

Twin disciplines in Taoist tradition are outer alchemy (waidan, 外丹) and inner alchemy (neidan, 内丹), the former being refinement of substances in the external world, and the latter being refinement of energy bodies within the human microcosm.

Aspect	外丹 Outer Alchemy, <i>Wai Dan</i>	内丹 Inner Alchemy, <i>Nei Dan</i>
Domain	External, physical practices	Internal, physiological, and spiritual practices
Definition	Physical practice of compounding materia to produce elixirs for prosperity or longevity	Internal mental and physiological practices to cultivate elixirs from subtle energies
Explanation	Proto-scientific tradition of workings for refinement and transformation of substances	System of coordinated breath, movement, and focus for refinement of the spirit
Medium	<b>Minerals, herbs, and metals</b> into an <u>external</u> crucible + agents (solvents, carriers)	Subtle energy bodies ( <b>Jing, Qi, and Shen</b> ) into an <u>internal</u> crucible
Symbolism	External substances stand in for cosmic principles of change and regeneration via the cosmological correspondences of the materia. Forces of nature and phenomena personified as outer gods.	The human body as a crucible, or crucibles within a crucible. organs and bodily functions with cosmological correspondences or personified as inner gods
Modern Practice	Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), pharmacopoeia, plant medicine; chemistry; metallurgy, material sciences, fermentation, food alchemy, ceremonial magic	Qi gong, tai chi, meditation, martial arts, guided visualizations; breathwork; Zen Buddhism; energy raising; energy healing; ceremonial magic