

Circulation of the Light by Dennis William Hauck

Chinese alchemists became proficient at spiritual Distillation thousands of years ago. In a discipline called "Circulation of the Light," the aspirant is taught to concentrate on the light of the inmost region and, while doing so, to free himself from all outer and inner entanglements. The basic practice in the Circulation of the Light is known in Taoist alchemy as "The Microcosmic Orbit" or "The Lesser Heavenly Cycle" (as opposed to the greater cycle of the rotation of stars and the constellations). The "light" that is circulated is the chi guided by mind through an alchemical laboratory within the body that consists of three cauldrons or furnaces (known as tan tien or "elixir fields") that purify and refine the energy in a process of Distillation.

The first of these inner cauldrons is the Lower Tan Tien, which is situated in the abdomen between the pelvis and navel. It is where the alchemist gathers, blends, and cooks his or her sexual, vital, and spiritual essences. The operations carried out here are equivalent to the Western stages of Calcination, Dissolution, and Separation, which are equivalent to energizing the muladhara (base), svadhithana (genital), and manipura (solar plexus) chakras in the Tantric tradition or the Wheel of Emanation in the Buddhist tradition. Once the energy is purified sufficiently, it is brought up the primary or Governor Channel along the back or dorsal of the spine. The Chinese call this solar channel of yang energy the tu mai, while Tantrists refer to it as the ida.

The Middle Tan Tien cauldron is between the solar plexus and diaphragm and its energies are associated with the heart, lungs, and throat. This is where the essences from the purification in the Lower Tan Tien accumulate and where the soul finds expression. The fundamental essences are further purified and condensed and eventually move up the Governor (or Solar Channel) along the back of the spine. The Tantrists saw this cauldron as activating the anahata (heart) and vishuddha (throat) chakras. In Western alchemy, it is where the operation of Conjunction takes place.

The Upper Tan Tien is known as the Crystal Palace. This "precious" cauldron at the center of the brain is also called the Sacred Square Inch, the Heavenly Heart, or the Cavity of Spirit. It is where the higher self or spirit from Above dwells. Sufi alchemists call this the ruh; Jewish alchemists call it ruach, while for the Tantrists, it is seen as an activation of the ajna (brow) and sahasrara (crown) chakras. In Western alchemy, it is where the operations of Fermentation, Distillation, and Coagulation take place. In the cabala, this center corresponds to the Sefirah Daat, located on the Middle Pillar (or spine) between Binah (at the back of the head) and Hokmah (in the forehead area).

In physiological alchemy, the Upper Tan Tien is associated with the center of the brain where the pineal gland is located. When this gland is activated, it is said to become illuminated like thousands of shining crystals, able to receive light (as energy and knowledge) from the universe. In Taoist alchemy, this is called the "Mysterious Gate" (hsuan kuan). In

Tibetan Buddhism, this is the source of the “White Drop” that descends to the heart center, where it mixes with the ascending “Red Drop” attain an enlightened body and mind. All this activity is seen as a cosmic sex act in the head. The phallic-shaped pineal gland releases a pure white liquid light that impregnates the nearby bi-lobed pituitary gland, which then releases hormones in the blood that inaugurate a Second (Spiritual) Puberty in the body.

This final stage is not accomplished in just a single round of operations but must continue until all impurities have been eliminated, and the light is in its most concentrated form. Thus, the purified inner light is returned from the Upper Tan Tien to the Lower Tan Tien down the secondary Functional Channel along inside of the spine. The Chinese called this lunar channel of yin energy the jen mai, which is called pingala by the Tantrists. The energy is then once again guided by thought and imagination inward to the center of the body, where it is progressively refined and transmuted through the three cauldrons.

So, essentially, the Circulation of Light is an operation of Distillation in which the mercurial light of consciousness (or life force) is progressively purified and concentrated. Try a session of this regimen and see how it feels. In practice, the initiate repeats the Circulation of the Light daily for months or even years, until enough of the “light” collects to crystallize in the cauldron with-in the brain. According to Chinese alchemists, the subtle matter distilled through this process congeals into a Golden Pill, which is the adept’s passage to perfect health and even immortality. Western alchemists would call the product of these repeated distillations the “Mother of the Stone.” But the goal is the same in both systems: to create an immortal spirit body (the Stellar Stone or Body of Light) through which the adept can function on a more evolved plane of existence than in the ordinary physical body.