

Portrait of an American Daoist

Charles Belyea / Liu Ming

SCOTT P. PHILLIPS

Abstract

Liu Ming (born Charles Belyea) was perhaps the first American of European descent to identify himself as a Daoist priest for the purpose of teaching Daoism as a religious tradition. His organization Orthodox Daoism in America (ODA) introduced Americans to a particular, traditional Chinese orientation towards knowledge and commitment. His life and work, training and challenges are symptomatic of the ebbs and flows observable as Daoism winds its way into Western culture.

Early Years and Basic Training

Charles Belyea was born in New England in 1947. Like many Americans of his time, he reveled in a heroic struggle through drug use, unconventional sex, acts of righteous justice, and experimental diets—whose details are of little interest except to note that they prematurely ended his academic career and led to complete estrangement from his family.

While working at a record store on the MIT campus, he first encountered Buddhism through a presentation by Shunryu Suzuki and soon joined a campus *zazen* group. After viewing the film *Requiem for a Faith*, his interests turned to tantric Buddhism and he began to learn Tibetan, studying with Robert Thurman, the first ordained American Buddhist, who was then a graduate student at Harvard.¹

¹ Charles even baby-sat once for Thurman's now famous daughter Uma.

Charles moved to Berkeley in 1968 to study Tibetan Buddhism with Tarthang Tulku and Trumpa Rinpoche. There he completed the Tibetan Buddhist Ngondro practice of 100,000 prostrations and came to study of Chinese Buddhism, martial arts and calligraphy.

He then went back to the East Coast for a several years where he opened a restaurant, received teachings from H. H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche, and helped to establish the Maha Siddha Nyinmapa Center in Massachusetts. As his Tibetan improved, he began to read original sources and served as a translator (and cook) for visiting lamas. The experience of having to interpret Buddhist teachings to an American audience was formative and helped him over the years.

Although a committed Buddhist, he began to have some conflicts with the Tibetan community and, as a result, went traveling for a while in Europe and the UK. In 1978, he moved to Taiwan where he joined a Buddhist monastery near Taipei.

After a few months there, his Buddhist teacher and a few other monks organized a tour of a local sacred mountain. They all jumped in the back of a pick-up truck and proceeded to stop at various shrines where they talked to residents and burned incense. At one point they got out to view a sign which said: "This pathway leads to a hermit. Do not disturb!" Suddenly an old man came running down the path. The monks, fearing his wrath, ran for the truck or dived into the bushes, but Charles did not move and his Buddhist teacher stayed with him.

The hermit ran up to them and reached out to shake Charles's hand, but before he could do so, the Buddhist teacher struck Charles on the head and shouted for him to bow in prostration. As Charles flung himself to the ground, the hermit laughed, turned to the Buddhist teacher, and said, "Thank you. You can go now." Charles then moved in with the hermit and together they lived in a Daoist hermitage on the mountain.

The Daoist hermit, whose full name Charles never learned, had fled mainland China during World War II. All of his friends and family perished during the war. He was an Orthodox Daoist priest (Zhengyi daoshi) with the family name Liu and traced his lineage back to the royal family of the Han dynasty, referring to Liu An, the compiler of the *Huainanzi*, as a first ancestor of his lineage. He had been in solitary retreat for about thirty years.

Charles never became fluent in Chinese, but Master Liu had studied some English when he first arrived in Taiwan. Charles spoke to him in English and he spoke back in Chinese, each choosing not to butcher the other's language. After some time, Charles received formal investiture in the master's lineage, including methods of meditation, alchemy, ritual, daoyin, and dreaming. His teacher then went into a dramatic death retreat. The cave he had secluded himself in for over a month began to glow; there was a flash of light and a loud crack that could be felt everywhere in the surrounding valley. The following day Charles and some other hermits went in to find his clothes sitting upright permeated with a reddish powder.² His body was missing—only hair and long nails remained (see Belyea 1991).

Charles tells many stories about what he and his teacher did together. He explained the universalistic inspiration for his book, *Dragon's Play* (written in the 1980s and published in 1991) with the following encounter: Once he and his teacher paid a visit to the library of a Buddhist monastery. Charles pulled out a copy of the Chan-Buddhist *Ten Ox Herding Pictures*. His teacher looked at them and said that there were two images missing, which he went on to describe and explain. Charles then pulled out a Tibetan meditation image showing a pantheon of deities. To Charles's horror, his teacher took a pencil and made notes on the painting. Some of the deities, he said, were no longer there and a few were dressed in archaic clothing and held the wrong implements. Charles protested: "Master, this is Buddhism." His teacher responded: "No, it is just wrong." Apparently he had direct access to the source which inspired the creation of these religious artworks.

Another important story concerns his adoption into the Liu family at a large clan gathering. Once adopted, he could receive his teacher's heritage of 120 sacred texts, a collection that never left the hands of the

² His teacher's clothes were made into talismans after his dramatic death. An Italian reporter sent one of them to a lab to be tested for chemical constituents. One ingredient was identified as ancient bone, but from an unknown reptile. The lab sent it to various other labs around the world whose members debated its origins, some claiming it was a flying dinosaur but finally confirmed it as a mammoth bone. Liu Ming received a letter with copies of the lab reports, but lost them in a move.

family. Arrangements were made to have these books sent to a safe deposit box in San Francisco, where Charles was given access but not ownership. Further tales concern the other masters he encountered during his mountain stay. One was a martial arts teacher who constantly drank tinctured herbs and shouted a lot. Charles lived with him for a short time, staying in snake-infested huts beyond a wire-bridged ravine. The other teacher was a dream teacher who visited him at the hermitage for an afternoon but inexplicably left him with months of memories.

The Daoist Teacher

After Master Liu's dramatic passing in the winter of 1978, Charles spent a year in London where he pursued his interest in macrobiotic cooking. He then returned to California where he went into a year-long private retreat on an estate near Santa Cruz. After completing his retreat in 1981, he wrote the book *Dragon's Play* and began teaching what he called "Dragon Training." Methods included daoyin, meditation, shiatsu, and *Daode jing* studies. He co-founded a school and healing center called Twin Lakes, where he taught for a while.³

In 1984, he co-founded the Five Branches Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Santa Cruz. He worked as an administrator and taught courses in Chinese culture, history, and nutrition for twelve years. During that period he also started the Da Yuan Circle where he continued to teach the *Daode jing*, meditation, and daoyin.

In the early 1990s, he began publishing a quarterly newsletter called *Frostbell*. He also changed the name of his organization to Orthodox Daoism in America (ODA). *Frostbell* announced classes, explained commemorative and festival days in the Daoist calendar, offered recipes for appropriate foods, featured book reviews, and in general covered a wide range of teachings about Daoism and Chinese culture.

ODA was what Charles likes to call a "discreet" organization. Students were discouraged from talking about it to outsiders. The newsletter had about 200 subscribers; the inner group consisted of maybe 20

³ The school later moved to Northern California and changed its name to Heartwood Institute.

members. Charles gave small public talks on an irregular schedule, usually about some aspect of Chinese culture and its relationship to the history of Daoism.

In late 1996, he took a group of twenty members on a pilgrimage to Daoist sites in China, visiting Baiyuan guan, Qingcheng shan, and Maoshan. Shortly after returning to Santa Cruz, he officially changed his name to Liu Ming, which he had been given when he was adopted into the hermit's family. He also started to wear Daoist clothing full-time and tie his hair in a topknot.

Over the next two years, his core students similarly began to wear their hair in Daoist fashion and study groups took on the more formal name "investiture." A less formal open-to-all precepts meeting, held each month at the full moon, offered a study of the *Xiang'er Precepts*, the *180 Precepts of Lord Lao* and excerpts from the *Analects of Confucius*.⁴

While ODA's adoption of the topknot, the free precept meetings, and the *Frostbell* mailings seemed to indicate a move toward a more public face, members generally confined their discussions of Daoism to low-key commemorations or celebrations at Liu Ming's home, known as the Spring Street Tan (Altar). These social events were held several times a year and usually involved a lecture about the day being commemorated, the sale of talismans, calendars, incense, books, or tea utensils. Tea and snacks (sometimes even meals) were served to harmonize or tonify seasonal *qi*.

ODA became less discreet under the impact of the exhibition "Taoism and the Arts of China" at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco in early 2001 (see Little and Eichman 2000). The exhibit created an active, local awareness of Daoism which resulted in invitations for Liu Ming and his associates to speak to larger groups. At the time, I myself was contacted by the museum, and we both guided tours of the exhibit, taught classes, gave lectures, and put together titles for a small film festival.

⁴ For these meetings, Liu Ming put together a book of precepts known as *The Blue Book*. The third addition (O.D.A. 1998) acknowledges Hendrischke and Penny 1996; Bokenkamp 1997; Schipper 2001 (paper delivered in 1998).

The exhibit also led to an increased interest in investiture groups, which had been growing slowly but now involved more than thirty students, all committed to one- or three-year periods of study and paying \$60-\$100 a month. Among those newly interested was also Harrison Moretz, a martial arts teacher from Seattle who ran the Taoist Studies Institute there. When he offered to set up classes for Liu Ming to teach in Seattle, he began to travel north once a month.⁵

Another set of activities of the organization in 2001-02 was the holding of public retreats in Northern California, attended by as many as fifty people. At the second retreat Liu Ming, gave everyone in attendance a translation of a meditation text called "Purple Classic" from his secret personal collection.

Organizational Changes

In 2002, Liu Ming left his suburban home in Santa Cruz, the Spring Street Tan, due to his landlady's desire to sell the house. The location had held a small shop which supplied students with books, incense, and tea utensils as well as a Japanese tea room next to the kitchen. It also had a garden with exotic bamboo clusters, fruit trees, and a symbolic mountain to the north. Among the two garden entrances, one came from the east and

⁵ Two other people joined ODA in this period. One was Dharmanidhi Sarasvati, a European American who received a Kashmiri lineage in Kaula Shakta Tantric Yoga. He had been teaching mostly in Australia using *Dragon's Play* as a textbook. He soon moved his teaching operation to Berkeley, founded The Tantric College of America (later Yoga Mandala) and encouraged his students to study with Liu Ming (*Frostbell*, Summer 2002). The other was Nam Singh, an African American who spent his early years with his grandparents stationed in Taiwan. An expert at gourmet cooking with Chinese herbs, his strong bonds with the Chinese community in San Francisco led him to become a Daoist priest in the Complete Perfection school (Longmen lineage). With his investiture he received a collection of sacred texts and vestments which he wore all the time. He joined ODA because he wanted to understand the Daoist commitments he had already made. His public commitment and his quiet enthusiasm for Liu Ming's teachings brought a new level of confidence to ODA. (see nam-singh.com)

led to the teaching hall; the other entered from the south and led to the altar room. A second teaching and meditation hall with Japanese *tatami* mats had been set up in the garage.

Increasingly active in Seattle, Liu Ming spontaneously moved there, joining three of his students in an apartment. He soon began to teach out of their home and at the Taoist Studies Institute, where he developed a nine-year ordination procedure. Throughout this period, he continued to hold classes for his California students, returning once a month to teach out of a student's home in San Francisco.

In 2003, after about a year in Seattle, there was a break with some of his students, as a result of which Liu Ming moved back to the Bay Area, this time settling in Oakland (see Komjathy 2003). The circumstances surrounding the break revolved around the secret meditation text called the "Purple Classic," which Liu Ming had revealed at the second ODA retreat. Initially Liu Ming claimed the text was his translation of a book from the large collection of Daoist scriptures held for him in an undisclosed safe deposit box in San Francisco. One of the students living with him began doubting the existence of the original text, at least in part because Liu Ming only had basic language skills. It was incongruent that he should be guiding students in a nine-year ordination process, given that he himself had only been in Taiwan for a short time—not even long enough to learn Chinese. The student searched Liu Ming's room, looking for evidence of secret texts, and found nothing. He then accused Liu Ming of lying and making up the text and a good portion of his teachings as well; most notably, the orthodoxy of his lineage was challenged. Liu Ming admitted that there were no secret texts but still claimed the lineage was real. He was later ambiguous about whether the books actually existed or not. He told another student that he had thrown them all in the ocean.

Always adept at sudden changes in direction, Liu Ming stopped wearing Daoist garb and had his hair cut in standard American fashion after his move to Oakland. He discontinued the name Orthodox Daoism in America and reverted to the old name Da Yuan Circle. His teaching now de-emphasizes the importance of lineage and draws on a broader Daoist-Buddhist vision which embraces trance-mediumship as a possible source of Daoist inspiration and teachings which he continues to develop

for an active assembly of mild mannered students (see www.dayuancircle.com).

Channeled or received, Liu Ming's teachings would never have had the credibility they did if his students had not been able to verify their authenticity in the works of three Daoist scholar-initiates: Kristofer Schipper (1994), John Lagerwey (1987), and Michael Saso (1978), plus the various studies of Daoist historians, particularly Isabelle Robinet (1993; 1997). Not only testimonial for his accuracy, their work obviously created a strong foundation for his accounts.

There is a question of authenticity here. It is not clear how much of Liu Ming's accounts were generated from his readings of these various scholars. Future generations may ponder this question. However, it is beyond doubt that he brought transcendent glory, actual practice, and personal experience to otherwise dry academic presentations.

The Teachings

Liu Ming has described his teachings in *Frostbell* and in papers presented for academic audiences (e.g., Liu 2001; 2002). These descriptions include mention of Highest Clarity and Celestial Masters lineages, meditation, text study, hygiene, longevity practice, and ritual. But they fail to describe what actually happens when he teaches. Words like "paradoxical" or "inspired" also miss the profound particularity of each teaching.

For instance, Liu Ming teaches that we are in an American Protestant religious milieu, in which individuals see themselves on a journey seeking a personal relationship with truth. Or put in the vernacular: "Everybody thinks they're special." So if the subject were, for example, Chinese astrology, the teaching might be that everyone has the same amount of astrology, nobody is special. Then we would go on to look at how everyone has a unique fate at birth. It sounds completely ridiculous if you read it on a page. Are we special or not? The question would float.

Then we might look at larger questions, like "What is fate?" — "Is personal fate possible?" — "What perpetuates a particular fate?" — "Is fate physiological?" or "Can you change the meaning or persistent influence of something that has happened in the past?" These discussions would usually lead to some type of practice, some type of experiment that one could do at home, like marking auspicious practice days on the

Chinese calendar or making commitments based on calendrical auspices.⁶ The teaching would be filled in with stories, jokes, and tea drinking. We might talk about the habits of an emperor or a celebrity; we might reflect on the strengths and weakness of each others character. The teaching would saturate the environment in a disheveled way.

Liu Ming's teachings could usually be analyzed by the structure: view, method, and fruit, matching the structure used by the Dzogchen teacher Namkhai Norbu (see Shane 1986). Every teaching had an underlying view, an assumption or way of perceiving, which would suggest a method. If that method were practiced it would produce some fruition, which would verify the original view. For instance, let us say the original view is: "What a person eats has an effect on personal conduct." The method might be to study how the *qi* qualities of particular foods (and various cooking strategies) affect a person's appetite over time. As the method is practiced and internalized, the fruition is revealed. In this case it could be that one's appetite leads to food choices and portions which match one's energetic needs. When one has the right amount and type of *qi* for the task at hand, appropriate conduct usually results. In other words, fruition verifies view. Because each student is conducting their own experiments and drawing conclusions based on the results of those experiments, each student's degree of commitment and experience of fruition is unique.

Sometimes Liu Ming would talk about a specific practice and its place in everyday living, like how to chop broccoli, why it matters, or the posture of meditation and how to find it. At other times his teachings were gigantic, covering the entirety of religious experiences over the millennia, from head hunting through yogic transcendence to AIDS walk-a-thons. He taught that all religious experience is available at all times in the world as we know it; that Daoism itself is not a single way of being, but an infinite kaleidoscopic source of frameworks with which to become intimate with the way things are.

Scripture. Among all texts the *Daode jing* formed the main focus of study. Each month investiture students received a chapter in English for

⁶ For many years, ODA published a Daoist calendar with traditional cycles, holidays, and commemorative days. Robert Fenwick, one of Liu Ming's students, now sells them online at www.tongshu.com.

daily chanting. Liu Ming created his own commentary to accompany each chapter, month after month, often repeating a chapter with revised commentary and translation. He often used the *Xiang'er* and Heshang Gong commentaries to support his views as well as other ancient sources, such as *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi*, or *Hanfeizi*.

As other scriptures became available in translation, we studied them as well. After returning from the China trip in 1996, we read Steven Bokenkamp's *Early Daoist Scriptures* and began a study group to unfold the *Santian neijie jing* line by line.

Meditation. After a year of practicing sitting and forgetting (*zuowang*) daily, students were introduced to the golden elixir (*jindan*). These two practices were always done in private and served as a foundation for everything else Liu Ming taught. Investiture classes invoked innumerable textual, artistic, architectural, and iconographical references in the process of transmitting these practices.

Ritual. Although researched and discussed in great detail, Daoist ritual was never taught directly. It was made clear, though, that its purpose is the rectification of *qi*. Liu Ming taught that for ritual to be truly orthodox it would have to arise spontaneously from one's own experience in relationship to an actual constituency. This teaching was the basis for numerous experiments, from tea ceremony through food preparation and presentation to incense studies, altar creation, talisman making, ritual bathing,⁷ clothing, fengshui, the construction of personal meditation chambers, general remodeling, and ancestral offerings. Almost anything could be approached as ritual.

He taught that trance possession, by varying degrees, is a normal everyday occurrence; recognition of trance is what is unusual. A key aspect of a Daoist priest's mandate as an ritual exorcist, was to *not become possessed*. But he always made it clear that the possibility of possession or falling into trance was happening by degrees all the time. A ritual master's expertise in identifying various types of trance, is a tool of the trade that also facilitates not falling into one.

Daoyin. In addition to a movement sequence with pounding, slapping, scraping, rubbing, expanding, contracting, and bouncing— all

⁷ Around 1996, he composed a pamphlet called "Bathing," which covered three types of bathing: hygienic, purification, and ritual.

done in a small cave-like space—Liu Ming's teachings included details about shamanic forms of meditation. He felt that daoyin was primarily a hermit practice and taught that martial techniques like bagua zhang, taiji quan, qigong and gongfu in general had as much to offer urban people if practiced without an aggressive healing or martial orientation.

Dreams. In addition to all these, Liu Ming currently teaches dream practice from a universalistic point of view. During his ODA years, he held discussions about dream practice but gave little instruction.

While the reader could easily be forgiven for seeing the above list as a group of *methods*, in fact, each category is a self-contained complete set of teachings, which happen to overlap, but do not need to be taught together.

Personal Recollections

I first met Liu Ming in 1994, when he gave a public talk to about ten people at the Spring Street Tan on "The Shamanic Roots of Daoism." His speech was funny and engaging, overflowing with Chinese history and sometimes wandering into conjectural cultural anthropology.

I arrived there having read two articles in *Frostbell*, one about contractual relationships with deities to perform rituals at specific times and places, which is common to Native Americans and Chinese Daoists; the other an exposé on how Orthodox Daoism was not a universal religion, i.e., did not seek converts and it did not see itself as helpful or meaningful for everyone. Listening to Charles's talk, it occurred to me that he might be helpful in answering questions I had about the cultural milieu responsible for the creation of Chinese martial arts, a big interest of mine. His home was full of elegant Chinese furniture, art, books, fine incense. After the talk he spent over an hour answering my wide-ranging questions.

I attended a few other talks over the next few months and expressed interest in studying with him in more depth. He put me off for about six months at which point he said there would be one or two openings in a *Daode jing* meditation study group he was leading. If I was still interested, I should prepare a ten-page essay explaining my interest. I should also be prepared to commit to an hour of meditation every day for at least one year. There was also a questionnaire designed to discourage

applicants with health obsessions. The power to decide who among the five applicants would be admitted to the group was in the hands of the group and not Charles's. No one ever read my essay. I was not selected, but over the next couple of months I talked Charles into teaching me privately.

He and I met once a month all day for a year. We made lunch, drank tea, and discussed one chapter of the *Daode jing* which I took home and chanted for a few minutes everyday before practicing *zuowang*. I came home from each lesson with a new pile of books which he lent me or which I found on my own. They were mostly on Chinese culture, religion, history, and art. Each book would add weight and depth to our all-day discussions. After a year of this arrangement, in the winter of 1996, I accompanied Charles and a group of his students on a China tour, then joined the *Daode jing* meditation study group and became a member of ODA.

Reflecting on this period in my life and on Liu Ming as a Daoist teacher, I find that he is most of all a consummate storyteller. If the topic was history, it often seemed like we were interviewing an eyewitness. Asking for references and following up on his sources, I found that his knowledge of history was indeed excellent. Even though he sometimes admitted that conjecture played a significant role in his explanations, it was always clear that demonstrable facts were not that important because history was used as a vehicle for talking about human nature.

Liu Ming would often tell stories about his personal experiences. Initially I doubted many of these stories, particularly those that could have made a good script for a fantasy gongfu movie. Whether or not the details of this biography are true, I believe that Liu Ming has to be understood through his stories about himself. More than entertaining, these stories often had a point; they animated and gave meaning to our way of living. I often asked myself, "Does it matter if this story is true?" Most of the time it didn't.

If someone used the exclamation "Jesus!" you could watch the hair go up on Liu Ming's neck. The power of invocation was always alive around him. Words like "ghost" and "demon" had a tangible quality, and even more mundane expressions like "Thank you" or "I'm sorry" could cause a disturbance in 'the force.'

Over the years, many times I was surprised when someone from his past would show up and I had a chance to interview them about the veracity of Liu Ming's claims. Most people would back him up. For instance, Liu Ming told us that he was once married to a woman who was making a lot of money working in the computer industry in a skyscraper in San Francisco. When she got bored she would hook up her rock-climbing equipment and go for a climb on the outside of the building. Having heard and doubted this story several times over the years, one day his ex-wife Christine showed up unannounced, after not seeing him for over ten years. I pulled her aside and she verified every story I could think, not just her climbing out the window but also that Liu Ming had worked in a record store at MIT, and that for six months he spent all day doing 100,000 prostrations in their Berkeley garage.

As time went by, he started to tell stories about events I had actually witnessed. I sometimes felt that I had missed all the excitement because when he told a story about a minor event he made it sound miraculous. While he stretched the truth a little on occasion, it is quite normal to exaggerate the length of the fish that got away. Overall, the gist of the stories he told were true. Like in all good teaching environments, here too students were free to shout: "No way!" or "I've got a bridge to sell you if you believe that one." Students were not required to believe anything.

Sometimes when I challenged Liu Ming's declarative statements about, for instance, a sacred text, he would say: "The secret copy of this text that I received from my teacher has a note written on the margin." On reflection, I doubted the existence of these transmitted texts as often as I believed in their existence. Still I felt some betrayal when I heard the account of the Seattle students. Just how much material was Liu Ming making up to bluster his authority? He taught that Daoist inspiration is available anytime anywhere, yet he also said that it is easier to use roots that are already established. Thus we were led to believe that through his connection to an orthodox lineage we were taking a well trodden path.

On the other hand, if we were attracted to Liu Ming because of his amazing lineage, then finding out it was all a fantasy would be a perfect demonstration of how we desperately want to be in the proximity of people who help us to believe we are special. Given what Liu Ming taught about truth and the way he taught about it, it is not surprising

that he would make up details to enliven his otherwise mundane existence. It is also quite consistent with historical Daoist practice.

Before the Seattle break, I remember being surprised and humored to get an email from one of ODA's Seattle members asking for my feedback on a comprehensive outline of the nine-year ordination process. Liu Ming's teachings were always loose and permeable; he established order only to reorganize again after the dust had settled. When we were remodeling the Spring Street Tan, we put in new ceilings and moved the walls, then moved them again after the paint had dried. It may sound ridiculous, but Liu Ming was teaching us not to get attached to outcomes—and the process was a lot of fun. It is also possible he was *not* teaching us that, perhaps I just learned that as a byproduct of his fickleness? In essence he taught that it didn't matter which was true. So when I heard that the Seattle students were creating a document that would pin down the stages of ordination, I laughed. I just imagined a student asking him to please create a curriculum so that they would know in advance what they were going to learn, and Liu Ming saying, "What a great idea, why don't we do it together!" only to toss it to the wind after it was completed.

Throughout the nine years that I studied with Liu Ming, individuals would leave because they did not like spontaneous disruptions of whatever appeared to be true or stable. For months on end Liu Ming would keep explaining why, for instance, pizza was so bad for one's digestion. When we finally came around to denouncing and detesting pizza, he would surprise us by taking everyone out for "some really special" pizza. Liu Ming never permanently rejected anything, if you hardened your opinion, he would seek to undermine it. Everything has a place—even pizza. Thus ideas are freed to conform to situations as they arise.

Is this a Buddhist teaching? Is it something a shaman would do? Did he get it from reading *Zhuangzi* or the *Daode jing*? I don't know. Probably all those things are true. Did he learn it from a Daoist hermit? Maybe.

During the first years of my involvement with ODA, all of my close friends asked me if I was a Daoist. My answer is the same now as it was then. "Yes, I am a Daoist, but not if that makes me different than you. Not if that separates us."

The adapt has no fixed heart/mind,
but uses the heart/mind of the people...
The adapt trusts the trustworthy,
but also trusts the untrustworthy.
By this the nature of trust is understood.
---*Daode jing* 49

Are Liu Ming's teachings still significant even if the lineage story is false?
Do the teachings hold up once Liu Ming is out of the picture? Does Daoism have a future in America? I guess only time will tell.

Bibliography

- Belyea, Charles, and Steven Tainer. 1991. *Dragon's Play: A New Taoist Transmission of the Complete Experience of Human Life*. Berkeley: Great Circle Life-works.
- Bokenkamp, Stephen. 1997. *Early Daoist Scriptures*. With a contribution by Peter Nickerson. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hendrichske, Barbara, and Benjamin Penny. 1996. "The 180 Precepts Spoken by Lord Lao: A Translation and Textual Study." *Taoist Resources* 6.2: 17-29.
- Komjathy, Louis. 2003. "Daoist Teachers in North America." www.daoistcenter.org/Articles/Articles_pdf/Teachers.pdf
- Lagerwey, John. 1987. *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*. New York: Macmillan.
- Little, Stephen, and Shawn Eichman. 2000. *Taoism and the Arts of China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Liu, Ming. 2001. "The True and Simple: Criteria for Orthodox Practice According to the Liu-Zhang Covenant." Paper Presented at the Conference on "Daoist Cultivation: Traditional Models and Contemporary Practices," Camp Sealth, Vashon Island.
- _____. 2002. "The Use of Intermediaries in Daoist and Tantric Buddhist Ritual." Paper Presented at the Conference on Tantra and Daoism. Boston University, Boston.

- O.D.A. 1998. *The Blue Book: A Text Concerning Orthodox Daoist Conduct*. Santa Cruz: Orthodox Daoism of America.
- Requiem for a Faith*. 1968. Documentary film, 28 minutes. Producer: Elda Hartley; Script: Huston Smith; Camera: Irving Hartley, Elda Hartley.
- Robinet, Isabelle. 1993. *Taoist Meditation*. Translated by Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Girardot. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- _____. 1997. *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*. Translated by Phyllis Brooks. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Saso, Michael. 1978. *The Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Schipper, Kristofer M. 1994. *The Taoist Body*. Translated by Karen C. Duval. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- _____. 2001. "Daoist Ecology: The Inner Transformation. A Study of the Precepts of the Early Daoist Ecclesia." In *Daoism and Ecology: Ways Within a Cosmic Landscape*, edited by Norman Girardot, James Miller, and Liu Xiaogan, 79-94. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Center for the Study of World Religions.
- Shane, John, ed. 1986. *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen—The Teachings of Namkhai Norbu*. New York: Routledge.