

The Spiritual aspects of Traditional Chinese Medicine

The esoteric system within Traditional Chinese Medicine has been flourishing for thousands of years. It encompasses the traditional system and eastern thought as it intermingles between philosophy, daily life and religious practices. The system encompasses aspects such as astrology, numerology and flows of energy both in the world around us and within the human body.

Traditional Chinese Medicine theory looks at the human body and the universe through a holistic energetic system that is based on theories dating back to approximately the 1st or 2nd century BCE. This started with a primary text called Huang Di Nei Jing or The Yellow Emperors Canon of Medicine credited to the famous Yellow Emperor. It is written in a traditional question and answer style of writing where the student poses a question and the master presents an answer.

Huang Di Said, "From ancient times it has been recognized that there is an intimate relationship between the activity and life of human beings and their natural environment. The root of all life is Yin and Yang; this includes everything in the universe, with heaven above and earth below, within the four directions and the nine continents."

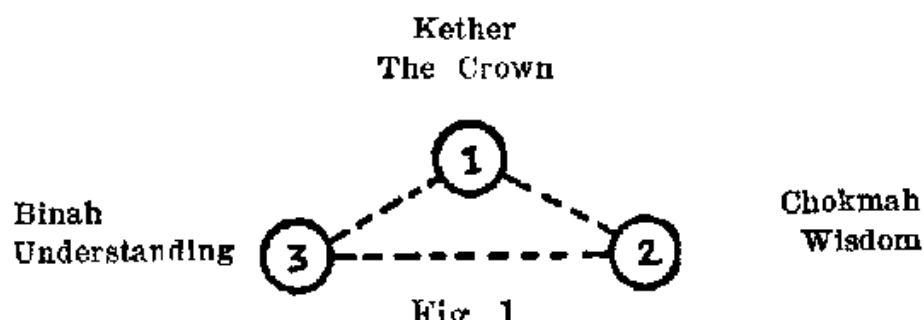
– Huan Di Nei Jing Su Wen, (Chapter 3)

From this text and the influences of the surrounding religions, scientific knowledge of the time and observations of the world has resulted in the system growing and evolving. Over the centuries the theories have expanded and practices developed from empirical observation into a complex system that is an interrelated web of energetic philosophies. It encompasses areas including diet therapies, acupuncture, herbal medicine, physical manipulations or massage and moving energetics such as Tai Chi or Qi Gong. The system can be loosely compared to using the Sephirot of the Kabbalah and used to classify or sort the known universe into a useful or manageable system in which to operate and explain unseen forces.

The fundamental view of Traditional Chinese Medicine starts with three concepts, that of Qi, Yin and Yang. These simple essential concepts are also discovered under various names within many other traditions, from around the world and throughout the centuries. Qi means energy and is the fundamental building block of everything around us. It flows through and builds the universe as the Macrocosm impacting us on an individual level as its Microcosm. Yin and Yang represent the duality of forces that encompass and manifest from the whole. If we look at this from a Qabalistic point of view, out of Ain Soph Aur the first manifested Sephirot comes Kether (Qi) it then reflects itself into Chochmah (Yang the active energy) and stabilizes itself into the balance of the trinity with Binah (Yin the more passive energy).



The symbol for Qi depicts a pot of rice bubbling on a stove with the steam flowing upwards representing the generation of energy.





“The relationship and interdependence of Yin-Yang can be represented in the famous symbol. This symbol is called the “Supreme Ultimate” (Tai Ji) and it represents well the interdependence of Yin and Yang.

The main points of this interdependence are:

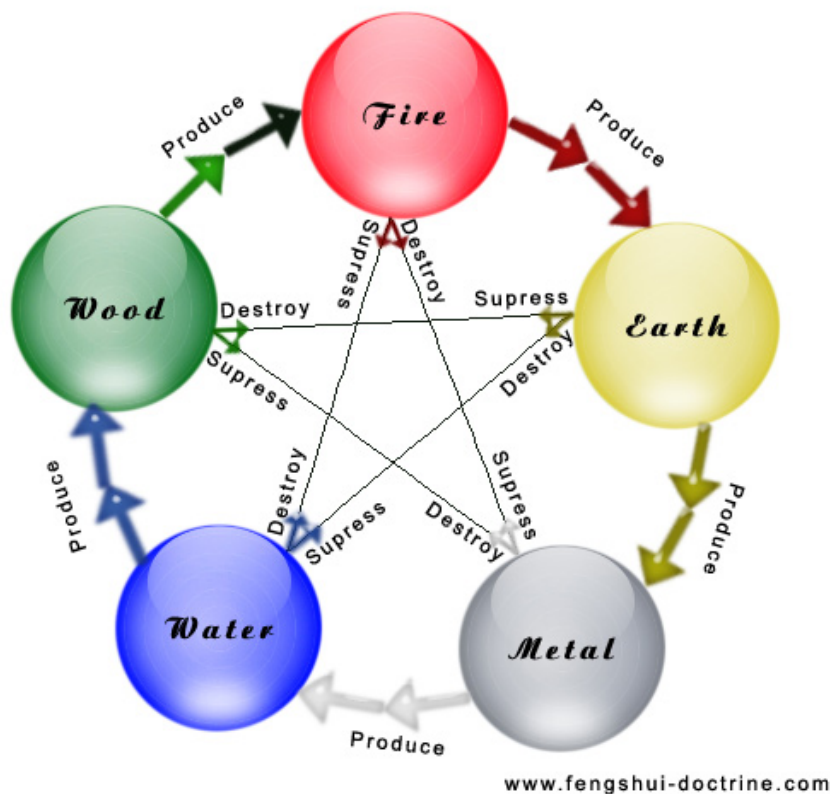
- a) Although they are opposite stages, Yin-Yang form a unity and are complementary.
- b) Yang contains the seed of Yin and vice versa. This is represented by the small black and white spots.
- c) Nothing is totally Yin or totally Yang.
- d) Yang changes into Yin and vice versa.”

- Giovanni Maciocia Fundamentals of TCM (pg 5)

The symbol for Yin and Yang demonstrates this concept thoroughly, the White Yang energy has a small part of Yin energy within it and the Black Yin energy has a small part of Yang within it, in a state of constant check and balance. Yin and Yang can represent many dualities such as the sunny and dark side of an object, day and night, up and down, left and right, positive and negative, force and form, masculine and feminine. You can describe anything in the terms of Yin and Yang as having a functional relationship with another object or thing. For instance you could say the television is Yang in relation to the stand or table it sits on which is more Yin to more specific functions of the human body and its interrelationships of its organs such as the Liver is more Yin in relation to the Gallbladder which is considered more Yang.

Within Traditional Chinese Medicine the human body is said to have 12 Meridians of energy (Qi) that flow around the body in twelve, two hour cycles that relate to the various organs of the body. These can then link to the Chinese Zodiac and subsequently to the 12 earthly branches of Daoism. In truth each meridian follows its superficial pathway and then delves deeply into the body to reach each specific organ, thus allowing access to the energy of each organ from a superficial level. This is the underlying mechanism of Acupuncture, through correct point selection the Qi of a specific channel is augmented at a superficial level as it flows through the channel and reaches the physical organ. As this happens it corrects various any disharmonies or blockages within the channel or internal organ that may be manifesting as illness.

The organ system in Traditional Chinese Medicine can be combined into the Chinese Five Element System. The Chinese elemental system has its similarities with the western elements (including spirit) but fundamentally operates differently through the eyes of the Traditional Chinese system. The Chinese elements being Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water. It is drawn generally indicating how each element produces the next through the generative cycle (outside ring), or controls each element through the controlling cycle (inside pentagram).



Elemental Correspondences:

Element	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Direction	East	South	Center	West	North
Color	Blue-green	Red	Yellow	White	Black
Climate	Windy	Hot	Damp	Dry	Cold
Season	Spring	Summer	Late Summer	Autumn	Winter
Human Sound	Shouting	Laughing	Singing	Weeping	Groaning
Emotion	Anger	Joy	Reflection	Grief	Fear
Taste	Sour	Bitter	Sweet	Pungent	Salty
Zang (Yin)	Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lungs	Kidney
Fu (Yang)	Gall Bladder	Small Intestine	Stomach	Large Intestine	Urinary Bladder
Orifice	Eyes	Tongue	Mouth	Nose	Ears
Tissue	Tendons	Blood Vessels	Flesh	Skin	Bones
Smell	Goatish	Burning	Fragrant	Rank	Rotten
Spirit	Hun <i>Ethereal Soul</i>	Shen <i>Mind (spirit)</i>	Yi <i>Intellect</i>	Po <i>Corporeal Soul</i>	Zhi <i>Willpower</i>

Through looking at the correspondences of each element we can see each element consists of two main organs (one Yin, one Yang) and also a Spirit. The Spiritual correspondence relates to the psycho-emotional aspect of the Yin organ.

Shen is a term used to describe Spirit, the fundamental spiritual aspect of the entire body that contains all five spiritual aspects described within each element. It is also a term used to describe the state of mind with the spirit (and also called Shen) that is attributed to the fire element. The mind is the most subtle and non-material type of Qi. It makes sure our emotions are all balanced and is responsible for the recognition of thoughts, perceptions and feelings. When the mind is clear we are conscious, capable of insight, happy, sleep well and it is said that wisdom derives from a strong heart and a healthy mind.

The Liver houses the Hun, or the ethereal soul and this component of the eastern spirit is the broad equivalent of the Western concept of the soul or spirit. Chinese thought believes that the Hun enters the body shortly after birth and is ethereal in nature. It survives the body after death and flows back to 'heaven'. This is the ancient Chinese concept of 'heaven' that is a state of subtle and non-material energies or beings. The Hun is the equivalent of ghosts or energetic beings. From a Kabalistic point of view the Hun would leave our world and move up the tree of life to the subtler energetic Sephirot initially entering Yesod.

'Yesod is the sphere of that particular substance, partaking of the nature of both mind and matter, which is called Aether of the Wise the Akasha, or the Astral Light, according to the terminology that is being used.'

– The Mystical Qabalah, Dion Fortune (pg 237)

From a Chinese perspective it would be the Hun component of the soul that leaves the body though astral traveling or path working with the tree of life always finding its way back through the pull of its partner the Po.

The spirit of the Hun is Yang (it leaves the body and moves up into finer energies) in relation to its partner the Po or Corporeal Soul that dwells in the Lungs and dissolves through returning into the earth after death. It is the more animistic or primal component of the soul and closely linked with the physical body. The Po is responsible for helping our bodies five senses and making sure they are all functioning properly. Due to the residence of the Po being the Lungs, breathing exercises or meditation acts on the Po, stills the mind and influences its Yin/Yang hold on the Hun. This allows for the Hun to wander and experience other realms feeding back information to the Po to allow these sensations to be experienced by our physical body. The Po protects the body on a physical level from external psychic influences and if someone has a strong Po their psychic defenses are strong and resistant to attack or feeling the negative influences of others.

The two final spiritual aspects take on minor roles in comparison to the Shen, Hun and Po. The Yi or intellect is responsible for aspects of our mind that involve concentrating, focusing, memorizing, studying and creating new ideas, whilst the Zhi or Willpower involves our drive, determination, motivation and also our long term memory.

One of the reasons it can be beneficial to understand the spiritual aspects of Traditional Chinese Medicine is to analyse the any physiological experiences that may occur after mystical operations or meditative states. For instance if you feel disconnected, looking at the world from above your head or feel detached from your body one could equate those feelings to a detached Hun. The Ethereal Soul isn't properly grounded in its body or being balanced by the Po and suitable exercises or treatments can be conducted to re balance these spiritual elements. Likewise, if an individual feels drained or fatigued after meditation or an energetic practice the solution could be to build the defenses of the Po to protect the physical body whilst in a higher energetic state.

In Working with the tree it is wisest to keep on going over it, rather than to concentrate upon a single point until it is mastered, for one thing explains another, and it is out of the perception of the relationships between the different symbols that enlightenment arises.

– Dion Fortune, The Mystical Qabalah (pg 29)

It is the complex interrelationships between the various energetic organs and their spiritual aspects that allow us to follow our true path or progress in higher realms. Having another modality or system to overlay and work with energetically is beneficial to all practitioners working in psycho-spiritual endeavors, if problems should arise. It brings forth another layer of correspondences and methods for acting upon situations that could occur during an energetic working or endeavor. This is especially helpful in regards to the health of individuals involved with activities that have a direct impact on the human psyche.

References

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Images

Supernal Triad Image:

<http://hermetic.com/browe-archive/achad/qbl/QBL%20chapter%201.htm>

Qi Image:

<http://taichi-inthepark.co.uk/qi.html>

Five Elements Diagram:

<http://fengshui-doctrine.com/index.php?q=five-feng-shui-elements-cycles.html>