

Mind, Body, Spirit, Qi

In Western philosophy, we have broken people into pieces; we say that a person consists of his mind, his body, and his spirit. To this we really should add his qi maybe even his emotions. In Chinese philosophy, while each of these components of a person is recognized, a person is never reduced down simply to one of these parts.

Western Philosophy		Chinese Philosophy
MIND BODY SPIRIT QI	=	PERSON

In western medicine, if you have something wrong with your mind, you go to a psychologist; if you have something wrong with your body, you visit a physician; if you have something wrong with your spirit, you go to your priest or the equivalent in your religion. In Chinese medicine, for all ailments you simply visit your doctor. People got divided into sections largely because of the rise of power of the Church in Europe. During the dark ages, the Church rose into power in Europe and exerted great power over governments and all fields of study. To appease the Church, people separated the spirit and the body in their philosophy. If the Church could not be convinced that the spirit and the body were separate, then the Church would not allow such procedures as dissections and surgery. To cut the body would be to damage the spirit, a practice the Church obviously would not tolerate. Rene Descartes and the influence of his famous phrase, "I think therefore I am," separated the mind from the body and spirit in Western thought.

Currently, there is a large push in Western allopathic medicine to begin considering the whole person again and to recognize that the mind, body, and spirit are all connected. The mind, body, and spirit are **not independent**.

MIND: Imagine yourself running in a race. You are at the starting line. There are large crowds of people watching and shouting, cheering you on. The starter calls for you to take your mark. You take a deep breath, position your feet, and squat down. On your mark. You tense in preparation. Bang! You're off sprinting for the finish line. If we hooked you up to biofeedback machines, we would find that by imagining deeply, your heart rate and blood pressure raised a little. When you took your mark and sprinted, nerve impulses actually were sent from your brain to your muscles. Some of them even contracted - just not enough of them for you to see a large motion. This happens because your mind and your body are connected. Olympic trainers often use this connection to train their athletes. In fact, the current standard for training is 80% visualization, %20 physical training.

Another example is of a person who is tortured psychologically. Eventually, he is broken bodily and spiritually. He can no longer take care of himself. Chemical imbalances occur within the brain.

BODY: People who are tortured physically often suffer from mental illness and broken spiritedness. They lose their minds or become timid. Torture was used to break the spirits of slaves, making them docile and complacent. Not all spirits and minds are broken, but many are. So we know that the body is connected with the mind and the spirit.

SPIRIT: To break one's spirit leaves the person an empty shell. We can no longer expect their minds to function properly. Their bodies seem incapable of large or fast movement.

We see that the mind, body, and spirit are all connected, as is the qi. For every thought, there is an associated bodily effect and associated qi effect.

THOUGHT ⇔ BODY EFFECT ⇔ QI EFFECT

The power of the mind, body, spirit, qi connection has been demonstrated scientifically in many studies the effects of non-religious prayer on healing and the effects of qi gong and other qi therapies on health. These can be found on PUBMED or WORLDCAT by searching for "prayer" or "qi," "chi," and "ki."

Universal Recognition of Qi

Throughout history, qi has been recognized by virtually every culture that has developed.

- In Oriental and Indian medicine (qi, ki, prana)
- Hawaiian medicine (huna)
- Any culture with shamans, medicine men, witches, or priests that perform healing or exorcisms (Africa and Voodoo, Southeast Asia, Native Americans in North America, Latin America, Ancient Egyptians, Europe)
- The Celts had an extremely developed understanding of qi systems, especially universal qi
- Viking berserkers were able to circulate qi and slow its escape after mortal wounding

The current skepticism in western cultures directed towards qi is largely due to western science and the Church. Modern science doubts it because it could not be observed physically or quantified. This has been overcome, as mentioned earlier, but skepticism still exists this is not yet common knowledge. During the Dark Ages, the Church actively sought out all other spiritual practices and destroyed them. The Church actively killed witches, healers, Celts, and other religions in order to ensure a monopoly on spiritualism. At the same time, the qi rituals practiced by these people were largely lost as well. However, qi is recognized even by Christianity – baptism and exorcism are qi rituals!

Instinctually, each of us recognizes and detects the presence and the flow of qi within our own bodies. If an extremely angry person enters the room, we can often tell without looking. The *feel* of the room changes. The same is true if the person was extremely

happy, or sad, or there is a shared emotion by a group of people. Attending a funeral *feels* very different than attending a baby shower.

Have you ever lost your keys and rested a couple of fingers on your forehead and said “Dang, where did I put my keys?” You were utilizing the qi systems of your body! The points on the forehead where we place our fingers are known for improving memory. People who wear glasses often pinch the bridge of their nose, hitting the entry points of the bladder meridian – these are known for improving eyesight. What would happen if someone threw a baseball and hit you on the shoulder? You would say “Ouch!” grab your shoulder and then rub it a little. When you say “ouch” air is expelled out of your lungs. Inhaling gathers heavenly qi. Exhaling helps *circulate* qi. Being struck by the baseball causes a blockage in qi flow at the point of contact, which causes pain. By exhaling, we help circulate the qi to lessen the pain. Rubbing the contact point achieves the same thing. We try to help the qi through the blockage, and the pain lessens. What happens if we stop rubbing? It starts to hurt again! Pretty soon, the blockage is largely cleared, the pain is gone or minimal, and we stop rubbing.

Where Does Life Qi Come From?

We mostly get our qi from the food we eat, the air we breathe, and from our environment. In Chinese philosophy, humans are thought of as vessels between heaven and earth. The earth provides us with food and drink. We eat it and it gets incorporated most immediately as Stomach channel qi and then cycles through the pathway of the other channels (see meridian section). Overall, food and water is Yin to the Yang of air (more on this in the Yin Yang section). Heavenly qi, derived from the air we breathe, is very important for our immediate survival. The air we breathe gets incorporated into as Lung qi. Statistically, most people who die in the hospital die around 5 a.m., right as the concentration of qi in the Lung channel shifts to Large Intestine.

Our very first qi is given to us by our parents at conception. This qi is called *ancestral qi*. It is kind of like DNA for qi: it is hereditary, unique yet derived from each parent, and it determines certain characteristics about us. These can include our body shape, what types of foods we prefer, how excited and expressive we are naturally, and our ability for follow long term projects to completion. Since this qi came from our parents and their ancestral qi was pass to them by their parts and so on, some high level qi gong masters and doctors can read into a person’s family history by examining the ancestral qi.

When we are conceived, we get a little more qi from our fathers because he gives us our more Yang qi. Yang qi is important for developing fetuses, infants, and toddlers because this is the hard, protective qi. It helps fend off illness so the child can grow into an adult. Since the baby stays with the mother throughout pregnancy and usually for a good amount of time afterwards, less Yin qi from the mother is needed at the time of conception. Males tend to get tired after sex because they are expending qi; each sperm needs to be infused with a little bit of qi. When I was a teen going through sex education, the estimate at the time was that roughly 10 million sperm fit on a pinhead! Men expend a lot of qi during sex, making them tired. Part of this tiredness is a safety mechanism to prevent men from expelling too much qi.

12 Organ Channels

Qi travels through 12 organ channels in our bodies, infuses all our cells, travels the 8 Extraordinary Channels, and forms a protective barrier at the surface of our skin (wei chi).

The Extraordinary Channels mostly carry our primordial qi and, except for 2 channels, do not have their own acupoints. They share acupoints with the 12 meridians. The extraordinary channels are usually used only in life threatening cases or when a fast and strong response is needed. Because they intersect many of the 12 meridians, they also function to shunt qi from one meridian to another without having to go through the entire pathway of the 12 meridians.

At conception, the Yin qi from our mothers joins with the Yang qi of our fathers and gives rise to our primordial, or ancestral, qi. This original stem cell divides into 2, then 4, then 8, and so on until we get a small balloon of cells called a *blastula*. It is at this stage that your extraordinary channels form. After we form a blastula, an infolding begins in the balloon that pushes all the way through, forming a tube through the blastula. This stage is called the *gastrula*, and the tube later becomes our gastro-intestinal tract. In humans, the infolding begins at the anus and finishes the tube with the mouth. Our 12 channels form during gastrulation, when the tube forms and pushes through the balloon.

For the most part, the qi in our bodies flows through the 12 channels: Lung, Large Intestine, Stomach, Spleen, Heart, Small Intestine, (Urinary) Bladder, Kidney, Pericardium, Triple Warmer, Gall Bladder, and Liver. Although these are the 12 organ channels that are regularly acknowledged and used by Traditional Chinese Medical doctors, there is actually a meridian for every organ in the body. The brain, for example, relates to the Governing Vessel, one of the Extraordinary Channels. *Anything that is physically present in the body has a correlating manifestation in the qi.* The organ that the channel is named after feeds the channel and keeps qi flow through it strong. If the organ is removed, qi flow through the channel becomes weak and may stagnate. This can be compensated with exercises that stimulate the channel even though the organ is no longer present.

The Triple Warmer (or Triple Burner) is often confusing for people since there doesn't seem to be a "Triple Warmer" organ acknowledged in Western anatomy. Some say that it doesn't correlate to a body part. Others say it is the hypothalamus. In actuality it refers to the body cavity and the visceral peritoneum, the serous membrane that lines the walls of the abdominal cavity and folds inward to enclose the viscera. Each meridian runs through and nourishes the organ that it is named after. Qi flow through each meridian affects anything along its pathway, the associated organ, and the body as a whole. It is important to remember that nothing in living things is ever static, and neither is anything that is talked about in Chinese medicine; everything is about flows and dynamic balances. Even acupoints and channels shift in the body!

As qi travels through the twelve meridians, it concentrates in a single meridian for two hours. The meridians cycle our bodies 3 times from chest to hand, hand to head, head to

foot, and foot to chest. So in a 24-hour cycle, qi concentrations circle our body 3 times, staying in each meridian for 2 hours. The table below charts this body clock in order of flow with each cycle through the body separated. Every two meridians we get a Yin Yang pair. Lung and Large Intestine are a Yin Yang pair. Stomach and Spleen are another, and so on.

Time of Day	Channel	Yin or Yang	Flow
3am – 5am	Lung (LU)	Yin	Chest to Hand
5am – 7am	Large Intestine (LI)	Yang	Hand to Head
7am – 9am	Stomach (ST)	Yang	Head to Foot
9am – 11am	Spleen (SP)	Yin	Foot to Chest
11am – 1pm	Heart (H)	Yin	Chest to Hand
1pm – 3pm	Small Intestine (SI)	Yang	Hand to Head
3pm – 5pm	Bladder (B)	Yang	Head to Foot
5pm – 7pm	Kidney (K)	Yin	Foot to Chest
7pm – 9pm	Pericardium (P)	Yin	Chest to Hand
9pm – 11pm	Triple Warmer (TW)	Yang	Hand to Head
11pm – 1am	Gall Bladder (GB)	Yang	Head to Foot
1am – 3am	Liver (LV)	Yin	Foot to Chest

On the following pages you will find a chart that maps the body clock and correlates the 12 meridians with a little bit of 5 phase theory. Also are some drawings of the path of the meridians, their source (or master) points, and lists of common uses for each meridian. All source points are either in the hand, wrist, ankle, or foot. Below is a chart that will help you remember the location of the meridians.

End	LU*	Big	H	Small	P	Middle	Hand
Start	LI	2 nd	SI	Small	TW	4 th	
End	ST	2 nd	B	Small	GB	4 th	Foot
Start	SP	Big	K	Bottom of foot	LV	Big	

Each channel either starts or ends on a nail except for the Kidney meridian. The farthest left column tells you whether it starts or ends. The column immediately right to each channel tells you which digit it starts or ends on. The far right column tells you whether this digit is on the hand or the foot. Notice that: 1) the channels are arranged in order of qi flow 2) each column of channels completes a cycle through the body and 3) the channels are grouped in Yin Yang pairs by column and above and below the thick middle line. In the digits columns, the patterns are fairly easy to remember. The first goes Big, 2nd, 2nd, Big. The second is all small, except for the irregular Kidney. The last is a pattern similar to the first, with an irregular end: middle, fourth, fourth, big.