “Knowing by Birth,” “Knowing by Study”

The opposition, or the integration, of Daoism and Buddhism is a frequent subject in the Neidan discourses on *xing* and *ming*, but this is not Li Daochun’s main point. Having said the above, he adds an important detail: some persons are innately able to “jointly attain *xing* and *ming*.” These persons, whom he qualifies as “superior” (*gaoshang* 高上), are able to do so first through practices of a Buddhist type—precepts, concentration, and wisdom (*jie* 戒, *ding* 定, and *hui* 慧; or *śīla*, *samadhi*, and *prajña*)—and then through Neidan:

⁹⁰ *Zhonghe ji*, 4.1b.

The superior persons jointly attain *xing* and *ming*. First, by observing the precepts and by concentration and wisdom they empty their minds. Then, by refining Essence, Breath, and Spirit they protect their bodies.⁹¹

高上之士，性命兼達，先持戒定慧而虛其心，後鍊精氣神而保其身。

These two ways of cultivation, respectively focused on *xing* and *ming*, enable those practitioners to make both of them “intact”:

When the body is tranquil and at rest, the basis of *ming* is permanently firm; when the mind is empty and clear, the foundation of *xing* is entirely illuminated. When one’s *xing* is entirely illuminated, there is no coming and going; when one’s *ming* is permanently firm, there is no death and birth. As one reaches the inchoate, complete, and immediate [awakening], one directly enters non-doing: *xing* and *ming* are both intact, and form and spirit are both wondrous.⁹²

身安泰則命基永固，心虛澄則性本圓明。性圓明則無來無去，命永固則無死無生。至於混成圓頓，直入無為，性命雙全，形神俱妙也。

In another discussion on the same subject, Li Daochun clarifies the difference between these two possible approaches to Neidan. “Superior persons,” he says, directly fulfill their *xing*, and through this they also spontaneously fulfill their *ming*; everyone else, instead, should first work on *ming* and then on *xing*. Using two expressions of the *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects of Confucius*), he adds that these two approaches are addressed to those who “know by birth” (*sheng er zhi* 生而知) and those who “know by study” (*xue er zhi* 學而知), respectively:

If those who study the Dao are provided since the beginning with inborn capacity (*genqi*), they directly fulfill their *xing*, and of their own they [also] fulfill their *ming*. This is “knowing by birth.” Those in whom the inborn capacity is shallow and weak cannot directly fulfill their *xing*. Enabled to do this by the teaching (*zi jiao er ru*), from Being they reach Non-Being, and from the coarse they attain the

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *Zhonghe ji*, 4.1b–2a.

wondrous. Therefore, first they fulfill their *ming* and then they fulfill their *xing*. This is “knowing by study.”⁹³

學道之人夙有根器，一直了性，自然了命也，此「生而知之」也。根器淺薄者，不能一直了性，自教而入，從有至無，自粗達妙，所以先了命而後了性也，此「學而知之」也。

In this view, the standard three-stage Nanzong practice is addressed to those who should “first fulfill their *ming*.” According to Li Daochun—whose explanation here is slightly different from the ordinary one—the first stage (“refining the Essence to transmute it into Breath”) focuses on the body and serves to fulfill one’s *ming*. The second stage (“refining the Breath to transmute it into Spirit”) focuses on the mind and serves to fulfill one’s *xing*. When, in the third stage (“refining Spirit to revert to Emptiness”), body and mind conjoin, *xing* and *ming* are both made “intact” and the Elixir is achieved.⁹⁴

(b) “Non-Doing” and “Doing”

Cultivating *xing* and *ming* corresponds, according to Li Daochun, to compounding the Internal Medicine (*neiyao* 內藥) and the External Medicine (*waiyao* 外藥), respectively. Those who “know by birth” can directly compound the Internal Medicine; others, instead, should first compound the External Medicine:

The External Medicine allows one to cure illnesses, and to “prolong your life and have lasting presence.”⁹⁵ The Internal Medicine allows one to transcend the world, and to exit from Being and enter Non-Being. In general, those who study the Dao should begin from the External Medicine; then they will know the Internal Medicine by themselves. Superior persons have already planted the foundation of virtue, and know it by birth; therefore they do not refine the External Medicine, and directly refine the Internal Medicine.⁹⁶

⁹³ *Zhonghe ji*, 3.10b. “Knowing by birth” and “knowing by study” derive from *Lunyu*, 16:9: “Those who know by birth are superior; those who know by study are next” 生而知之者，上也；學而知之者，次也。

⁹⁴ *Zhonghe ji*, 2.6a–7b, where Li Daochun expounds the Nanzong practice.

⁹⁵ This phrase derives from *Daode jing*, sec. 59.

⁹⁶ *Zhonghe ji*, 2.4a.

外藥可以治病，可以長生久視。內藥可以超越，可以有入無。
大凡學道，必先從外藥起，然後自知內藥。高上之士，夙植德本，生而知之，故不鍊外藥，便鍊內藥。

In connection with the two “medicines,” Li Daochun raises another important point, concerning the roles played by “doing” and “non-doing”:

With the Internal Medicine “there is no doing, yet nothing is not done.” With the External Medicine “there is doing, and something whereby it does.”⁹⁷

內藥，無為無不為；外藥，有為有以為。

Since one’s *xing* is innately perfect, self-cultivation only consists in allowing it to manifest itself through “non-doing.” Cultivating *ming*, instead, requires that one “does” the Neidan practice. Li Daochun concludes his discourse by saying:

The External Medicine brings one’s *ming* to fulfillment; the Internal Medicine brings one’s *xing* to fulfillment. When the two Medicines are complete, form and spirit are both wondrous.⁹⁸

外藥了命，內藥了性。二藥全，形神俱妙。

The two “medicines,” therefore, are both necessary and lead to the same goal, but they reflect two degrees or stages in the practice.

(c) “Nothing to Cultivate” and “Setting to Practice”

Li Daochun’s discourse summarized above had a significant impact on the later Neidan tradition.⁹⁹ In his “Essay on the Inchoate

⁹⁷ *Zhonghe ji*, 2.4a. The phrases in quotation marks derive from *Daode jing*, sec. 48 and 38, respectively. On “doing” and “non-doing” in the context of cultivating *xing* and *ming* see Ge Guolong, “Xingming shuangxiu yujing xia de ‘youwei’ yu ‘wuwei’” 性命雙修語境下的「有為」與「無為」, *Qi Lu wenhua yanjiu* 齊魯文化研究 9 (2010): 288–92.

⁹⁸ *Zhonghe ji*, 2.4a–b.

⁹⁹ In addition to Wang Jie and Liu Yiming, discussed below, it also attracted the attention of Chen Zhixu, who quotes the whole portion concerned with the External and the Internal Medicines in his *Jindan dayao*, 5.4b.

Merging of *Xing* and *Ming*” (“Xingming hunrong lun” 性命混融論), his second-generation disciple, Wang Jie, points out that the sole cultivation of *xing* or *ming* leads to incomplete states of realization. Focusing only on *xing*, he says, makes it impossible to manifest the “pervading” power of Spirit (*shentong* 神通), by which he seems to refer to the supernatural knowledge of aspects of the sensible world (in the sense of Buddhist *abhijñā*, that is, in order to comprehend or to renounce them, according to their kind); focusing only on *ming* may grant long life, but not transcending the world:

If you only cultivate your *xing* and do not cultivate your *ming*, after your body dies your Nature becomes a *yin* spirit (*yinshen*), and you cannot manifest the pervading power of Spirit. If you only cultivate your *ming* and do not cultivate your *xing*, your body may live a long life, but you will forever reside in the phenomenal world and will be unable to transcend the cycles of kalpas.¹⁰⁰

苟有只修性而不修命，身死之後，性為陰靈，不能現神通。只修命而不修性，身雖長生，終住於相，不能超劫運。

Both *xing* and *ming*, therefore, should be cultivated. However, analogously to Li Daochun, Wang Jie emphasizes the priority of *xing* over *ming*, and states that by knowing one’s *xing* one can also know one’s *ming*:

To cultivate the real while living in the vulgar,
to exit the world while dwelling in the dust,
you should first awaken to your *xing*.

在俗修真，居塵出世，當以悟性為先。

In cultivating the real, *xing* is the first principle;
as you see your *xing*, you do the work for refining your *ming*.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ *Huanzhen ji*, 2.5b. The purpose of Neidan is often described as the creation of an immortal “yang spirit” (*yangshen* 陽神). See van Enkevort, “The Three Treasures,” especially 136–41, whose discussion is based on Wu Shouyang’s views but also applies to other Neidan traditions.

¹⁰¹ *Huanzhen ji*, 3.39a and 3.27a.

修真先以性為宗，見性方為鍊命工。

Although Wang Jie does not use the terms “non-doing” and “doing,” one can hardly doubt that he has them in mind when he writes these verses, where he draws a distinction between having “nothing to cultivate” and “setting to practice”:

For *xing*, there is fundamentally nothing to cultivate or verify; for *ming*, instead, you should set to practice.¹⁰²

性本無修證，命乃有施為。

Finally, using two expressions from the *Daode jing*, Wang Jie says that those who dwell in “non-doing,” and thus “have no desires,” nourish their *xing*; those who “have desires,” and therefore are bound to “doing,” perform the Neidan practice in order to cultivate their *ming*:

Without desires, you nourish your *xing*;
with desires, you set to practice.¹⁰³

無欲養性，有欲施功。

In other works—in particular, his *Ruyao jing* commentary—Wang Jie describes what some would call the “course” (*cursus*) of the ordinary Neidan practice. The passages quoted above make clear, however, that the main part of Wang Jie’s Neidan consists in the doctrines on *xing*.

(d) “Superior Virtue” and “Inferior Virtue”

Traces of Li Daochun’s views are also clearly visible in the works of Liu Yiming, who belonged to one of the northern lineages of Longmen. While his discourse is comparable to the one made by Li Daochun, Liu Yiming focuses on the ideas of “superior virtue”

¹⁰² *Huanzhen ji*, 3.39a.

¹⁰³ *Huanzhen ji*, 1.3a–b. The two expressions used by Wang Jie derive from *Daode jing*, sec. 1.

(*shangde* 上德) and “inferior virtue” (*xiade* 下德), two other terms derived from the *Daode jing* that respectively refer to the ways of “non-doing” and “doing.”¹⁰⁴

According to Liu Yiming, neither *xing* nor *ming* is more or less important than the other, but their cultivation corresponds to different stages in the practice:

Then there are those who do not comprehend the Great Dao. They either say that *ming* is more important and *xing* is less important, or that *xing* is more important and *ming* is less important. Both are wrong. *Xing* and *ming* must be cultivated in conjunction, but in the practice there should be two stages (*duan*).¹⁰⁵

更有不明大道之流，乃曰命為重，性為輕，或曰性為重，命為輕，皆非也。夫性命必須雙修，工夫還要兩段。

Analogously to Li Daochun, Liu Yiming says that those who possess “superior virtue” cultivate their *xing* by “non-doing,” and through this they also cultivate their *ming*; those who possess “inferior virtue,” instead, should follow the way of “doing,” by cultivating first their *ming* and then their *xing*:

In superior virtue, there is no need to cultivate *ming* and one just cultivates *xing*: when *xing* is fulfilled, *ming* is also fulfilled. In inferior virtue, one must first cultivate *ming* and then cultivate *xing*: after *ming* is fulfilled, one must also fulfill *xing*. Fulfilling *ming* is “doing”; fulfilling *xing* is “non-doing.”¹⁰⁶

上德者，不待修命而即修性，性了而命亦了。下德者，必先修命而後修性，了命又必了性。了命者有為，了性者無為。

¹⁰⁴ *Daode jing*, sec. 38: “Superior virtue has no doing: there is nothing whereby it does. Inferior virtue does: there is something whereby it does.” I deal in more detail with the subject of the present subsection in an article entitled “Superior Virtue, Inferior Virtue: A Doctrinal Theme in the Works of the Daoist Master Liu Yiming (1734–1821),” *T’oung Pao* 2014/15 (forthcoming).

¹⁰⁵ *Xiuzhen houbian* 修真後辨 (Further Discriminations in Cultivating Reality), 31b–32a; see Liu Yiming, *Cultivating the Tao: Taoism and Internal Alchemy*, trans. Fabrizio Pregadio (Mountain View: Golden Elixir Press, 2013), 119. On this work see my “Discriminations in Cultivating the Tao: Liu Yiming (1734–1821) and His *Xiuzhen houbian*,” in *Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 2014 (forthcoming).

¹⁰⁶ *Xiuzhen houbian*, 32a; Pregadio, trans., *Cultivating the Tao*, 119.

These statements show that Liu Yiming follows the model of “conjoined cultivation” formulated by Li Daochun. This also leads him to express the same idea as that of Wang Zhe (“The original True Nature is called Golden Elixir”), but in a more elaborate way:

Golden Elixir is another name for one’s fundamental Nature (*benxing*), inchoate and yet accomplished. There is no other Golden Elixir outside one’s fundamental Nature. All human beings have this Golden Elixir complete in themselves: it is entirely achieved in everybody. It is neither more in a sage, nor less in an ordinary person. It is the seed of the Immortals and the Buddhas, the root of the worthies and the sages.¹⁰⁷

金丹者，混成本性之別名，非本性之外又有一金丹。這箇丹人人具足，箇箇圓成。處聖不增，處凡不減，乃仙佛之種子，聖賢之根本。

While this well-known passage is concerned with *xing*, we should now look more closely at the meanings and the functions of *ming* in this view of Neidan.

VII. “Returning to *Ming*”

As we have seen, Neidan in general distinguishes between an “original *ming*” and a *ming* identified with the course of one’s life. Li Daochun elaborates on this view by positing two types of “body” and “mind,” associated with the precelestial and the postcelestial domains: *xing* and *ming*, he says, pertain to the precelestial mind and body, but they are “yoked” and “burdened” by the postcelestial mind and body.

This distinction is accepted by several later authors of Neidan works. In particular, Wang Jie seems to be first identifiable Neidan author to distinguish between two aspects of *xing* by using the Neo-Confucian expression “Nature consisting in one’s character” (or temperament, disposition; *qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性), which he contrasts with the concept of “fundamental Nature” (*benran zhi xing* 本然之性):

¹⁰⁷ *Wuzhen zhibi*, 1.4b (commentary on “Lüshi” 律詩, poem no. 3). “Inchoate and yet accomplished” (*huncheng* 混成) derives from *Daode jing*, sec. 25.

Therefore there are a fundamental Nature and a Nature consisting in one's character. The fundamental Nature concerns the movement of consciousness. The Nature consisting in one's character concerns cravings and desires.¹⁰⁸

故有本然之性，有氣質之性。本然之性者，知覺運動是也。氣質之性者，貪嗔癡愛是也。

The distinction between the two types of *xing* places Li Daochun's discourse in a clearer perspective: what "yokes" one's true, precelestial Nature is the inferior, postcelestial "Nature consisting in one's character."

Several centuries later, the difference between the two types of *xing* becomes the focus of a broader discourse that also involves two corresponding types of *ming*. Demonstrating its importance, this discourse is found in at least three almost identical versions in Neidan sources: the 17th-century *Xingming guizhi*, a work by Dong Dening 董德寧 (fl. 1787–88), and a work by Liu Yiming. I will draw here on Liu Yiming's version, as his discussion is especially important for our present subject.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ *Huanzhen ji*, 2.9b. The expression "Nature consisting in one's character" is actually found in an earlier work attributed—in a hardly credible way—to Zhang Boduan, which contains a passage partly identical to the Neo-Confucian formulation of this concept by Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–77); *Qinghua miwen* 青華祕文 (Secret Text of Green Florescence, DZ 240), 1.7b. On this point see Kong Linghong 孔令宏, "Zhang Boduan de xingming sixiang yanjiu" 張伯端的性命思想研究, *Fudan xuebao (Shehui kexue ban)* 復旦學報(社會科學版) 1 (2001): 46–50 (especially 48–49); and Liu Ning 劉寧, "Liu Yiming dandao lun zhong de xing yu ming" 劉一明丹道論中的性與命, *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 3 (2007): 47–50, especially 47.

¹⁰⁹ The other two versions are found in *Xingming guizhi*, "Yuan" 元, 9b–10a (translated in Darga, *Das alchemistische Buch von innerem Wesen und Lebensenergie*, 72–73); and in Dong Dening's *Zhouyi cantong qi zhengyi* 周易參同契正義 (The Correct Meaning of the Seal of the Unity of the Three in Accordance with the Book of Changes; *Daozang jinghua lu* 道藏精華錄 ed.), 2.86. On Liu Yiming's views of *xing* and *ming* see Liu Ning, "Liu Yiming dandao lun zhong de xing yu ming," and Bai Xiantang 白嫻棠, "'Xingming shuangxiu' shiyu xia Liu Yiming de 'dao' 'de' lun pouxi" 「性命雙修」視域下劉一明的「道」「德」論剖析, *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 1 (2012): 53–57.

(a) True and False *Xing* and *Ming*

In an essay entitled “True and False *Xing* and *Ming*” (“Zhenjia xingming” 真假性命), Liu Yiming describes the four kinds of *xing* and *ming* as follows:

Concerning *xing*, there are a *xing* consisting in what is bestowed by Heaven, and a *xing* consisting in one’s character. Concerning *ming*, there are a *ming* consisting in the destiny given by Heaven, and a *ming* consisting in the Breath of the Dao (*daoqi*).

The *xing* that is bestowed by Heaven is innate knowledge and innate capacity. It is what “possesses all principles and responds to the ten thousand pursuits.”

The *xing* that is one’s character can be worthy or foolish, wise or inept. The endowed Breath differs in purity and impurity, in goodness and badness.

The *ming* that is the destiny given by Heaven can last a short or a long time, and can meet exhaustion or flow without hindrances. Wealth and honor, hardship or prosperity differ in range and are dissimilar.

The *ming* that is the Breath of the Dao is firm and strong, pure and flawless; in it, life and death are equal, and it continuously preserves itself for numberless eons. Heaven and Earth do not go against it, and *yin* and *yang* do not adhere to it.¹¹⁰

性有天賦之性，有氣質之性。命有天數之命，有道氣之命。天賦之性，良知良能，具眾理而應萬事者也。氣質之性，賢愚智不肖，秉氣清濁，邪正不等者也。天數之命，天壽窮通，富貴困亨，長短不一者也。道氣之命，剛健純粹，齊一生死，永劫長存，天地不違，陰陽不拘者也。

¹¹⁰ *Xiuzhen houbian*, 8a; Pregadio, trans., *Cultivating the Tao*, 43–44. The expression translated as “destiny given by Heaven” (*tianshu zhi ming* 天數之命, lit., “destiny consisting in Heaven’s numbers”) refers especially to the length of one’s life. The terms “innate knowledge” (*liangzhi*) and “innate capacity” (*liangneng*) derive from *Mengzi*, 13:15: “What one is able to do without learning is innate capacity; what one knows without pondering is innate knowledge.” The sentence translated in quotation marks is drawn from Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 (1130–1200) *Mengzi jizhu* 孟子集註 (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 ed.), 7.1a.

After this passage, Liu Yiming adds that the *xing* given by Heaven and the *ming* that is the Breath of the Dao are the “true” (*zhen* 真) *xing* and *ming*, while one’s character and destiny are the “false” (*ja* 假) *xing* and *ming*.

The most complex of the four definitions is the one concerning *ming* as the “Breath of the Dao” (*daoqi* 道氣). The corresponding passages in the two other versions of this discourse have “form and Breath” (*xingqi* 形氣) and “form and body” (*xingtǐ* 形體), respectively. Clearly all of these terms refer to *ming* as one’s embodiment, but Liu Yiming emphasizes that this embodiment occurs in the first place within the One Breath (*yiqi* 一氣) of the Dao, the state of Unity prior to multiplicity. Being not manifested in space and time, this embodiment “preserves itself for numberless eons,” and for it “life and death are equal.” In another work, Liu Yiming writes:

Ming is Heaven’s mandate. This is not the *ming* of having a short or a long life. It is, instead, the *ming* in which having a short or a long life are not two different things.¹¹¹

命者，天命，非天壽之命，乃天壽不二之命。

The unmanifested embodiment corresponding to this primal *ming* is what Li Daochun and other Neidan authors, including Liu Yiming himself, call “dharma-body.” Only secondarily does *ming* manifest itself as one’s physical existence, subjected to birth and death and to a particular “destiny” and life span; and only under this second aspect is *ming* related to “fate” and length of life.

Liu Yiming does not hesitate to call the second aspect of *ming* “false,” a definition to be understood in relation to the reality of the first aspect of *ming*. Analogously, one’s character or personality is “false” in relation to the true *xing* bestowed by Heaven. However, according to Liu Yiming, by means of self-cultivation the true aspects of *xing* and *ming* can transform the respective false aspects:

If those who cultivate the Dao know how to cultivate the *xing* that is bestowed by Heaven, they can use it to transform the *xing* that is

¹¹¹ *Wudao lu* 悟道錄 (Records of an Awakening to the Dao), 27a.

one's character. If they know how to cultivate the *ming* that is the Breath of the Dao, they can use it to change the *ming* that is the destiny given by Heaven. When they do this, they realize the Way of *xing* and *ming*.¹¹²

修道者，若知修天賦之性，以化氣質之性，修道氣之命，以轉天數之命，性命之道得矣。

“Choosing *ming*,” in this view, consists in returning to one's primal *ming*, and this is the way to change one's destiny. But how does Heaven respond to those who intend to take their destiny in their own hands and change it?

(b) “Heaven does not Go against Him”

Liu Yiming's answer to the above question is closely related to his views on the function of Neidan. In another discussion of *xing* and *ming*, he mentions the terms External Medicine and Internal Medicine, also used by Li Daochun in one of the passages discussed above. While Liu Yiming understands these terms in the same sense as does Li Daochun, he explains their purport by means of sentences found in the *Yijing*:

The Internal Medicine fulfills one's *xing*; this is the same as saying that “when he follows Heaven, he abides by the times of Heaven.” The External Medicine fulfills one's *ming*; this is the same as saying that “when he precedes Heaven, Heaven does not go against him.”¹¹³

夫內藥了性，即後天而奉天時。外藥了命，即先天而天弗違。

In the *Yijing*, both sentences describe the person who “accords in virtue with Heaven and Earth.”¹¹⁴ Liu Yiming, instead, uses them to describe the two main aspects or stages of the Neidan practice, respectively concerned with *ming* and with *xing*:

¹¹² *Xiuzhen houbian*, 8a; Pregadio, trans., *Cultivating the Tao*, 44.

¹¹³ *Xiuzhen biannan* 修真辨難 (Discriminations on Difficult Points in Cultivating Reality), 4a. The *Xiuzhen houbian*, quoted above, is a sequel to this work. There are several shared passages in the two texts, and in fact a fourth version of the discourse discussed above is found in the *Biannan*, 5a–b.

¹¹⁴ *Yijing*, “Wenyan zhuan” 文言傳 (“Commentary on the Words of the Text”) on the hexagram Qian ☰.

“[Heaven] does not go against him” means that, using the Way of inverting the course (*ni*), you take action ahead of events (*xianfa zhiren*). By doing so, you “seize creation and transformation” and coagulate the Elixir.¹¹⁵

“He abides by the times [of Heaven]” means that, using the Way of following the course (*shun*), you apply the natural fire phases. By doing so, you merge the five agents and deliver the Elixir.

The former and the latter are two stages of the practice; therefore we speak of the conjoined cultivation of *xing* and *ming*. The Internal and the External [Medicines] are equally cultivated; therefore we speak of the twofold operation of inverting the course and following the course.¹¹⁶

弗違者，用逆道，先發制人，所以奪造化而結丹。奉時者，用順道，天然火候，所以融五行而脫丹。前後兩段工夫，故曰性命雙修。內外一齊修持，故曰逆順並用。

Cultivating *ming*, according to this passage, is equivalent to inverting the course (*ni* 逆) of creation. This corresponds to the first stage or aspect of Neidan, when one transcends the limitations of the cosmic domain by inverting the sequence through which the Dao generates Spirit, Breath, and Essence and gives birth to the ten thousand things. Even though inverting this sequence amounts to “seizing creation and transformation,” Heaven does not object to this, because inverting the course results in returning to the original “mandate of Heaven.” In the second stage or aspect of the practice, having completed the inversion process, one performs the opposite movement, realizing one’s Nature by following the course (*shun* 順) of life and by “abiding by the times of Heaven.”

The movements of ascent to the principle and of re-descent to

¹¹⁵ The expression used by Liu Yiming, found in many other Neidan texts, derives from the *Ruyao jing*: “Steal Heaven and Earth, seize creation and transformation” 盜天地，奪造化. See *Ruyao jing zhujie*, 6b.

¹¹⁶ *Xiuzhen biannan*, 4a. The “natural fire phases” (*tianran huohou* 天然火候) are not intentionally timed according to a predetermined sequence, as is usually done in Neidan, but occur spontaneously. “Delivering” (*tuo* 脫) the Elixir is related to the image of the Elixir as an embryo, which undergoes conception, gestation, and birth through the alchemical practice.

the manifested world are distinct, but there is no interval between them, and the latter is only the continuation of the former. What distinguishes the two movements is the fact that the point of arrival is by no means the same as the point of departure: while one at first uses (“borrows,” *jie* 借) the postcelestial in order to ascend to the precelestial, one then “transforms” (*hua* 化) the postcelestial by means of the precelestial: the two domains become one. In fact, even the distinction between *xing* and *ming* fades as one reaches the highest point of the ascensional course, and the movement of re-descent allows one to realize both. Liu Yiming clarifies these points when he says:

To cultivate the postcelestial *xing* and *ming*, one follows the course of creation and transformation. To cultivate the precelestial *xing* and *ming*, one inverts the course of creation and transformation.

Those who practice the great cultivation borrow the postcelestial in order to return to the precelestial, and cultivate the precelestial in order to transform the postcelestial. When the precelestial and the postcelestial inchoately become one, when *xing* and *ming* coagulate with one another, this is called “achieving the Elixir.”¹¹⁷

修後天性命者，順其造化；修先天性命者，逆其造化。大修行人，借後天而返先天，修先天而化後天，先天後天，混而為一，性命凝結，是謂丹成。

“Inverting the course,” therefore, is the way to return to one’s original *ming* and thereby to attain one’s *xing*, while “following the course” is the way to manifest one’s *xing* and thereby to realize one’s *ming*.

(c) Having a Short Life Span: The Case of Yan Hui

In the perspective described by Liu Yiming and by the masters who share this view of Neidan, cultivating and realizing *ming* is different from extending one’s life span: not all those who enjoy a long life have fulfilled their *ming*, and the opposite is also true. Neidan

¹¹⁷ *Xiuzhen bianman*, 4a.

literature includes several replies to the famous question of why Yan Hui 顏回, Confucius' favorite disciple, intellectually bright and morally flawless, had a "short *ming*" (*duanming* 短命) and died at a young age.¹¹⁸ The most elaborate of these replies is given by Liu Yiming. In reading his words, it is useful to remember that, through the *Zhuangzi*, Yan Hui also became a paragon of Daoist practice, so accomplished that Zhuangzi turns him into Confucius' master in the art of "sitting and forgetting" (*zuowang* 坐忘).¹¹⁹ Answering the objection of a disciple, who observed that Yan Hui should have been able to "fulfill his *ming*" (*liaoming*) but instead had a "short life span," Liu Yiming replies:

Fulfilling or not fulfilling one's *ming* should be distinguished according to the principles of the Dao, and should not be investigated on the basis of the illusory [bodily] form (*huanxing*). Those who have not fulfilled the Dao may be alive but look as if they are dead; those who are able to fulfill the Dao may be dead but look as if they are alive. In fact, what dies is the illusory form, and what does not die is the Dao. Master Yan obtained the Dao of Confucius; he dwelled "where others would not have endured the distress,"¹²⁰ and he delighted himself therein. "Whenever he got hold of what was good, he earnestly cherished it without going astray."¹²¹ He had obtained the precelestial Breath of True Unity, and he had reverted to the root and had returned to the mandate; he was not seized by *yin* and *yang*, and he had attained the position of a sage.

Since he was not attached to this illusory body, he could die at any time. With regard to the predicament caused by the people of Kuang, [Yan Hui] told Confucius: "While you are alive, how would I dare

¹¹⁸ In addition to the passage quoted below, two other examples are found in *Zhonghe ji*, 3.11a, and *Minghe yuyin* 鳴鶴餘音 (Echoes of the Call of Cranes, DZ 1100), 3.19b.

¹¹⁹ "Yen Hui said, 'I smash up my limbs and body, drive out perception and intellect, cast off form, do away with understanding, and make myself identical with the Great Thoroughfare. This is what I mean by sitting down and forgetting everything.' Confucius said, '. . . So you really are a worthy man after all! With your permission, I'd like to become your follower.'" *Zhuangzi*, ch. 6; Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 90–91.

¹²⁰ *Lunyu*, 6.11.

¹²¹ *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean), sec. 8.

die?”¹²² This suffices to see that life and death depend on oneself and do not depend on Heaven.¹²³

了命不了命，在道理上分別，不在幻形上講究。未了道，雖生如死；能了道，雖死如生。蓋所死者幻形，而不死者道。顏子得孔子之道，居「人不堪其憂」之地，而樂在其中。「得一善，則拳拳服膺，而弗失之。」是已得先天真一之氣，歸根復命，不為陰陽所拘，到得聖人地位。自不愛此幻形，可以死的矣。觀於匡人之危，對孔子曰：「子在，回何敢死？」亦足以見生死由己不由天。

According to Liu Yiming, Yan Hui's early death is not something that “depends on Heaven,” in whose regard Yan Hui was impeccable; having “reverted to the root and returned to the mandate” (*Daode jing*), his destiny was in his own hands. One could take this as one of the Neidan readings of the famous Daoist statement, “My destiny is in me and not in Heaven” (*wo ming zai wo, bu zai tian* 我命在我，不在天): as knowledge of one's original *ming* transforms one's ordinary *ming*, fate and life span rest on oneself.

VIII. Conclusion

As we have seen, the Neidan discourse on *ming* cannot be disjoined from its discourse on *xing*. *Xing* and *ming* are said to have a common origin, and their separation reflects the division of Unity into the Two; but even in their separate condition, they are two aspects of the same principle. Their interdependence is formulated according to two models:

- (1) Precelestial *xing*—Postcelestial *ming*;
- (2) Precelestial *xing* and *ming*—Postcelestial *xing* and *ming*.

¹²² *Lunyu*, 11:23. This refers to the episode that happened in Kuang 匡, where Confucius, mistaken for a wrongdoer, was detained and lost sight of Yan Hui. When the two met again, Confucius said: “I thought you had died,” and Yan Hui replied with the words reported above.

¹²³ *Xiuzhen bianman*, 30b–31a. For the last sentence, see *Wuzhen pian*, “Jueju,” poem no. 54 (Wang Mu, *Wuzhen pian qianjie*, 118): “Ingest the one grain of the numinous Elixir, let it enter your belly, and for the first time you will know that your destiny does not depend on Heaven” 一粒靈丹吞入腹，始知我命不由天。

In the first model, *xing* is the foundation of *ming*, and *ming* is the operation of *xing*. Here *xing* is one's true "being"; it is a superpersonal or superindividual principle, related to Spirit and analogous or identical to the Buddha-nature; it is formless and therefore is unchangeable; and it pertains to one's "heart" or "mind." *Ming* is the operation of this central essence in the course of one's life. It is related to Breath; it takes effect in the world of form and therefore it is subject to change; and it pertains to one's individual existence as a person or a body. If *xing* is the principle that rules on one's "being," *ming* is the principle that rules on one's "becoming."¹²⁴

The second model—where the employed terminology suffices to show the roles that Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism play in Neidan—includes the views of the first one but is more complex. Both *xing* and *ming* have an absolute, precelestial aspect and a conditioned, postcelestial aspect. The precelestial *xing* is the celestial mind or the mind of the Dao. In the conditioned state, this quiescent *xing* is obscured by the mental activities of cognition and other psychological phenomena, especially attachment and desires. This is "the *xing* consisting in one's character." Analogously, the precelestial *ming* is the "dharma-body." In the conditioned state, this quiescent *ming* is obscured by one's intercourse with the world through the physical body and the senses. This is "the *ming* consisting in one's destiny." The second aspect of *ming* relies on a quality and a quantity of Breath or "vital force" that differ for each human being; this "vital force," though, is not *ming* itself, but only one of its aspects.

In both models, *ming* is in the first place the "decree" or the "mandate" given by Heaven, or by the Dao, that causes one's

¹²⁴ To use the Indian metaphor of the wheel (*cakra*), *xing* is the central empty hub, and *ming* is the set of spokes that are held together in the hub and end at the felly, the rim, through which the wheel—one's individual constitution as a whole—is in contact with the earth, or the world (compare the use of the term Barrier of *Ming* to denote the feet, mentioned in note 33 above). The hub is the intelligence, and the spokes are the existence. Neither the hub nor the spokes could do without the other; however, the central hub, being empty, is untouched by the movement of the spokes. This metaphor is relevant to Daoism and Neidan: see *Daode jing*, sec. 11.

embodiment; it is nothing more and nothing less than the “order to exist” imparted to each individual being. Some Neidan traditions understand this “mandate” as destiny, especially with regard to one’s length of life; in this view, alchemical and other practices can extend or enhance one’s “vital force” and therefore can prolong one’s lifetime. Other traditions, instead, make a clear distinction between *ming* as the “mandate to exist” and *ming* as “destiny.” Here the “mandate” consists in the first place in the “dharma-body,” an unmanifested embodiment that has no temporal or spatial existence and is devoid of birth or death. This is “the body that has been clear and quiescent for countless eons” (Li Daochun) and that “continuously preserves itself for numberless eons” (Liu Yiming). With the division of Unity into multiplicity, the unmanifested “dharma-body” takes form as an individual being that exists in space and time and undergoes birth and death. Only then *ming* can be understood as “existence” and can be identified with the sequence of events that forms one’s “destiny.”¹²⁵

The relation between the “dharma-body” and the ordinary body is the same as the one between the “celestial mind” and the ordinary mind. One may say that *xing* pertains to the mind and *ming* pertains to the body, but in the view of at least some of the authors surveyed above, this is correct only if “mind” and “body” are meant in a sense in which the psychological mind and the physical body are the final determinations of two unmanifested principles—the “dharma-body” and the “celestial mind.” In this final determination, *ming* is one’s individual existence as one of the myriad forms in the world of form.¹²⁶ Considering this, it seems to me that the dictionary glosses of *ming* as “name,” seen at the

¹²⁵ With regard to this point, it seems impossible to avoid recalling the passage of the Zhuangzi, ch. 12, that states: “In the not-yet-formed there are divisions but no intervals; this is called *ming*” 未形者有分，且然無間，謂之命。 According to this passage, one’s *ming* is already determined in the state of formlessness, before the subdivision into separate forms—the “intervals”—comes forth. This primal, formless *ming* is the same as the “dharma-body.”

¹²⁶ To recur again to the metaphor used above, if the wheel is now the universal manifestation, each individual existence is a smaller wheel whose hub is placed on a particular point of one of the spokes. This image helps to explain the whole concept of “gradation,” whereby each individual existence is different from all others.

beginning of this article, are significant. Names perform a function analogous to forms in identifying each object as such and in distinguishing it from other objects: having an individual name is an aspect of having an individual *ming*.

As *xing* and *ming* are originally a single principle, they should be returned to their state of unity. This is where the discourse and the practices of Neidan in the strict sense begin. The reconjunction of *xing* and *ming* occurs through their “conjoined cultivation.” As we have seen, this is done by integrating with one another two emblematic modes of cultivation, each of which gives priority to one of the two principles but includes or culminates in cultivating the other. Assuming that Neidan deals only with the body, and neglecting or denying the significance of these different modes of self-cultivation, would empty of meaning not only the idea of “conjoined cultivation,” but also the entire Neidan discourse on *xing* and *ming*.

“Choosing *ming*” in Neidan may have two main meanings. In the first meaning, while *xing* is unchangeable and has no beginning or end, *ming* has limits that an individual may be able to modify to some extent; this includes the idea of “extending *ming*” in the sense of increasing one’s vital force and prolonging one’s physical existence. In the second meaning, working on *ming* in order to extend one’s lifetime would be a worthless undertaking, as this would benefit only the “false” physical body. Returning to *ming*, in this view, means returning to the mandate given by Heaven: one’s embodiment as part and parcel of the Breath of the Dao. As shown in the clearest way by Liu Yiming’s comments on Yan Hui, this embodiment has nothing to do with one’s life span: “Since he was not attached to this illusory body, he could die any time.”

Choosing this *ming* requires both inverting and following the ordinary course of existence. As Liu Yiming points out, these two aspects operate together but are also distinguished from one another. Using the postcelestial domain as the starting point of the ascent to the precelestial domain, one first returns to one’s original *ming*. This involves “seizing creation and transformation” but Heaven does not oppose, for “inverting the course” means returning to the mandate of Heaven. Then one continues and completes the course: descending again to the world and realizing the identity of

precelestial and postcelestial, one “follows the course” and complies with Heaven’s times.

命運，生氣，或存在？ 論道教內丹中「命」之意義及其與「性」的關係

玄英

摘要

內丹發展出了兩種不同的修煉模式。第一種模式建立在修心的基礎上，致力於去除妨礙人們「見性」的因素，而其中的「性」即金丹。第二種模式旨在煉精、氣、神，從而使其成為金丹的成分。這兩種修身模式分別強調「性」或「命」；然而內丹作品卻再三重申，要想理解並成就性與命，必須將二者結合起來。

在內丹，性與命是「體」和「用」的關係，與「神」和「氣」相對應，並分別關聯「心」與「身」。以這種看法為基礎，兩大內丹流派展開了關於性與命的論述：南宗的「先命後性」和北宗的「先性後命」。儘管有此等差異，「性命雙修」才是內丹真正的主題。因此，所謂的「先」是指將性與命中的任何一個作為修煉另一個的基礎，從而達到既「了性」又「了命」的目的。

文章的最後部分將具體分析兩位內丹大家的觀點。李道純（13世紀後期）提出，性與命指的是「天心」與「法身」，而並非現代意義上的精神與身體，後者實則損害一個人的性與命。與此類似，劉一明（1734–1821）也提出了「假」性命和「真」性命的本質區分：前者是一個人的「氣質」與「天數」（包括壽命），而後者是一個人與生俱來的本性（「良知」與「良能」）及「道之一氣」的具體化。

關鍵詞：道教、內丹、命運、李道純、劉一明