

# LIFE FORCE & ENERGY HEALING

CONCEPTS, SYSTEMS,  
AND THERAPIES



BY [TRADITIONALBODYWORK.COM](http://TRADITIONALBODYWORK.COM)

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# Preface

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With this book we offer you a comprehensive overview of Vital Life Force conceptions and Energy Healing.

In the first part of the book — [Life Force Concepts and Beliefs](#) — we embark on describing a broad range of ancient and contemporary Life Energy concepts across a variety of cultures. Think of conceptions such as Prana, Qi, Kundalini Energy, Orgone, Mana, Anima, and Pneuma, to just give some examples.

In the book's second part — [Life Energy Systems and Constructs](#) — we take a look at how various conceptions and beliefs have been translated in workable Life Force systems and constructs, such as Energy Meridians, Nadis, Sib Sen Energy Lines, Chakras, Dantian, and the Microcosmic Orbit, among others.

Finally, in the last part of the book — [Energy Healing Therapies](#) — we discuss the most important and best-known Energy Healing therapies, also synonymously called Biofield therapies, Bioenergy Healing, or Energy Medicine.

Questions and remarks about this book or about TraditionalBodywork.com can be sent to [talk2us@traditionalbodywork.com](mailto:talk2us@traditionalbodywork.com)

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# Introduction

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## Vitalism and Life Force

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*Vitalism* is the belief (or concept) that all life forms (and in some cases also all *inanimate* phenomena) are driven, ruled, or created by a mysterious, primordial “Vital Force” or “Vital Energy.” The notion of some kind of Vital Life Energy or Universal Life Force is perhaps as old as mankind, already surfacing in ancient Indian, Chinese, Egyptian, and Greek civilizations, among others.

Even today, the idea of a certain Vital Life Energy that guides and influences Life as a whole, and our physical and mental health and well-being in particular, still prominently exists in many traditional and complementary medicine and spiritual systems, such as in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Ayurveda, Yoga, Reiki, Reflexology, and the Thai Healing Arts, but also in modern alternative healing therapies.

This Vital Force has been given a variety of names, such as Qi, [Prana](#), Lom Pran, [Lung](#), Aether, Pneuma, Mana, Silap Inua, Élan Vital, Subtle Energy, or [Orgone](#), being only some conceptions of the philosophy of Vital Life Force.

In various ancient civilizations, and in traditional healing and spiritual systems, it's commonly agreed on that Vital Life Energy is absorbed by human beings via the air that is breathed in, the food that is consumed, barefoot contact with Earth, and via light (the sun) through, for instance, the skin.

Notably in traditional medicine systems that embrace the concept of Vitalism, it's thought that disease results from an imbalance or blockage of Vital Life Force flow in the

body. In some of those traditional systems, it's argued that this Vital Life Energy flows through well-defined Energy Channels i.e. Energy Pathways, such as through the [Meridians](#) in TCM, and the Sen Energy Lines in the Thai healing arts. This also implicates that by clearing or unblocking the Energy Channels, Vital Force can flow freely through the body, and maintain health and optimal functioning of body, mind, and spirit.

Very much depending on the type of Vitalism adhered to, Vital Life Force may be visible, invisible, material, an energetic force, a “second kind” of [etheric body](#), spiritual force, a kind of electrical current, air, magnetism, radiation, photons, a radio-frequency, or convertible i.e. transformable into other “states” of energy and matter. In most cases, a particular form i.e. implementation of Vitalism is constituted as one or more of these aforementioned characteristics and elements.

In any case, today, in contemporary science, the concept of Vitalism is not seen as having a scientific basis or being built upon scientific principles, and at best it's seen as a (maybe workable) hypothesis. Others argue that Vitalism i.e. Life Energy concepts are just a way to give a name to those natural life phenomena around and within us, that is, the creative and sustaining processes of Life which mankind has not yet fully understood.



## Energy Medicine and Healing

*Energy Medicine* (also called *Energy Healing*) is a type of alternative or complementary medicine in which it's thought that practitioners (or healers) can work with the “energy field” or “subtle energy” of a patient to achieve health benefits.

Depending on the underlying concepts or systems, this subtle energy is explained in various ways, which may include [Vital Life Force](#) (Prana, Qi, rLung, and so on), magnetic fields, electricity, electromagnetic fields and currents, ether, biophotons, or certain “special particles,” and so on.

Within Energy Medicine practices, it's typically stated that imbalances or blockages in the body's Energy Field or [Biofield](#) cause discomforts and illnesses, and that by re-balancing or harmonizing the patient's Energy Field healing can be achieved.

Energy Medicine sessions may include hands-on, manual touch therapy, or non-touch therapeutic work, and even distant healing.

There are many different types of treatment modalities that are considered Energy Medicine, such as Biofield Healing, Healing Touch (HT), [Therapeutic Touch \(TT\)](#), Magnetism, [Aura Healing](#), and Reiki, some types of Yoga, Tai Chi, and Qigong, to give a few examples.

Although Energy Medicine is widely used nowadays, there's no evidence-based support for actual repeatable clinical effects of Energy Healing, and within the scientific

community positive therapeutic results are usually seen as the result of known psychological mechanisms, such as placebo effects and cognitive dissonance.

# Life Force Concepts and Beliefs

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## Air, Wind, and Breath

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For millennia, air, wind, and breath have been strongly associated with the phenomenon of life, often seen as the most prominent Vital Life forces or Vital Life energies that constitute the universe.

Many concepts about Vital Life Force, in different ancient cultures, are simply named after air, wind, or breath, or even have — depending on the context used — the meaning of all three words.

Think of Life Energy concepts such as [Prana](#) (meaning vitality, life, spirit, animation, or breath), Qi (meaning air; vital energy, spirit, breath, or vapor), [Lung](#) (meaning wind” or breath), [Inua](#) (meaning life essence, breath, spirit, wind, weather, sky, air, or intellect), and Pneuma (meaning breath, breath of life, air in motion, or wind), to give some examples.

Additionally, air, wind, and breath are linked to notions of “motion,” “movement,” “energy,” “vitality,” “spirit,” “mind,” and “change,” which are the typical characteristics of life processes. Moreover, if we can’t *breathe*, if we can’t inhale *air*, we very quickly cease to live.

As such, air and breathing have always received more immediate importance compared to food or water, the latter being things we can do without for a longer period. It’s therefore not extraordinary that wind, air, and breath have gotten such prominent focus.

In many legends that relate the beginnings of life, mankind, and the universe, wind and breath play a crucial role. For

instance, it was “God’s wind that swept over the waters...,”  
“The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground  
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man  
became a living being...” “The wind blows where it wishes,  
and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it is  
coming from and where it is going...”

In fact, tales and sagas that involve wind, air, and breath  
play an important part in many beliefs about the origins,  
constituents, and sustenance of Life, across many different  
civilizations.

Furthermore, influencing, manipulating, moving or  
circulating air and breath in the body has been an  
important type of healing and spiritual work in many  
traditional medicine systems, practiced through various  
types of [Breathwork](#), movement exercises, and Yogic  
systems that work with Vital Breath or Life Force.

## Anima and Animus | Ancient Rome

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*Anima* is a Latin word, which can mean “wind,” “air,” “breath,” “vital principle,” “life,” or “soul.” It’s a word sometimes used synonymously with *animus*, which rather means “mind,” “desire,” “spirit,” “temper,” or “will,” but can also mean “life” or “soul.” The word *anima* has its roots in the ancient Greek *anemos*, which can mean “wind,” “breeze”, “gale,” or “breathe.”

In ancient Rome, the *anima* typically referred to the soul, spirit, or the *animating* principle of a living thing, but it could not be considered separately from *animus*. In fact, *anima* and *animus* together were a dualistic concept, describing a whole, that is, a unity that seemingly consisted of two parts.

For instance, the Roman philosopher and poet Lucretius (99 – 55 BCE) believed that the *soul* is made of extraordinarily fine *atoms*, having two related i.e. connected parts: the *anima*, which is distributed throughout the body and is the cause of *sensation*, and the *animus* located in the breast, which creates *consciousness*.

In fact, Lucretius’ philosophy was a form of *atomism*: the *atoms* (the fundamental and indivisible components of life) and the *void* (space and emptiness to contain atoms) are eternal, and in constant motion and change. Through “atomic collisions” the objects i.e. entities in the universe are being created, until the phenomena again fall apart into atoms.

Thus, the *soul*, according to Lucretius, is born (i.e. created), and during our lives it grows with the body, and at

death it vanishes like air or smoke. Yet, the anima and animus don't really disappear, but they rather fall apart into their fundamental components (atoms) and remerge with the universe.

## Animatism | United Kingdom (Marett)

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*Animatism*, also referred to as *manaism* — and not to be confused with [animism](#) — was a term used by the British ethnologist Robert Marett (1866 – 1943).

The term denotes the belief in a generalized, impersonal and supernatural power or force in humans, animals, plants, and inanimate phenomena, which influences the world, but over which people can have some control, using it for protection, strength, and success in achieving goals in the world.

According to Marett, animatism is the belief that everything in the natural world, including inanimate objects, is permeated by a mystical, all-pervading [Life Force](#). This impersonal Life Force infuses things or situations, which become enlivened, but not as an individual *soul*, such as is common to believe in *animism*.

Marret further states that many indigenous cultures believe in animatism, while also adhering to the idea that worshipping inanimate objects will shoo away evil forces, increase Life Force, and protect them against harm.



## Animism

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*Animism*, a term derived from the Latin [anima](#), is the belief that all things in the universe possess a unique spiritual, divine, or living essence. Animism is often considered the oldest and most widespread philosophical and spiritual belief system.

Depending on the specific animistic belief system of a culture or civilization, animism may include all or some of the world phenomena, such as human beings, deities, animals, plants, mountains, rivers, land, rocks, language, and sounds, and so on.

Animism is deeply concerned with the creation and sustenance of the universe, the supernatural world, and the existence of distinct immaterial souls or spirits that inhabit all things. As such, there are river spirits, tree spirits, mountain spirits, ancestor spirits, animal spirits, and so on, which may be (or need to be) worshiped or appeased. In some animistic systems, the existence of distinct spirits or souls is attributed to an all-encompassing, universal [Life Force](#).

There is continuous debate as to whether animism is a religious belief or a worldview as it incorporates many diverse mythologies and beliefs from a broad range of cultures and civilizations. Nevertheless, animism has profound ecological consequences as it puts Nature as a whole on an equal footing with human beings, and not as a separate, foreign entity that needs to be conquered or subjugated.

Animism today is still very much alive and often integrated in more recent worldviews or religions, such as Hinduism, Shinto, or Buddhism. For instance, in basically all Asian countries, animism is fully part of the mainstream religious systems, and as such, Nature (trees, mountains, forests, lakes, animals, and so on), deities, and ancestors as distinct spiritual or living entities are worshiped and respected, and are an essential part of the people's belief, spiritual, and/or religious systems.

## Arche and Apeiron | Ancient Greece

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*Arche* (or *archai*) is a Greek word already used in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, which, depending on the context, can mean “beginning,” “divine origin,” “source of action,” “first principle,” or “element.”

Arche refers to the first principle or element, the ultimate underlying, intangible, and indemonstrable substance of the universe, which is the source, origin, or root of all things that exist. Through arche all things come into being, and into arche all things are again resolved.

What substance exactly this arche consisted of remained a recurring point of discussion among successive Greek philosophers. Some philosophers claimed it was *water*, others said it was *air* or [aether](#), but the philosopher *Anaximander* (610 – 546 BCE), for instance, proposed the existence of an *apeiron*, an indefinite, unnamable substance from which all things are born and to which all things will return.

Apeiron, which has the meaning “endless,” “infinite,” or “boundless,” is something completely unknowable, of unlimited extent and duration, eternal and ageless. It generates the opposites such as hot and cold, wet and dry, and so on, which enable the creation and continuation of everything in the world. In fact, apeiron creates and maintains the world, but is not *of* the world.

## Ase | Nigeria

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*Ase*, *ashe*, or *ache* is a philosophical, cosmological, and religious concept of the *Yoruba* people, which is conceived as a Sacred Power, Divine Energy, or Life Force that “make things happen” or “can change things.” The Yoruba people are a West African ethnic group, which today inhabits parts of Nigeria, Benin and Togo.

It's thought that Ase is given or supplied by *Olodumare* (the Almighty and Supreme Creator) to all that lives or exists, which includes gods, ancestors, spirits, humans, animals, plants, rocks, rivers, but also songs, words, prayers, praises, or curses. In fact, without Ase, life is impossible.

Every person is born with a certain amount of Ase, which increases and decreases depending on the choices made in life. Ase is also said to be passed down to each generation, that is, the ancestors leave their Ase behind when they die and give this power to their descendants.

The Yoruba people also believe that someone can fully master Ase through training and dedication, someone who is then called a *Alaase*, and can use Ase Life Force to deliberately change things in the world or make things happen.

## Auras

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The word *aura* is both an ancient Greek and Latin word, which can mean “breeze,” “wind,” “air,” “breath,” or “air in motion.”

Although the idea of auras existed already earlier, the concept was made popular by Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854 – 1934), who developed a Westernized-Tantric theory about auras, and claimed, among other things, that humans, animals, and even inanimate objects are surrounded by an Energy Field that emanates from the body, which is correspondingly connected to the Vital Life Force that runs through the [Chakras](#).

In some conceptions of the aura it's thought to be a kind of [subtle body](#), or second body, a specific form of Life Energy (arising from Qi or Prana), which some psychics and energy healers claim they can see (or “read”), and which has a size, form, color, and vibration. In other notions, the aura is rather seen as an enclosing electromagnetic or perhaps a bioenergetic field.

By those involved in “aura reading,” it's believed that a person's aura tells about his or her character, health, medical condition, energy level, state (or level) of being, and consciousness. Additionally, the aura is also a kind of magnetic field that picks up emotions, health, psychic vibrations, and circumstances existing around a person.

As auras can get “contaminated” by external influences, it's likewise believed that they can be “healed” or “cleansed” by using various techniques or methods, such as bathing, walking in the rain, smudging, [meditation](#), mantras, chants,

seeing an energy healer, [using crystals](#), performing certain rituals, or carrying out specific exercises, among others.

## Bildungstrieb | Germany (Blumenbach)

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Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752 – 1840), commonly referred to as the “Father of German Vitalism,” was a physician, naturalist, biologist, physiologist, and anthropologist.

One of the important elements of Blumenbach’s work contained the conception of a *vis formativus* or *Bildungstrieb*, which could be described as an inborn Life Force (*Lebenskraft* in German) or *nisus formativus* i.e. “formative drive” within each organism. This Life Force reaches out and expands, in order to create, maintain, and — if necessary — repair its specific *shape, function, and being*. In higher life forms this *Bildungstrieb* would also include the drive to self-development and self-perfection.

Johann Blumenbach claimed that both living organisms and inanimate things have an inherent active and operative “tendency” to accomplish a specific form and function, and continuously develop, maintain, and repair their own existence. Moreover, this tendency (or inclination) is a [Vital Force](#) that goes beyond the mere physical, chemical, or mechanical properties of phenomena.

Blumenbach described his *Bildungstrieb* as being a proper, undeniable force, whose existence and effects are apparent throughout the whole of Nature and revealed by experience.

## Élan Vital | France (Bergson)

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Henri-Louis Bergson (1859 – 1941) was a French philosopher who used the term *Élan Vital* to describe the mysterious force that drives Life, present in all creatures, one that, according to Bergson, cannot (yet) be explained by natural science. *Élan Vital* has been translated in different ways, such as Vital Force, Vital Urge, Vital Impetus, Vital Principle, or Vital Impulse.

When we look at the French word *élan* in the meaning it is used by Bergson, it can translate as *momentum, movement, impetus, impulse, zest, burst, or rush*. The French word *vital* can be translated to the English *vital, essential, fundamental, or pivotal*.

According to Bergson, Life is a process, and manifests itself as *endurance* and *duration*, continually developing and generating new (life) forms, while simultaneously increasing in consciousness (the intuitive perception and understanding of experience, itself, and the flow of time) *and* in *Élan Vital*. In short, it's Bergson's way of describing *evolution*, which he considers a *creative* process, rather than *mechanistic*.

In fact, increasing consciousness and *Élan Vital* is seen as the purpose of evolution, and more *Élan Vital* means more aliveness and Life Energy, an ever “expanding” phenomenon. Of course, the idea of the existence of a primary Life Force is not new. We find it addressed by many philosophers, spiritual teachers, and in many ancient cultures, such as those of India (Prana Life Force) and China (Qi or Chi Vital Energy), among others.



Nevertheless, it's rather interesting to observe that Bergson's idea of an "increasing Élan Vital and consciousness" runs rather parallel with the goals of increasing Life Energy, Prana, or Chi in one's body (for physical, mental, and spiritual health purposes), such as common in Asian (but also in other) traditional medicine, religious, and philosophical systems.

## Emergence Theory

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*Emergence theory*, also called *Emergentism*, is a philosophical and scientific theory (already propagated by the Greek philosopher *Aristotle*) about the fact that sovereign entities i.e. phenomena (or groups of entities i.e. systems) have properties or characteristics its separate parts (components) don't have on their own. That is, the properties of a certain entity or system *emerge* only when the parts interact together.

For instance, the phenomenon of life is generally considered an “emergent property” of its individual elements, an interactive, interconnected result of what nowadays is called *chemistry* between its constituents. The same counts, for instance, for our consciousness or self-consciousness, which only emerges as a result of properly functioning body elements.

To say it differently: an emergent property of a single entity or a group of (similar or different) entities (a *system*) is a property (or characteristic) that is not a property of any constituent of that entity or system on its own, but it's still a feature of that entity or system *as a whole*.

Nevertheless, it's also possible to see the Emergence philosophy the other way around, that is, to consider that the “emergent property” is actually already there, but needs a “vessel” or “vehicle” to become visible, active, or functioning i.e. emergent. For instance, we could propose that consciousness i.e. awareness already exists, but needs, creates, and maintains a body (let's say: our brain and nervous system) to express itself and function.

In this particular view, [Vital Life Energy](#), Vital Force, or Life is “already there,” and not a result of “chemistry” of the different parts of a body or entity, but works the other way around: the body is a function or even an “emergent property” of Life.

## Entelechy | Germany (Driesch)

The concept of *entelechy* was already embarked on by the Greek philosopher Aristotle, and later on by the German polymath Leibniz, but it was the German biologist and philosopher Hans Driesch (1867-1941) who developed a more comprehensive idea of this notion.

In fact, it was Aristotle who invented the word *entelechy* as a combination of the Greek words *entelēs*, (complete, full-grown), *echein* (to be a certain way by the continuing effort of holding on in that condition), *endelecheia* (persistence), and *telos* (completion).

In any case, *entelechy* is explained as a non-material, non-spatial, metaphysical element in living bodies, which is supposed to be a Vital Force that leads the development, organization, and functioning of organisms. Driesch insisted that such a concept was indispensable to come to a scientific explanation of biological phenomena.

## Ether, Pneuma, and Psyche | Ancient Greece

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In this chapter, we take a look at the ancient Greek concepts of *ether* (*aether*), *pneuma*, and *psyche*, how they relate to each other and to the idea of Vital Force or Vital Life Energy.

### Aether

In ancient Greece, *ether* or *aether* denoted either the bright upper atmosphere above the clouds, which was considered a material element of the cosmos and a form of [air](#) (*aer* in Greek), or the fifth classical element alongside the terrestrial *air*, *water*, *earth*, and *fire*. In the European Middle Ages *ether* was also addressed as *quintessence*, but the ideas around it started to diverge from the early Greek concepts.

In any case, to be clear and unambiguous: we're not talking about *ether* as a class of organic compound (either as liquid or gas) or about the *aether* in physics, such as discussed in the 18th and 19th century.

*Aether*, in Greek mythology, was considered the pure essence that the Gods breathed, filling the space where they lived (above the clouds in the upper atmosphere), and the substance everything else originated from. Aether was also personified as a deity. Yet, it was the Greek philosopher *Aristotle* (384 BCE – 322 BCE) who developed a theory of aether as the fifth element (which he himself didn't label *aether*, by the way, but just as the fifth element).

This fifth element, which later was seen as the actual first essential element where all other elements spring from, was considered very different from the other four terrestrial elements. Aether had no specific qualities, was not hot, not cold, didn't change, and was a kind of void or space, intangible, but still existing, a subtle type of matter, and *moving* in a circular motion, additionally being responsible for or causing the essential "heat of life."

Some Greek philosophers considered *aether* and *aer* the same things, or even the actual [arche](#) (or at least emanating from *arche*), the latter being a Greek concept that denotes the "beginning", "origin," "source of action," "from the beginning," or "first principle."

By the way, in ancient India, a similar system of five elements is found called *Pancha Bhoota*, used especially in Ayurveda, and defined as Akasha (aether, space or void), Vayu (air), Tejas or Agni (fire), Apas or Varuna (water), and Prthivi or Bhumi (earth).

## Pneuma

The Greek *pneuma*, meaning "breath," also roughly translated as "air in motion," or "wind," was addressed by the Greek philosopher *Anaximenes* (586 BCE – 526 BCE) as the Greek *aer*, being the element from which all things in the universe originate.

In fact, in the earliest usage the concepts of *aer* and *pneuma* were synonymous. Additionally, Anaximenes also considered the *psyche* (soul) a form of *aer* (air). Moreover, *pneuma* was also used as a reference to "spirit" or "soul."

Later in ancient Greece, *pneuma* becomes the circulating, moving air that we inhale, and which is necessary for the function of vital organs and our ability to move, essential for

maintaining *vital heat* in the body, and the element that sustains our *consciousness*.

Bit by bit, *pneuma* becomes the concept of the “breath of life,” the human soul or *psyche*, and the active, creative principle that forms and sustains the individual and the cosmos, including animate objects, which is obviously a concept of Vital Life Energy or Vital Force. The highest form of *pneuma* is considered the divine *spirit*, the soul of God.

## Psyche

The exact denotation of the Greek word *psyche* (ψυχή) is still under debate, but it has been used by Greek philosophers in a variety of ways, including “life”, “to blow,” “spirit,” “soul,” or “self,” among some other meanings.

Nevertheless, *psyche* was often used synonymously with *pneuma*, having similar properties of *motion* and *moving*, and as such also analogies with *wind*, [breath](#), and *breathing*.

The Greek philosopher *Plato* (428 BCE – 347 BCE) described the *psyche* as the spirit of the universe, the immaterial principle of movement and life. *Homer* (8th century BCE), the famous Greek poet, saw the *psyche* as the animating principle of a human or animal body, the vital spirit, soul, or life.

The ancient Romans synonymized the Greek word *psyche* to their Latin [anima](#) (soul, breath, or life), a word that comes from the Greek word *anemos*, meaning “wind” or “breeze,” and obviously refers to *movement* and *moving*.

The derived Latin words *animationem* (English: animation) and *animare* meant “action of imparting life,” “bestowing life

on,” “give breath to,” “to enliven,” “to endow with a spirit.” Nowadays, *animation* is used in the sense of vitality, motion, vigor, liveliness, or the appearance of activity or life.

## In Conclusion

The concepts of *ether*, *pneuma*, and *psyche* in ancient Greece were in a constant state of flux, highly flexible, and still under development, that is, they changed over time, and depending on which philosopher occupied himself with these ideas they were seen as different, similar, synonymous, related to each other, or influencing each other.

Nevertheless, they all — in one way or the other — referred to the first principles of life, that is, to [Vital Force](#) or Vital Life Energy, being responsible i.e. the creative and animating cause of the universe, the heavens, the earth, and the individual human being.



## Hylozoism | Ancient Greece

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*Hylozoism*, a word derived from the Greek *hyle* (matter) and *zoe* (life), is a philosophical system originating in ancient Greece (6th and 5th centuries BCE) that regards all matter as being alive, either in itself or driven by some Vital Principle or Vital Force.

The ancient Greek held different versions of hylozoism to explain the underlying “living principle.” For instance, philosophers might claim that the Vital Force was actually magnetism, [air](#), divine energy, the “soul,” water, or fire, yet the main idea behind the theory was that life is inseparable from matter and vice versa.

## Innate Intelligence

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*Innate Intelligence* is a chiropractic term that refers to the inborn organizing characteristics of animate phenomena. The term was launched by Daniel Palmer, who was the founder of Chiropractic.

This concept is usually considered related to the realm of [Vitalism](#), in this particular case one that presupposes that all life contains an Innate Life Force that is responsible for the organization, maintenance, and healing of the body.

Although it was historically believed that adjusting the spine removed interference to the nervous system, through which this Innate Intelligence could act and heal the body, the idea of Innate Intelligence as an unknown Life Force Energy is not very common any longer among modern Chiropractors.

Chiropractors who still use the term often see Innate Intelligence rather as a form of *homeostasis*, or as an expression of the natural self-healing mechanisms of the body.

## Ka | Ancient Egypt

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*Ka* was the ancient Egyptian concept of Vital Essence, and part of the very complex life and afterlife belief system of the ancient Egyptians.

It was thought that everyone had an individual *Ka*, being part of the “soul,” which consisted of *Ka*, *Ba*, and *Akh*. While being alive, the *Ka* was in the body, but when someone died, the *Ka* left the body, yet continued to exist.

The *Ka* needed the same nourishment as a person after he or she died. Foods and drinks were regularly offered to the dead, but it was believed that it was the *Ka* Life Force within the offerings that was actually consumed.

In some regions of Ancient Egypt it was believed that when a child was being born the *Ka* was breathed into the body by the Gods to give it life.

Nevertheless, one must take into consideration that the concept of *Ka* changed several times during the many millennia of the ancient Egyptian civilization.

## Kundalini Energy | India

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*Kundalini Energy* is the name for a specific form of Life Force Energy (Prana), which according to Hindu religious teachings, is located at the base of the vertebral column (spine) of every human being. In Hinduism, typically in [Tantric traditions](#), it's believed that Kundalini is Divine Spiritual Energy, strongly associated with feminine, sexual, and creative Shakti energy.

The terms *Kundali* and *Kundalini* start to appear in Indian sacred texts, the *Upanishads*, as from the 7th century BCE. In the Sanskrit language it has different meanings and connotations, such as circular, annular, snake, bowl, rope, ring, water-pot, or coiled. Kundalini is often conceptualized or visualized as a coiled-up serpent (snake).

The active practice with Kundalini Energy comes about around the 11th century CE, and as from the 15th century CE it was also adopted in Hatha Yoga. Later, it became a more mainstream thought in Hinduism, and today it's a well-accepted concept in modern spirituality, and within the New-Age and Neo-Tantra movements.

It's thought that Kundalini Energy lies dormant i.e. sleeping in the Muladhara Root Chakra and can be aroused or awakened. The Muladhara Chakra is located at the base of the spine, and is one of the seven primary [Chakras](#), the latter considered the main Prana transformation and distribution centers.

By awakening Kundalini Shakti Energy it will be channeled i.e. pushed upwards through the other Chakras (which will be opened and fully activated), along the spine (notably

through the Sushumna [Nadi](#), but in some interpretations also through the Ida and Pingala Nadis) up to the Sahasrara Crown Chakra, resulting in a process of Spiritual Perfection, Divine Creativity and Union, Enlightenment and Bliss. It's also believed that rising Kundalini Energy will give the practitioner certain psychic powers (the so-called *Siddhis*).

On a spiritual energetic level, it's thought that when *feminine* Kundalini Shakti Energy reaches the Crown Chakra, it will be reunited with *masculine* Shiva Energy (Universal Consciousness or the Divine Ground of all Being), its counterpart, resulting in dissolution of duality and ignorance, and realization of complete spiritual union.

Kundalini Energy can be stirred or awakened by the use of various Yogic practices, such as meditation, [Pranayama](#), asanas (Yoga postures), acupressure, mudras, mantras, and bandhas, among other techniques. These Yogic activities are often guided by a Guru. Depending on the Yogic lineage, the techniques may focus directly on rousing the Root Chakra, others focus first on the Crown Chakra, and again others on the Navel Chakra (Manipura Chakra).

Whatever the techniques, methods, or procedures used, it's generally believed that, in order to control, handle, and integrate the powerful Kundalini Energy, a preliminary period of purification and strengthening of body, mind, Nadi Energy Channels, and nervous system is necessary to avoid physical or mental injury, or even death. Yet, Kundalini can also awaken spontaneously, without any preparation or volition.

In any case, in more ancient times in India, people would take these precautions seriously and would stay for longer periods in *ashrams* (spiritual retreat centers) to support this

preparation practice under the guidance of a Guru before trying to awaken their Kundalini Energy.

## Lom Pran | Thailand

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Life Force or Vital Energy is an important concept in Thai Traditional Medicine (TTM), notably in Thai Massage. It's known as *Lom Pran* in the Thai language, which freely translated means *Wind of Life*.

In various other Asian countries and cultures the same concept of Life Force is acknowledged, known under labels such as Prana (India), Qi or Chi (Chinese), Ki (Japanese), Gi (Korean) and Khi (Vietnamese), to give some examples.

In Thailand, Lom Pran Energy is said to be absorbed from our surroundings, by what we eat, drink and breathe, including through sunlight. Like the concepts of Qi (Ki) and Prana, it's thought to be the elemental Vital Force, invisible, but part of any living being, permeating and activating everything and everyone, without it life itself being impossible.

In TTM, the Ten Sen or [Sib Sen](#) are considered the ten major Life Energy Channels in the body that facilitate Lom Pran throughput. These Energy Channels need regular maintenance to avoid blockages or stagnation.

An obstruction in the flow of Lom Pran can cause physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual discomforts, and dis-eases or illnesses to a person. By contrast, the free and unobstructed flow of Lom Pran, in correct proportions and where needed, maintains or restores health.

Thus, most TTM treatments, such as Thai Massage practices, are based on “balancing Lom Pran,” or

unblocking the pathways (the Sen Energy Lines) that Lom Pran uses to travel and distribute itself through our bodies.

In Thai Traditional Massage one applies acupressure, pressure or stretches, among other techniques, on special Vital Energy Points along the Sen Sib lines, sometimes in combination with herbal compresses, to unblock or “clear” Sen Energy Lines and treat certain illnesses.

For certain common ailments treatment protocols are used indicating specific Vital Energy Points and/or Energy Lines to be treated in order to alleviate or cure health issues.



## Lung | Tibet

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*Lung* (*rLung* in Tibetan) means “wind” or “breath,” and is an important concept in Tibetan Buddhist-Tantric Medicine (in Tibet called *Sowa-Rigpa*).

Nevertheless, Lung can mean different things depending on the context of use: the Vital Energy (*Sog rLung* or *Prana*) that runs through the Energy Channels (*rTsa*, *Tsa*, or *Nadis*) of the [Subtle Body](#), the five winds (the *Five Vayus*, *Five Lung*, or *Subtle Breath*), or the transmission of spiritual power, among some other denotations.

In Tibetan Buddhism, it's thought that the human body consists of a *gross physical body* made of the elements earth, water, fire, wind, and space, and a *Subtle Body*. The Subtle Body, or *Vajra Body*, is made of *Vayu Winds*, Energy Channels (called *rTsa* or *Tsa*), Chakras (*energy wheels*), and Vital Points (called *Drops*, *Thig Le*, or *Bindu*).

The Five Lung are used in many Tibetan Yogic exercises to further spiritual development, that is, to increase physical, emotional, and mental health for spiritual purposes. The final aim of Lung exercises is to broaden awareness and consciousness, and to attain self-knowledge i.e. self-realization and spiritual enlightenment.

## Mana | Austronesia

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*Mana* is a concept found in Austronesia, notably among Polynesian and Melanesian peoples. Polynesia is defined as the region with countries such as Samoa, Tahiti, Tonga, Hawaii, and New Zealand, and Melanesia includes New Guinea, New Caledonia, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands, among other countries.

Depending on the region, the local indigenous peoples, situation and/or context, Mana may refer to the powers of Nature as a whole, or it may be an impersonal, supernatural and spiritual force, power, authority, or influence that people, spirits, or inanimate objects possess or can acquire. It may also be the originating [Universal Life Force](#) or a Spiritual Healing Power.

In some cultures in Austronesia, it's thought that Mana is a force that can be cultivated or enriched through certain (positive) actions, or a force that can get dissolved or gradually disappear due to "wrong" actions. Other perceptions see Mana as neither a benevolent nor a malevolent force, nor something inherently helpful or harmful, but just as the all-permeating Universal Life Energy, which can be used for both good and evil doings.

In Hawaii, for instance, Mana can be an energy concentrated in both living things and inanimate objects. It's a force or power that can be acquired or lost. Sexual activity and fighting are seen as means to gain Mana Energy. By the way, it's interesting to notice how this idea about sexual activity coincides with concepts in ancient [Taoist Sexual Practices](#) in which sexuality is seen as a means to transform Sexual Energy into Life Energy.

Among the Maori peoples in New Zealand (which originally is called *Aotearoa*) Mana is an extraordinary power, energy, essence or presence that somebody is born with, passed down from higher beings or from the sphere of “ultimate reality.” More Mana may result in more power and influence on one’s surroundings. Nevertheless, Mana can also be acquired during one’s life, or by contrast, get lost, both depending on one’s actions. Inanimate objects can also have Mana.

For the Maori people, Mana is closely related to the concepts of *Tapu* — the physical presence or restriction in the phenomenal world — and *Mauri*, which is considered the Vital Life Energy that binds and animates all things in the physical world. Without Tapu and Mauri, Mana cannot be expressed or flow into a person or object.

## Manaism

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Although the term *Manaism* may refer to the Austronesian belief in *Mana* (see our chapter about [Mana](#)), it's also used as a synonymous term for *Animatism* (see our chapter about [Animatism](#)).

## Manitou | Native America

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Among the Native American Algonquian groups, *Manitou* is considered both the primordial [Life Force](#) (seen as an impersonal life giving energy) and the *Great Spirit* (rather seen as a more personal Supreme God). Manitou has many similarities with the [Orenda](#) concept of the Iroquois people, another indigenous North American people.

The spiritual force Manitou is thought to be omnipresent and manifested everywhere and in everything: in organisms, the environment, in inanimate things, in events, and so on. In fact, everything, every phenomenon, may it be animate or inanimate, has its own Manitou.

Manitou, seen as the Supreme God and creator of the world, is looked for by spiritual leaders, individuals, and by communities for help in daily life, or for guidance in making difficult decisions.

Depending on the context, Manitou may also refer to good spirits and bad spirits. The Algonquian people acknowledge medicine men i.e. shamans, who use Manitou to see the future, change the weather, expel bad spirits, and heal illnesses. To communicate with spirits and manipulate Manitou, healers enter a trance, induced by singing, dancing, drum beats, or the use of hallucinogens.

In general, the Algonquian people believe that anyone is able to interact with spirits by means of prayer, fasting, hallucinogens, and/or by going into seclusion i.e. into a retreat.

## Mesmerism | Germany (Mesmer)

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*Mesmerism*, also called *Animal Magnetism*, was coined by the German doctor Franz Mesmer (1734 – 1815). He claimed that there's an invisible natural Life Force or Vital Energy — called *Lebensmagnetismus* — possessed by all living things, which includes human beings, animals, and vegetables.

Mesmer believed that this *Lebensmagnetismus* could be used, and was a kind of “magnetic fluid” or “fluid matter” that could have physical healing effects, for instance, by treating patients (humans and animals) with [Laying on of Hands](#) i.e. Hand Palm Healing techniques.

The idea of this “magnetic fluid” is that it's a universal principle of “fluid matter” that occupies all space, which can flow from one body to another, as in a magnet. A body that has more “magnetism” than another body, more motion, communicates it to the other body, until there's a balance i.e. equilibrium between the two bodies. This is what Mesmer called Animal Electricity or Animal Magnetism.

The practitioners (therapists) of Mesmerism are usually known as *magnetizers*. It was an important specialty in medicine in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it's still practiced as a form of complementary or alternative medicine in some countries.

Nevertheless, today, the word Mesmerism itself generally functions as a synonym of *hypnosis*. The reason of this is the effects and feelings of a patient of a “mesmerizing

treatment,” which typically includes intense heat, trembling, vomiting, trances, and/or seizures.

Some claim that the effects of Mesmer therapy are not induced by the magnetizer, but come from the patient, and takes place in the patient’s imagination, that is, apparent healing is rendered through a form of *autosuggestion* generated from within the mind.

## Monads | Germany (Leibniz)

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Although the term *monad* was already used by Greek philosophers, meaning “the smallest units of matter,” or in other contexts meaning “God” or “first being,” it’s perhaps best known as a concept of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646 - 1716), a German scientist and philosopher.

Leibniz stated that the universe is made up of *monads*, which are basic, individual, and immaterial substances, lacking spatial extension, and with their own intrinsic Life Force.

Each monad is a unique, indestructible, dynamic, and soul-like entity, which has no causal relation with other monads, but is synchronized with all other monads by God (the ultimate monad on which each monad depends) in a pre-established harmony.

Each monad would be self-sufficient, expressing the workings of the entire universe. As a monad cannot be influenced (there’s no causal relationship with other things i.e. monads), there is no way for a monad to be born or destroyed (except by the will of God), which means that all monads are eternal and immutable.

He further held that, at creation, each monad was essentially programmed by God to undergo all the changes it would ever go through, and during its existence its changes were only the result of the unfolding of its pre-defined nature (the so-called pre-established harmony).



## Odic Force | Germany (Reichenbach)

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The term *Odic Force* was coined by Baron Carl von Reichenbach (1788 – 1869) to describe a mysterious, all-permeating Life Principle, Vital Life Force, or Universal Life Energy. Odic Force, also called *Od* or *Odyle* is a reference to the prominent Germanic and Scandinavian God *Odin*.

Od is thought to be a force i.e. power radiated by most substances while penetrating all plants, animals, and humans. It surrounds everything that exists and it's also thought that the Odic Force can be seen by "sensitive" people. Although Od or Odyle has the same connotations as Indian Prana or Chinese Qi, it's not associated with wind, breath, or breathing, but rather with electricity, electromagnetism, and heat.

Additionally, Odyle is transferable from person to person, for instance [through the fingertips](#), but also via the mouth or forehead. According to Reichenbach, Odic Force explains several mysterious phenomena, such as hypnotism, psychic abilities, dowsing (water-witching), and [aura reading](#).

## Orenda | North America

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The Iroquois, an indigenous North American people, believe in a certain, all-pervading spiritual Life Energy called *Orenda*, a concept also labeled as *Orenna*, *Karenna*, *Iarenda*, *Urente*, or *Olenda*, depending on the individual Iroquois tribe.

Orenda is considered a powerful, transmissible divine energy in Nature that penetrates all animate and inanimate phenomena, which includes, for instance, rocks, rivers, mountains, plants, animals, humans, and deities.

It's thought that a healer or *shaman* can work with the power of Orenda through songs, sounds, prayers, or rituals. Depending on the context of use, Orenda can also directly refer to the Creator of All Things or the Great Spirit.

An important additional belief is that respect and care for Nature strengthens, harnesses, or puts forth Orenda, which brings about positive results in life.

Nevertheless, Orenda and its manifestations are neither good nor bad in itself, that is, what may be good for one person, environment, or circumstance may not be good for another person or situation.

## Orgone | Austria (Reich)

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The concept of *Orgone Energy* (or *Orgone Radiation*) was developed in the 1930s by Wilhelm Reich (1897 – 1957), an Austrian physician and psychoanalyst.

The idea of Orgone roughly corresponds with the concepts of Indian Prana and Chinese Qi, that is, with Vital Life Energy or the Universal Life Force, in the sense that Orgone is considered an omnipresent, invisible substance being the creative “thing” that gives life to and animates everything, from plants, bacteria to humans and from the sea, mountains, and earth to the entire universe.

Wilhelm Reich believed that blockages and subsequent deficiencies of Orgone lie at the root of diseases and discomforts. As a consequence, Reich designed so-called Orgone Energy Accumulators, which are devices or machines that can collect Orgone Energy from the environment to be used to cure health conditions and promote overall health and wellbeing. Reich was notably occupied with improving *Orgastic* i.e. *Orgasmic Potency* (which he believed could solve many illnesses), and the idea of curing cancer with concentrated Orgone Energy.

Reich also claimed that he could actually “see” Orgone through his self-created Organoscope, a special kind of telescope. Orgone Energy, according to Reich, is present in the soil and in the air, and has a blue or blue-greyish color. Its physical i.e. material aspect is [aether](#), and its energetic or spiritual aspect is what we call *God*. In fact, he called the elementary make-up of Orgone as consisting of so-called *bions* (or *biones*). Reich claimed that the

(observable) *bion* is the core functional unit of all living things.

The concept of Reich's Orgone Energy was initially influenced by Sigmund Freud's work on *libido* i.e. *sexual drive*, but he took this farther than only being an individual psycho-emotional phenomenon. Reich saw libido as a powerful, life-embracing, bioenergetic force — with both an energetic and physical aspect — in fact, the underpinning *Life Force* of all phenomena, which he later called *Orgone*.

Moreover, the free flow and subsequent spontaneous expression of this Orgone Energy through human beings was being obstructed, that is, inhibited by the detrimental effects of society's rules, laws, and moral codes on our body, according to Reich, notably those moral rules with regard to our sexuality.

Interesting enough, Orgone theory shows some resemblances with [Tantric Kundalini Energy](#), which in Indian traditions is considered the sexual, creative energy — an important aspect (or expression) of Vital Life Energy, the latter called [Prana](#) in India.

According to some Tantric traditions such as [Tantra Yoga](#), Kundalini Energy needs to be “awakened” in order to get rid of our inhibitions, let Prana Shakti Sexual-Creative Energy flow freely through the [Chakras](#) and our body, to finally become Self-Realized, liberated, and Spiritually Enlightened.

Moreover, Reich argued that poor Orgone exposure and/or circulation leads to *neurosis* and what he called a *Body Armor*, the latter being a “shield” consisting of deep rooted emotional traumas, tensions and inhibitions, which express

themselves physically (leading again to mental i.e. psychological issues in an enduring vicious circle).

As a result of these ideas Reich developed a specific type of therapy to open and resolve this Body Armor i.e. neuroses, called *Vegetotherapy* or *Psychiatric Orgone Therapy*. The goal of this therapy was to stimulate the free flow of Orgone through the body, which would heal the person mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Vegetotherapy shows remarkable parallels with modern psycho-somatic *Dearmoring Bodywork* or *Body Psychotherapy*, which of late has become adopted and further influenced by the Neo-Tantric and Sacred Sexuality movement. In Neo-Tantra, Vegetotherapy or Orgone Therapy merges with Indian Tantric concepts of the “free flow of Prana Life and Sexual energy,” Self-Liberation, Self-Realization, and “the transformation of sexual energy into spiritual energy and growth,” among other ideas.

In any case, it was Wilhelm Reich who coined the term *Sexual Revolution* in the 1930s, and he is indeed by many considered the “Godfather of the Sexual Revolution,” which is considered to have taken place from the 1960s to the 1980s. Reich argued that an authentic political revolution could only be possible when sexual repression was overthrown, which again shows quite some resemblance with millennia-old Tantra concepts and implications.

## Prana | India

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*Prana* is an Indian term often translated as Vital Life Energy (or Life Force), and typically refers to “Life Energy” circulating through our body. It’s thought to be the key vital force, the *animating* part of any living being, permeating everything and everyone, and it’s considered the primordial underlying principle of life and living.

In Ayurveda and Yoga, it’s generally thought that Prana arises from the Five Elements, specifically from the *Vayu element* (Air element). Prana is strongly associated with “Wind” and “Breath.” Nevertheless, there are also Indian scholars who claim that Prana transcends the Five Elements and is actually that what connects and animates the Five Elements, being Life itself.

Furthermore, Prana is thought to be divided into five types or *Five Vayus* (Five Winds) having different movements and functions: *Prana* (movement is inwards and downwards, the core Vital Life Force), *Apana* (movement is outwards and downwards), *Udana* (movement is upwards), *Vyana* (movement is spiraling) and *Samana* (movement is outwards).

In India, it’s commonly agreed on that Prana is absorbed by human beings via the air that is breathed in, the food that is consumed, and through light (the sun). In our body, Prana circulate through Energy Channels called [Nadis](#).

Along the Nadis, one finds main and sub [Chakras](#) (Prana distribution centers) and important Vital Energy Points. In Ayurveda and Yoga, the Energy Points are called [Marma Points](#). These Marma Points can be manipulated for health

benefits, for instance, through massage therapy, acupressure, and Yoga exercises.

It's thought that blockages of the free flow of Life Energy through the Nadis can cause health discomforts and illnesses. As such, one of the principal ideas of health in both Ayurvedic Medicine and Yoga is that Prana needs to flow freely through the body, in correct proportions and where needed, to both maintain or restore health.

Thus, an important aspect of treatments and exercises is based on "balancing Prana" or unblocking the pathways (Nadis) that Prana uses to travel through our bodies. This can be achieved with (a combination of) herbal treatments, meditation, bodywork (Yoga), or massage, among other applications.

## Qi and Ki | China and Japan

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*Qi* (or *Chi*) is a Chinese concept translated as Vital Life Energy (or Vital Life Force), and refers to the life-giving energy circulating through our body. Qi can mean air; vital energy, spirit, breath, or vapor, among other meanings depending on the context in which the word Qi is used. By the way, *Ki* is the Japanese equivalent for Qi.

This Ki or Qi Energy doesn't circulate randomly in our bodies, but through Energy Channels called the [Meridians](#). In China and Japan, Qi or Ki is thought to be the key Vital Force, part of any living being, omnipresent, and the primordial underlying principle in both Traditional Japanese Medicine (TJM) and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

It's believed that Qi Energy aids the movement of blood, lymph, nutrients, toxins, and nerve conduction, and that it supports energy production and awareness. According to Oriental ideas, a strong and abundant Qi gives perfect health and vitality. Nevertheless, when getting older, Qi gets weaker automatically, and when it's totally dissolved the body dies.

Imbalance or blockages in our body or mind weakens our Qi, which eventually manifests as disease, either physically or psychologically, or both. So, it's imperative to look after our Qi on a daily basis and "cultivate" it in order to keep it strong and smoothly flowing.

Other definitions and designations for Ki or Qi are used also, like Universal Energy (for instance, in [Reiki](#)), which may also include concepts like heat, light, electromagnetic



energy, breath, air, gas, or the connection between matter, energy and spirit.

In Chinese and Japanese culture, Qi (Ki) also has a relationship with *Taoism (Daoism)*, in the sense that the *Tao (Dao)* is considered the source, pattern and substance of everything that exists.

The idea of health in TJM and TCM is that Qi needs to flow freely through the body, in correct proportions and where needed, in order to prevent illness or to restore health.

Thus, most treatments are based on “balancing Qi,” “cultivating Qi,” or unblocking the Energy Meridians that Qi uses to travel through our bodies. Hence, in China the presence of treatment modalities with names such as *Qigong*, *Chi Nei Tsang*, and *Tai Chi*, and in Japan, you can find modalities with names like *Aikido*, *Reiki*, *Ai Chi*, *Kiatsu*, and *Seiki*, and so on.

## Silap Inua | Inuit

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The *Inuit* are the indigenous inhabitants from what is now the area of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. Sometimes, the *Yup'ik* i.e. *Yupik* (from the far east of Russia, that is, from Siberia) are also included in the definition of Inuit people. In the past, these groups of aboriginal people were often called *Eskimos* (which usually also included the *Aleut* people), a term nowadays not any longer commonly used.

In Inuit mythology and religion, *Silap Inua* (also simply referred to as *Inua*) can have different meanings, such as “possessor of spirit,” “life essence,” “breath,” “spirit,” “wind,” “weather,” “sky,” “air,” “intellect,” “outer space,” or “universe.” *Silap Inua* may also be called *Silla*, *Sila*, *Hillap Inua*, and *Hilla* among the Inuit people, and *Ellam Yua* or *Ella* among the *Yup'ik* people.

Although *Silap Inua* or *Silla* is sometimes personified as a deity, it's usually considered a formless divine force (or energy). *Silap Inua* is believed to be the source of everything that exists, and the animating, moving spirit of Life and the Universe i.e. being the mystical Spiritual Vital Force or Life Energy.

It's also believed that the *Silla* is the substance or material of which the souls of human beings are made, but also the spirit or souls of animals, plants, lakes, and mountains, that is — of the whole of Nature. In fact, *Silla* or *Inua* can express itself in phenomena as an individual soul (which is an [animistic view](#)), but in essence it's the underlying, all-permeating driving and animating force of everything that is, was, or will be.

Silap Inua has obvious similarities with concepts such as [aether and pneuma](#) (ancient Greece), Prana (India), or Qi (China), which are all forms of so-called [Vitalism](#), that is, the idea that the origin and expression of Life are dependent on a spiritual, unobservable, and divine force or energy principle.

## Vis Essentialis | Germany (Wolff)

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Caspar Friedrich Wolff (1733 – 1794) was a German scientist considered one of the founders of embryology.

He was a proponent of *epigenesis*, which is the term used that refers to the development of organisms through a series of processes in which unorganized cell masses differentiate into organs and organ systems.

Wolff felt he needed to explain this “organizational drive” and postulated an “unknown natural force,” the *vis essentialis* (i.e. “essential force”) as he called it, which, acting like gravity or magnetism, would organize embryonic development.

Later on in his work, he tried to identify i.e. clarify this *vis essentialis*, but he finally abandoned this project and stated that “the formation of organic bodies in general is caused by one natural force which inhabits the organic substance, and consists in nothing other than in a certain special and definite kind of attractive and repulsive force.”

## Vitality Energy

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The term and meaning of *vitality* can be seen as a quality that has no connotations with a “divine or spiritual life force” like Prana, Qi, or Mana, but rather as a natural function (or result) of our bodily energy systems.

Vitality then is seen as being strong, healthy, vigorous, dynamic, and “full of energy.” A lack of vitality is usually described as having a “lack of energy.” In fact, when we experience less vitality, our wellbeing comes under pressure, and we may fall seriously ill — physically, emotionally, and/or mentally.

The reasons for a lack of vitality are generally attributed to physical health issues, but also to various mental and emotional health problems. These health conditions can obstruct the creation, transformation, and/or distribution of necessary vital energies through our biological system.

By contrast, a simple lack of appropriate “fuel,” such as poor nutrition, or poor air quality, can also get our energetic system to malfunction, and subsequently our complete biological system.

To increase our overall vitality, health, and general wellbeing there are a wide range of treatments that work with/on our energy flow, such as Reiki, [Qigong](#), magnetism, herbal remedies, diets, acupuncture, [meditation](#), and a variety of massage and hands-on manual therapies.

But it doesn't stop there: environmental, social, and relationship changes often play an equally important role to

increase our vitality, and finally our health, wellbeing, and happiness.

# Life Energy Systems and Constructs

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## Biofield (Biological Field)

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The term *Biofield*, which is a contraction of the phrase *Biological Field*, was proposed in 1992 by a committee of CAM (Complementary and Alternative Medicine) practitioners and researchers, organized by the Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM) at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Introducing the term Biofield was an effort to categorize i.e. unify [Energetic Therapies](#) (or Energy Medicine) that involved Life Force or Vital Life Energy concepts and cultivation, such as Reiki Healing, Yoga, Tai Chi, Therapeutic Touch, Healing Touch, [Pranic Healing](#), Qigong, and so on.

*Biofield* then became defined as “a massless field, not necessarily electromagnetic, that surrounds and permeates living bodies and affects the body.” In fact, it’s assumed that every person has a *physical body* and a *subtle body*, which both consist of several layers (or fields) of energy, and together referred to as the Biofield.

For instance, the *subtle body* — much depending on the definition, by the way — may consist of an [etheric body](#), mental body, emotional body, and/or spiritual body, and each of those may again have several sub-energetic layers and functions.

In any case, in 1994, Biofield therapies (i.e. Bioenergy Healing therapies) were officially recognized as alternative treatments by the NIH, and were defined as “noninvasive, practitioner-mediated therapies that explicitly work with the



Biofield of both the practitioner and client to stimulate a healing response in the client.”

Biofield therapies can be either direct or indirect. In the direct method, the therapist uses physical contact with the receiver, but in the indirect method the therapist gives therapy without direct physical contact. The latter is thought possible because Biofield therapies work within the Biofield energy layer that surrounds the receiver.

Therapeutic Biofield treatments are increasingly interpreted as working with the holistic energy matrix of an organism, that is, a human being, animal, or plant, allowing for rapid and effective communication and information exchange throughout the body of that organism, connecting physical, emotional, and mental levels.

Today, the term Biofield and its practice as Biofield Therapy transcends its initial purpose of “explaining” or “categorizing” Life Energy healing methods, and involves a broader variety of energetic features, such as magnetism, electromagnetism, homeodynamics, and/or neurological processes.

## Chakras

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A *Chakra* is the Indian Sanskrit name for *wheel*, *circle* or *cycle*, and is thought to be a location in the subtle or [Pranic Body](#), a “distribution center” of [Prana](#), which, depending on the type of Chakra, has certain qualities, functions, or properties, being able to transform and dispense Prana Life Energy. It’s generally thought that the concept of Chakras is of Indian Tantric origin.

Note that the Chakras’ various — seemingly endless — functions and properties, have, depending on the specific Indian spiritual tradition, lineage and context, a vast variety of characteristics. Actually, it would be impossible in the line of this chapter to embark in-depth on such a topic, which would easily need a complete booklet to expound.

Chakras are also thought to connect the Prana Energy Channels in the body, the so-called [Nadis](#), the latter amounting to 108, 72000, 350000, or more channels, depending again on the spiritual lineage or tradition.

The number of primary or main Chakras (there are also smaller or minor Chakras, on which we’ll talk later in this chapter) — and sorry to again needing to say this — the number varies depending on the spiritual tradition, and the goal and context of teachings.

In any case, there can be five, six, or seven Chakras, most commonly though it’s said there are seven, and we’ll name them in a down-to-up order, that is, from the base of the spine to the top of the head, running along the spinal column:

## 1. Muladhara Chakra (Root Chakra)

Muladhara is located near the coccyx and is the mystical Chakra where [Kundalini Awakening](#) starts. Kundalini Energy is thought to be the creative power and divine feminine energy which can be channeled upwards through the other Chakras, along the spine, up to the Crown Chakra, resulting in spiritual perfection, Divine Union (with the Masculine Energy), Enlightenment and Bliss. This Chakra is associated with the earth element, representing our ability to stand firmly grounded in life. If this Chakra is balanced, one feels calm, steady, and comfortable in one's body and in the world.

## 2. Svadhishthana Chakra (Sacral Chakra)

The Sacral Chakra is located two finger-widths above the Muladhara Chakra, seen from the back, and just below the navel seen from the front. It's thought that opening this Chakra can boost creativity, confidence, pleasure, self-esteem, relationships, sensuality, healthy sexuality, determination, independence, fertility. Moreover, it's believed that this Chakra protects against dangers and enemies.

## 3. Manipura Chakra (Navel Chakra or Solar Plexus Chakra)

Manipura is located just above the navel, associated with the fire element and transformation. It's also responsible for our (physical and emotional) digestion and metabolism. An open Manipura Chakra is furthermore said to simulate vitality, action, movement, energy, will power, and achievement.

## 4. Anahata Chakra (Heart Chakra)

Anahata is located near the heart, and is associated with balance, openness, purity, love, compassion,

charity, cleanliness, inner healing, calmness, and serenity. It's thought that Anahata enables us to make decisions "that follow the heart," in accord with our higher, true self.

## **5. Vishuddha Chakra (Throat Chakra)**

The Vishuddha Chakra is located at the throat region (hence the name). It's known as a purification and detoxification center, and associated with creativity, wisdom, truth, inspiration, learning, clear speech, communication, and self-expression.

## **6. Ajna Chakra (Brow Chakra or Third-Eye Chakra)**

The Ajna chakra is said to be located in the center of the forehead, between the eyebrows. It's associated with intuition, awareness, clear perception, psychic abilities, higher knowledge, inner wisdom, release of the ego, imagination, and intellect.

## **7. Sahasrara Chakra (Crown Chakra)**

The Crown Chakra is usually said to be located at the fontanel (soft spot) on the top of the head, which is also thought to be the location where the soul leaves the body at death. This Chakra relates to absolute wisdom, spiritual awakening, divine connection, and pure consciousness. If one's Kundalini Energy rises up to this point, the state of Spiritual Enlightenment will be attained.

As said, there are also a number of "minor" Chakras, let's say, smaller energy distribution centers ("affiliates" of the primary Chakras), which are located throughout the body. In fact, some important Vital Energy Points or [Marma Points](#), as they are called in Ayurveda Medicine and Yoga, are associated with these minor Chakras.

The seven main Chakras are thought to be located along the Sushumna Nadi, which is one of the three principal Energy Channels in Ayurvedic and Yogic theory. The Sushumna Nadi energy channel runs along the spinal cord through the seven principal Chakras. It's considered the central, primordial channel for the flow of Prana Life Energy in the body.

In Indian Yogic philosophy it's said that by opening (or unblocking) Sushumna Nadi one gives Kundalini Energy the chance to ascent from the perineum (from out the lowest located Chakra called *Muladhara*) to the top of the head (to the highest located Chakra named *Sahasrara*) traveling through the various Chakras and activating their proper functioning. It's furthermore thought that rising Kundalini Energy leads to spiritual growth and finally to spiritual liberation, Moksha or Enlightenment, and Bliss.

Chakra manipulation and Chakra opening plays an important role in many Indian Ayurvedic, Tantric, and Yogic practices, such as in various types of Yoga, and very particular in [Kundalini Yoga](#), in Tantra Yoga, Marma Point Therapy, and in a range of other Ayurvedic massages and treatments, including modern Tantra Massage, to name a few examples. A variety of tools is used, such as massage, acupressure, breathing exercises, meditation, visualizations, Yoni eggs, mudras, yantras, bandhas, kriyas, and mantras, and such, to manipulate the flow of subtle pranic energy through the Chakras and the Nadis.

The idea of Chakras extends also to other traditional medicine and healing systems in Asia, notably to Buddhist oriented bodywork all over Asia, like in Tibet, Japan, China, and Thailand, with Thai Traditional Medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine as notable examples.

For instance, in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), specifically in [Taoist Qigong](#), Tai Chi and in the Chinese Martial Arts, there's the concept of the [Microcosmic Orbit](#) (the principle circuit of Qi), where energy rises up a main Meridian along the spine, and comes back down the front of the body. While circulating, Qi enters various *Dantian* (elixir fields), which act as “burners,” where the types of energy in the body are refined. These Dantian can be very much compared with the idea and role of the Chakras.

## Dantian Energy Centers

The *Dantian*, also written as *dan t'ian*, *dan tien*, *tant tien*, or *tan t'ien*, can be translated as “elixir field,” “burner,” “furnace,” “sea of Qi”, or “energy center,” and are part of the [Microcosmic Orbit](#) connected by certain [Qi Meridians](#).

Dantian are important points (areas or locations) in the body for Chinese meditative, exercise, and healing techniques such as Qigong, [Tai Chi](#), Neidan Inner Alchemy, Neigong, [Taoist Sexual Practices](#), Tao Yin, the Chinese martial arts, and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

Historically seen, it's thought that the Dantian concept is of Taoist origin. In Taoist teachings, the Dantian refer to so-called *elixir-of-life* locations where Essence and Spirit are stored and transformed (by “heating”), related to regeneration, health, longevity, sexual energy, and spiritual growth and enlightenment. In fact, the Dantian relate directly to the concept of the Three Treasures Jing (Essence), Qi (Life Force) and Shen (Spirit).

The Dantian can be readily compared with the Indian [Chakras](#), the latter considered the centers of Prana Life Energy manipulation and distribution.

However, the Taoist Dantian Energy Centers are rather considered *storage* centers, while the Chakras are typically viewed as *distribution* centers.

Although you will find different categorizations, three Dantian are commonly stressed:

## Lower Dantian

This Dantian is thought to be located below the navel where the process of developing the life-elixir happens by refining and purifying Jing essence into Qi life energy. In Japan this Dantian is also called the [Hara](#). The lower Dantian is considered to be the foundation of standing, breathing, and body awareness, and is sometimes described as “the root of the tree of life.” It’s also believed to aid control of thoughts and emotions.

## Middle Dantian

This Dantian one lies near the heart, which is associated with storing Shen energy (spiritual energy), but on a physical level it’s associated with respiration and health of the internal organs. Here Qi is refined into Shen energy.

## Upper Dantian

This Dantian is located between the eyebrows, the location of the so-called “third eye.” Here, Shen energy is refined into Wu Wei, Emptiness, or Absolute Consciousness. One could say that this Dantian is the pure Spirit.



# Energy Channels and Vital Points

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[Vital Life Energy](#), Life Energy Channels, and Vital Points concepts play an important role in quite a number of traditional medicine and spiritual systems around the world.

In those systems, Life Energy is thought to circulate through well-defined Energy Channels (canals or pathways). Along these channels one finds important Energy Points (Vital Points, Acupoints, or Acupressure Points), which can be manipulated for physical, psychological, and spiritual health benefits, via, for instance, massage techniques, herbal medicine, meditation, Yoga, acupressure, Laying on of Hands, reflexology techniques, or acupuncture, among others.

The Vital Points that are located along the Energy Channels are, depending on the traditional medicine system, considered reflexology points (which can influence body and organ systems), minor energy distribution or transformation centers, or “windows” i.e. connections between the physical and [subtle body](#), or between body and mind.

The core idea here is that blockages or breaks in the free flow of Vital Life Energy through the body’s Energy Channels will cause physical, psychological, and spiritual health discomforts and illnesses. As such, most traditional medicine practices focus on clearing hindrances in those pathways or even “repairing” Energy Channels.

Depending on the tradition, different names, trajectories, and functions are attributed to the Energy Channels. For

instance, in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and in Traditional Japanese Medicine (TJM), the Energy Channels are called [Meridians](#). In Indian Ayurveda and in Yoga the names of the channels are the [Nadis](#), and in Thai Traditional Medicine they are called the [Sib Sen](#). Note that Energy Channels cannot be seen with the eyes, or proven by modern technology; they are considered to be invisible.

Apart from Acupressure Points i.e. Vital Points, one also finds energy distribution or energy transformation centers along the Energy Channels. In TCM and TJM those are called [Dantian](#), and in Ayurveda and in Yoga they are named the [Chakras](#).

In many traditional medicine systems, the Life Energy Channels are thought to start or converge around the navel, and as such much therapeutic work is done in that area also, using acupressure, massage techniques, and other hands-on therapies.

## Energy Meridians

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Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Japanese Traditional Medicine (TJM) theory claim that the human body is permeated with Energy Meridians, and on these Meridians you will find a range of Vital Points (acupoints, acupuncture or acupressure points, which in Japan are called *tsubo*), which have connective and therapeutic qualities.

Additionally, it's said that [Qi Life Force](#) flows through these Meridians. The Meridians are considered a network of Life Force Energy and conduction routes that nourish the entire body.

As for the number of vital or acupressure points, different numbers circulate: some sources state there are 1,000 or even 2,000 points, other sources mention 361 points, or 365, but in any case, the World Health Organization (WHO) published *A Proposed Standard International Acupuncture Nomenclature Report* in 1991, listing 361 classical acupuncture points.

### Further Introduction

The Meridian system has three grading levels: Meridians, Collaterals, and Sub-Collaterals. There are twelve [12] or fourteen [14] main Meridian channels (depending on the definition) distributed longitudinally in the human body, while the Collaterals and Sub-Collaterals are smaller branched channels extending from the main Meridian channels, which makes the total number of Meridians much bigger.

It's important to understand that there are slightly different systems to count the grouping-categories and the individual Meridians, which can give rise to confusion.

For instance, it's generally stated that there are twelve main Meridians. Nevertheless, there are other categorizations that speak of fourteen main Meridians, such as, for instance, the definition of the WHO.

Then, there are on top of that, eight [8] Extraordinary Meridians also called the *Eight Extraordinary Vessels*, which give the base Meridian system a total of twenty [20] Meridians (12 + 8).

## Twelve Organ Meridians

In any case, the twelve “standard” Meridians are divided into Yin and Yang groups. The Yin meridians of the arm are Lung, Heart, and Pericardium Meridians, and the Yang Meridians of the arm are Large Intestine, Small Intestine, and Triple Burner Meridians. The Yin Meridians of the leg are Spleen, Kidney, and Liver Meridian and the Yang Meridians of the leg are Stomach, Bladder, and Gall Bladder Meridian.

You can observe that each Meridian is connected to an organ and organ system (the organ system is also called *Zang-Fu*) from which it has derived its name.

In the definition of the WHO, the Governor Vessel and the Conception Vessel are also counted within the main Meridian system (making it fourteen Meridians instead of twelve), but in many other categorization those two vessels only belong to the Eight Extraordinary Meridians.

Note that, although listed under the fourteen main Meridians, the Governor Vessel and Conception Vessel are

also included among the Eight Extra Meridians in the WHO definition.

## The Eight Extra Meridians

The Eight Extraordinary Meridians (or Extraordinary Vessels) are of high importance in [Qigong](#), Tai Chi, and Chinese Taoist Alchemy. They differ from the twelve organ Meridians in that they are considered to be reservoirs of energy and are not associated directly with the Zang Fu internal organs system.

These Eight Extraordinary Vessels are the Conception Vessel (Ren Mai), Governing Vessel (Du Mai), Penetrating Vessel (Chong Mai), Girdle Vessel (Dai Mai), Yin linking vessel (Yin Wei Mai), Yang linking vessel (Yang Wei Mai), Yin Heel Vessel (Yin Qiao Mai), and Yang Heel Vessel (Yang Qiao Mai).

Note also that only the Governor (or Governing) Vessel and Conception Vessel have acupuncture points on them.

## In Conclusion

Mind that the Life Energy flow of the Meridians forms an interconnected system by which the Meridians transmit energy to each other. It thus forms a large energy cycle. The vital or acupuncture points are located on these Meridians and have a variety of functions.

These Vital Points and Meridians can be manipulated and influenced by, for instance, massage, acupuncture, Laying on of Hands, moxibustion, cupping, or acupuncture.

The Extraordinary Energy Vessels are generally accessed and manipulated through the practices mentioned above, but also with Qigong, Tai Chi, and Chinese Inner Alchemy i.e. Neidan.

Rest to say that it's important to realize that the Energy Meridian system is incredibly complex, and the discussion in this chapter is just a very basic introduction to the subject matter.

## Hara Abdominal Center

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*Hara* in the Japanese language stands for the abdominal region, and in Japan it's considered a key energy center in humans that renders intelligence, force, health, and vitality to all aspects of life.

According to Traditional Japanese Medicine concepts, the Hara is the location where you'll find the [Lower Dantian](#). This Dantian, located just below the navel, is thought to process and develop so-called *life-elixir* by refining Jing Essence into [Ki Life Energy](#).

The lower Dantian is also considered the foundation of standing, breathing, and body awareness, and it's believed to aid control of thoughts and emotions.

Additionally, the Hara is a location of the body where a therapist can “read” the state of body and mind of a patient, used for medical diagnosis.

Based on the characteristics of abdominal zones and points, the therapist can come to an idea of which internal organs, [Energy Meridians](#), or Five Elements are affected. Subsequently the therapist can design a treatment plan to treat (parts of) the body, which may include treating the abdomen itself.

## Marma Points

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In Ayurveda and Yoga it's thought that there are special high-energy points along the [Nadi Energy Channels](#), that is, Vital Points, acupressure points, or acupoints, in India commonly called [Marma Points](#). In the south of India, in the Indian Tamil Nadu state, they are rather called *Varma Points*.

Marma Points are seen as the “doors” or “windows” where Prana Energy that runs (or flows) through the Nadis enters the physical body. In fact, they are junction points in/on the body that connect energy and matter (or mind and body, if you wish).

Nevertheless, depending on different Ayurvedic and Yogic texts, the make-up of physical Marma Points has been described dissimilarly. For instance, some sources claim that the physical locations of Marma Points are anatomical sites where muscles, veins, fascia, ligaments, bones and joints meet together.

Other sources state that Marma Points are locations where important nerves come together, along with other structures like muscles and tendons, including points on our body that are tender or painful.

In any case, each Marma Point has different effects on various parts of the body, bodily tissue, and on the internal organs, and corresponds to specific functions. Seven special Marma Points (the so-called *Mahamarmas* or *Great Marmas*) have major significance and correspond to the seven [Chakras](#).



It's thought that the knowledge of Marma Points came into existence because of Indian martial arts warriors in ancient times who used special points (Vital Points or *Bindu*) to disable or kill enemy fighters or, by contrast, to heal or speedup recovery from injuries.

Generally, 107 or 108 main Marma Points are recognized, and they can be manipulated with, for instance, acupressure, cupping, stretches, herbal medicine, massage, and Yoga exercises in order to cure or alleviate specific physical, mental, emotional and spiritual illnesses or discomforts.

## Microcosmic Orbit

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The Microcosmic Orbit is a Chinese-Taoist concept and is related to energy cultivation techniques. The techniques involve deep breathing exercises together with meditation and concentration techniques, which guide or redirect the flow of [Qi Life Energy](#) along certain Energy Pathways — the Meridians — and through energy centers — the Dantian — in the human body.

With certain exercises, Qi Vital Life Force is guided to flow from the perineum (area between the sexual organs and the anus) up the spine, then through the head, and back down the front side of the orbit, creating a circular energetic flow.

The health benefits hereof are diverse, such as drawing in primordial force from the earth through the soles of the feet up to the spine, to catching universal spiritual energy and redirecting it down to nourish the lower Dantian, the heart and the brain, and in a broader sense bestow healing on a human being.

The main idea is not to deplete Qi Life Energy by letting it escape out of the body, but to keep it circulating in the Orbit, while drawing in external available Life Energy. Moreover, it's thought that by circulating it in the Microcosmic Orbit, Inner Alchemy processes are aided which transform Jing Essence into Qi, and Qi into Shen, which is connected to the important Taoist teachings of the Three Treasures.

In any case, finally it comes down to using the Orbit and the energy that circulates through it for health benefits on

the physical, emotional and mental plane, for attaining longevity (or even immortality, some believe), to prepare for deep meditation practices, and for spiritual advancement.

There are a variety of ways to work with the Microcosmic Orbit, such as exercising Qigong, Tai Chi, [Sexual Qigong](#), [Ovarian Breathing](#), Taoist meditation, Breathwork techniques, and Tao Yin (Tao Yoga), or, by contrast, when applied by a therapist, treatment modalities such as Chi Nei Tsang, Karsai Genital Massage, Taoist Erotic Massage, or Yin-Yang Massage.

## Pancha Kosha

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*Pancha Kosha* (also written *Panchakosha*) is the theory of five layers or sheets of human nature, which is of ancient Indian Vedanta Upanishadic origin.

According to Indian spiritual concepts, the human being consists of five energetic bodies, called *Koshas*.

The word *Kosha* means something like “layer” or “sheet,” and the *Koshas* together are usually considered the “generator of consciousness.” *Pancha* simply means “five.”

The five *Koshas* recognized are:

- **Anna Maya Kosha**  
The gross layer, also said to be the physical layer;
- **Prana Maya Kosha**  
The bioenergetic, [Pranic Life Force](#), energy or breath layer;
- **Mano Maya Kosha**  
The mental layer of thoughts and emotions;
- **Vijnana Maya Kosha**  
The consciousness, intellectual, and spiritual layer;
- **Ananda Maya Kosha**  
The most subtle layer, which is related to states of insight, bliss, enlightenment;

The Koshas should not be considered independent entities: they support, depend, and influence each other, and changes in one of the bodies automatically means that changes will take place in all other bodies. The Koshas are merely different aspects or interlaced functions of what we call a human being.

The Life Energy Channels (Nadis), which an Ayurveda therapist or Yoga practitioner manipulates or aims to unblock, are said to be located in the Prana Maya-Kosha.

Pranamaya (or Prana Maya) is the layer that is composed of Prana, the principle that vitalizes and holds together body and mind. It pervades the whole organism and its physical manifestation is breath. As long as this Life Force exists in an organism, life continues.

## Prana Nadis

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The Indian Nadis are channels or pathways through which Vital Life Energy, called [Prana](#) in India, is distributed to the gross, subtle, and causal body.

The *Nadis* (plural of the single *Nadi*) are thought to be an interconnected network of Prana channels in the body (depending on the context, Nadis may also translate as nerves, pulse, or blood vessels) containing a number of special Vital Points, the so-called [Marma points](#), and energy distribution centers, the latter generally referred to as [Chakras](#).

Although there are different interpretations, it's generally assumed that the Nadis of the physical body (gross body) are channels that transport air, water, nutrients, blood and other bodily fluids, which could be translated as our blood circulatory system and our lymph system.

However, in the [subtle body](#) (pranic energy body) and the causal body (the undefined root or seed body of both gross and subtle body) the Nadis are considered channels for cosmic, vital, seminal, mental, and intellectual energies, which together are labeled [Prana Life Force](#).

Mind that there are also other Indian classifications of “types of bodies,” such as in modern [Kundalini Yoga](#), where it's taught that there are ten spiritual bodies: the physical body, three mental bodies, and six energy bodies, including an 11th embodiment which supposedly represents a pure state of non-dual consciousness.

In any case, the three main Nadis run from the base of the spine to the head, and are the *Ida Nadi* on the left side of the spine, the *Sushumna Nadi* in the center of the spine and the *Pingala Nadi* on the right side of the spinal column.

Depending on a variety of Indian scriptural sources, the number of Nadis (and sub-Nadis) is thought to be 101, 72000, or 350000, or sometimes even millions. Nevertheless, 14 Nadis are considered specifically important, and among those, the three Nadis mentioned above are of most significance.

Also, it's through the Sushumna Nadi that the so-called [Kundalini Energy](#) arises (when awakened) from the root Chakra (Muladhara) to the crown Chakra (Sahasrara). In many Indian spiritual schools it's thought that awakened and rising Kundalini Energy will lead to spiritual growth and finally spiritual enlightenment and bliss.

The Nadis play an important role in Ayurveda and in Yoga as it's believed that obstructed Nadis can cause illnesses or discomforts. Consequently, Ayurvedic and Yogic healing practices are often (also) focused on opening or reopening the Nadis, Marma points, and Chakras.

## rLung, rTsa, and Thig Le

Learn more about the Tibetan system of the [subtle body](#), rLung Vital Energy, rTsa Energy Channels, and Thig Le Vital Points in our chapter about [Lung](#).



## Sip Sen Energy Lines

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In Thailand, the foundation of Thai Massage is based on the idea of invisible Life Energy Lines in the human body. Ten of these lines (meridians, channels, or pathways) have special importance – the so-called Ten Sen, Sib Sen, or Sip Sen.

The roots of this theory lie in Indian Yoga philosophy. The concepts of Yoga state that Life Energy (in Yoga called *Prana*, but in Thai Massage called *Lom Pran*) is taken in from the air we breathe and from the food we consume, which is subsequently distributed through a network of Energy Channels, called the [Prana Nadis](#). In this way the human body is supplied with Vital Life Energy.

The direct relationship with Indian Yoga concepts is obvious when we look at the terminology for the Energy Lines the Thai people use, with many words and designations coming from Sanskrit, the ancient language of India.

For instance, the Energy Lines Sen Sumana, Sen Ittha, and Sen Pingkhala are linguistically very close to the names of the Indian Prana channels Sushumna Nadi, Ida Nadi, and Pingala Nadi. And moreover, these three primary Thai Sen Lines also follow a trajectory quite similar to the corresponding Indian Nadis.

Nevertheless, Sen Energy Lines cannot be verified anatomically or otherwise scientifically. They form a second “etheric layer” or extra body next to the physical body. This invisible body, called [Pranamaya Kosha](#) or “energy body,”

consists of a huge amount of Energy Pathways, which, in Thailand, is claimed to be 72,000.

Most likely the number of Energy Lines is not 72,000 (which is said to be a number in Buddhist scriptures to state that “it’s a lot”), but there are indeed many lines and sub-lines, and from these, the Thai appointed ten principal ones on which we also find important acupuncture points. Manipulating these points make it possible to treat certain diseases and conditions, or to relieve pain.

Blockages in the Energy Lines result in a deficiency of Prana (Lom Pran) throughput, which causes discomforts or illnesses. Working on the Energy Lines with massage, stretching, and acupuncture can clear these blockages and hindrances, thereby promoting the free, unhindered flow of Life Energy, which in turn helps to restore health, optimal functioning of both body and mind, and general well-being.

## The Ten Sen Energy Lines

- Sen Sumana
- Sen Ittha
- Sen Pingkhala
- Sen Kalathari
- Sen Lawusang
- Sen Ulangka
- Sen Sahatsarangsi
- Sen Thawari
- Sen Nanthakrawat
- Sen Kitchanna

## Subtle, Astral, and Etheric Body

In esoteric and mystical teachings, but also in a range of traditional medicine systems, the *subtle body* is considered an aspect of the human body, which is neither merely physical, nor merely spiritual. The terms *etheric body* and *astral body* refer to specific interpretations of the subtle body.

The idea of the existence of a subtle body spans many millennia and many different civilizations, and is also part of various religious, philosophical, and lifestyle systems, such as Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Tantra, and Yoga.

Perhaps one of the best known constructs of distinct “bodies” is found in the Indian [Pancha Kosha](#) concept, which describes a series of five interpenetrating sheaths (or layers) of the body. In this case, the subtle body is the body that consists of Chakras, Marma Vital Points, and Energy Channels (Nadis), which transport Subtle Breath (Prana Life Energy).

In Western traditions, the subtle body is usually called the *astral body* or the *body of light*. This concept goes back to the Greek philosopher Plato, who thought that the stars (the word *astral* means “of the stars”) were composed of another type of element than the ones typically found on earth, and that the human psyche was made of this “astral matter.”

The *etheric body* (or ether-body) then is a term often associated with the Theosophy movement (founded by Helena Blavatsky). It’s a subtle body [made of ether](#) (a finer

substance than the matter of the physical body), and part of the human [Aura energy field](#). It's considered a kind of intermediate body between the physical body and higher level bodies.

## Tsubo Pressure Points

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*Tsubo* is the Japanese name for *pressure point* or *acupressure point*, also called *acupoint*. The existence of (functional) acupressure points in the body is widely recognized in a variety of traditional medicine systems, such as those of China, India, and Thailand, to give some examples.

The Tsubo are typically located along Life Energy Pathways, called [Meridians](#) in Traditional Japanese Medicine (TJM) and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). These Tsubo pressure points are usually considered “weak” or “sensitive” points being “doorways” to manipulating i.e. unblocking [Ki Life Energy](#) flow through the Meridians.

There are many hundreds or even thousands Tsubo known, located in different parts of the body, but generally around 365 points are more or less officially recognized.

Different Tsubo pressure points have different characteristics; some Tsubo can stimulate one or more Meridians, others directly influence an organ, or perhaps balance or promote emotional, mental, or physiological functions, and so on.

The “feel” of a Tsubo can indicate health disorders on one side, and on the other side the Tsubo can be manipulated to influence healthy functioning of body and mind, which includes relief of pains, tensions, and stress, among others.

An acupressure therapist will usually manipulate certain Tsubo based on his or her diagnosis with the goal of

reaching a certain healing result. A treatment may be based on pressing certain acupuncture points, or acupuncture techniques may be integrated within a more general massage session.

# Energy Healing Therapies

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## Ananda Yoga

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*Ananda Yoga* is a system of Hatha Yoga that gives emphasis to inner awareness and energy control. The practice of each Asana (Yoga pose) is to be experienced as a natural expression of a higher state of consciousness.

Also known as Ananda Yoga for Higher Awareness, it was founded by Romanian-born Kriyananda (1926 - 2013), a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, and is based on Yogananda's Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) and Yogoda Satsanga Society of India (YSS) teachings.

Ananda Yoga practice consists of using Asanas and [Pranayama](#) breathing exercises to awaken and move Prana Vital Life Energy within the body, especially through the [Chakras](#). The idea is that by tapping into and using our Vital Energy this way, we can balance our body and reach higher levels of awareness.

Ananda Yoga is not a fitness-based practice; the use of Asanas is more focused on preparing the body for deep meditation. The use of silent affirmations while in the poses is another practice of this modality; the affirmations are considered useful to keep students aware of the flow of energy and lift their consciousness to a higher state.

Another central part of Ananda Yoga is the Energization Exercises, created by Yogananda. They are a set of 39 exercises with the goal of tapping into cosmic energy, learning to control it and use it to recharge the whole body.

After some practice, the 39 exercises can be done in 10-12 minutes, and the benefits are thought to be increased



energy, awareness of the energy flow in the body, and a sense of well-being. It's recommended to do them before meditating, because it helps to relieve any tension in the body and enables you to sit more comfortably.

The final goal of Ananda Yoga is to raise consciousness, nourish the body, mind, and soul, and to experience *ananda*, a Sanskrit word that can be translated to bliss, divine joy, or divine happiness.

## Bioenergy Healing

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Bioenergy Healing, Bioenergy Medicine, or Biofield Therapy includes a range of different therapeutic treatments in which a therapist influences or manipulates the patient's [Subtle Energy](#), Vital Life Force, or Biofield (Aura) to restore the person's (energy) balance and stimulate the body's innate self-healing abilities.

Many types of Bioenergy Healing have been used for millennia in many ancient civilizations, often based on [Vital Life Force](#) concepts and systems. Some examples of Bioenergy Healing modalities are [Therapeutic Touch \(TT\)](#), Magnet Therapy, [Crystal Healing](#), Reiki, Pranic Healing, Qigong, and Laying on of Hands.

There are different theories surrounding the way Bioenergy Healing works, which explain its healing results as, for instance, a matter of quantum mechanics, biophotons, Vital Force flow, Orgone, intention, suggestion, placebo, (yet) unknown energy fields, among other concepts.

Treatments can be carried out through physical contact with the receiver (direct method), or by giving non-touch therapy (indirect method) in proximity of the receiver or over a larger distance.

Bioenergy Medicine practitioners believe that treatments can, for instance, reduce symptoms of fibromyalgia, sleep apnea, allergies, bronchitis, addictions, chronic pains, anxiety, fatigue, depression, burnout, insomnia, headaches, and can improve general health, vitality, and well-being.

## Breathwork

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*Breathwork* as a distinct healing modality arose in the late 1960s and 1970s, and consists of a variety of conscious breathing practices — typically working with Vital Life Force Energy — which are thought to influence one's mental, emotional, and/or physical state.

In fact, Breathwork comprises of techniques of conscious breath control, while moving (or *circulating*) energies across the body with the goal of achieving physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Depending on the type of Breathwork, different breathing techniques may be used to achieve the desired results.

Although forms of Breathwork existed already in various ancient bodywork, martial arts, and spiritual traditions (such as the well-known [Pranayama exercises](#) in Indian Yoga), it was first studied and practiced in the West by Wilhelm Reich, the founder of the [Orgone Vital Force](#) concept and the *Vegetotherapy* i.e. *Emotional Dearmoring* therapy.

Apart from promoting simple relaxation, Breathwork can be used therapeutically to stimulate physical, emotional, and spiritual changes, to access special — notably spiritual, hypnotic, and trance-like — states of consciousness, and to release traumatic emotional or sexual experiences.

Today, you'll find many types of Breathwork, such as Rebirthing Breathwork, Holotropic Breathwork, Integrative Breathwork, Zen Yoga Breathwork, Transformational Breathwork, Shamanic Breathwork, Conscious Connected Breathing, Radiance Breathwork, and [Tantric Breathwork](#), to name a non-exhaustive list of modalities.

## Brennan Healing Science

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Brennan Healing Science® (BHS) is a hands-on, therapeutic energy healing system developed by Dr. Barbara Brennan. It's a mix of ancient and modern healing traditions, which aims at personal change, psychological, and physical healing.

BHS, sometimes synonymously called *Full Spectrum Healing*, is a holistic healing modality that works with the complete human experience, that is, spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical levels.

It's thought that BHS can support in removing energy blockages and distortions, restore the flow and balance of [Vital Life Energy](#), relieve pains and anxiety, and promote general health by stimulating the patient's innate healing capacities.

BHS explores a variety of aspects of the human experience, such as the [native intelligence](#) of the body, the person's psycho-spiritual development, unconscious belief systems, negative emotional and physical patterns, [the Hara](#), the Human Energy Field i.e. [Biofield](#) or Aura, and the Chakras, among other facets.

## Chakra Healing

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*Chakra Healing* or *Chakra Balancing* is a type of [Energy Healing](#) that aims at channeling Prana Life Energy into and through the seven [Chakras](#) for physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health benefits.

Chakra Healing practitioners believe that many of our illnesses are the result of imbalances or disruptions in our body's subtle energy system, and one of the causes can be attributed to blocked or inactive Chakras, which subsequently need to be unblocked, opened, or activated.

The Chakras can be influenced or manipulated through various ways, such as [Marma Points](#) massage, Color Therapy, [Crystal Therapy](#), Pranayama Breathwork, chanting, Reiki, mantras, singing bowls, Yoga exercises, and/or meditation, among other techniques.

## Chromotherapy

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*Chromotherapy*, also called *Color Therapy*, *Color Medicine*, *Colorology*, or *Cromatherapy*, is a treatment that uses light energy in the form of color to balance energies in a person's body in order to achieve physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health benefits.

Color Therapy is based on millennia-old beliefs in a variety of ancient cultures, such as India, China, Greece, and Egypt, that colors can influence a person's functioning, health, and well-being.

Depending on the type of Chromotherapy used, practitioners claim that certain colors can add energy to a person's body, heal certain discomforts or illnesses, balance Yin-Yang energy flows or [Chakras](#), promote Life Energy circulation, and release emotional blockages, among other health benefits.

In fact, the concept of Chromotherapy is to supply colored light (each color is a specific form of energy) to the Electromagnetic Body, [Biofield](#), or Aura that surrounds the body, which is then transferred to the physical body.

Color Therapy sessions may be carried out by using colored glass filters and laser light, which direct colored light at the body or body parts, or simply by looking at certain colors which are thought to be beneficial.

## Crystal Healing

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Crystal Healing uses semiprecious stones and crystals to induce healing benefits. Historical documentation shows that crystals have been used already millennia for health benefits in a range of ancient cultures, such as in India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece, to give some examples.

It's thought that stones and crystals radiate certain special energies and can boost low energy, neutralize or prevent bad energy, release blocked energy, balance the [Chakras](#) and Vital Life Energy flow, or influence the body's [Aura](#) or Biofield.

Types of stones and crystals used may be rose quartz, jade, black obsidian, agate, and amethyst, among many other types. They may be used heated or cold, and are typically placed on different parts of the body or around the body to influence the body's energy field, used as a tool in a massage session, or worn as jewelry or amulets.

## Earthing

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*Earthing* (or *Grounding*) — in the sense of [Energy Healing](#) or Nature Therapy — is the belief and practice that it's necessary to restore direct contact with Earth to maintain or restore health and happiness.

It's thought that the Earth's surface, which has a natural electric charge, radiates and transfers beneficial electrons i.e. energies to the human body, and that close contact with Earth increases the benefits.

Direct contact involves, for instance, removing floors, tiles, carpets, and shoes, walking barefoot indoors and outdoors, and working, sitting, and sleeping on the ground. One can also find Earthing systems for purchase, such as conductive mats, pads, body bands, or patches.

By its practitioners it's believed that Earthing can reduce, for instance, inflammations, pains, stress, anxiety, depression, arthritis, autoimmune disorders, while promoting blood circulation, vitality, and sleep quality, and stimulating overall well-being.



## Elekiban Magnet Therapy

Japanese *Elekiban Magnet Therapy* is the therapeutic use of magnets instead of needles on [Vital Energy Points](#).

In Japan, [Magnet Therapy](#) is extensively used as a self-help modality to relieve pains and tensions. This is done by using so-called *Elekiban* (sometimes written as *Erekiban*), which are small magnets placed on specific location across the body.

Magnetic therapy is based on the idea that magnetic or electromagnetic fields can change actions in the body's [Energy Field](#), and has been a widely used remedy in traditional Oriental medicine.

In Asia, Magnet Therapy treatments are often used in conjunction with acupuncture, but they may also be used together with massage or other bodywork treatments.

## Energy, Massage, and Bodywork

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Notably in Asia, hands-on therapies and massage are officially considered *energy work* and not *bodywork*. That sounds perhaps paradoxical, because of the evident physical manipulations carried out.

In fact, *bodywork* in Oriental countries is usually related to food and herbal medicine, that is, substances that more directly affect the physical, biological, or chemical constituents of our body.

But what is meant by referring to *energy work* in Asian countries is that massage, physical exercises (such as Yoga), and other hands-on therapies work with the body to stimulate the uninhibited flow of Vital Life Energy, this energy being called Prana, Lom Pran, or Qi, among other labels.

What exactly this “Vital Life Energy” is, is subject of continuous debate in the West, but in the East it’s rather taken for granted, that is, no questions asked or efforts made to “explain” it.

Of course, for our skeptical Western minds this is highly unsatisfactory, but then again, we could translate Life Energy as the final product of the air we inhale and the food we eat, just exactly as how the East clarifies the intake and transformation of Qi, Prana or Lom Pran.

Thus, air (oxygen) and food (nutrients) are transported through our blood circulatory system to be combusted and transformed into energy for our bodies. This energy then *is*

Life Energy, movement, action, and functioning, and without it we would simply be a corpse.

With that particular outlook in mind we can perhaps better grasp that the end goal of massage and other physical therapies is indeed *energy work*. However, it doesn't stop there: the energy that is absorbed is transformed by our body into several types of energies, such as physical, emotional, mental, sexual, and spiritual energy, and such.

Now, there are therapists who approach massage and bodywork with a special focus on these more subtle energy aspects. They place emphasis on how different types of energies influence the state, health, and wellbeing of our physical body and mind.

The role of the energy worker then is seen as “to tune into” these more subtle energies and to diminish or release any energy that is causing physical pains or discomforts. The opposite is true also: to promote the production and flow of those types of energies that lack. In fact, this is what called *balancing the flow of energy*.

You will notice that energy work focused massage will usually put more emphasis on talks, touch, rocking, holding, support and so-called loving kindness and compassion. The sessions are generally much “softer” than our good old “no pain, no gain” Asian massages, making them particularly popular in the West.

In conclusion we could say that there's no real opposition between *bodywork* or *energy work*. Apart from what definition one would like to prefer, it's a matter of the stance one would take, emphasizing the one or the other in treatments. But finally, it's like the two sides, head and tail, of the same coin.

## Esoteric Healing

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*Esoteric Healing* as a specific treatment modality emerged in the 1950s, and is a type of [Energy Healing](#) based on the teachings of Djwhal Khul and Alice Bailey.

Esoteric Healing may include spiritual work with a person's Energy Field, Aura, or [Etheric Body](#), the human mind or will, or with a person's intuition, belief and faith.

In a broader, more general sense, Esoteric Healing refers to a wide range of alternative therapies and/or philosophical lineages that aim at healing disease or increasing spiritual development by using "esoteric" means.

The term *esoteric* refers to inner-circle, sacred, or hidden knowledge, which found its proponents through millennia in a range of philosophical, metaphysical, mystical, and/or occult systems, such as Hermetism, Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, Theosophy, Paracelsianism, and Kabbalism, among others.

## Feng Shui

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*Feng Shui* is an ancient Chinese practice that uses [Qi Life Force](#) to bring human beings and man-made structures in harmony with their surrounding environment.

*Feng* means “wind” and *Shui* means “water” and refers to one of the oldest practices i.e. forms of Feng Shui where the flow of wind and water in a certain environment is analyzed to choose the ideal location to build a structure.

The origins are taught to be in Chinese astronomy, and its history goes back to at least 3,500 BCE, although the methods, tools, and techniques applied have changed over time.

Historically, Feng Shui was used to position buildings, such as tombs and temples, in a “correct and auspicious” manner, which included designating the best time (season and star/planet constellations) to build something, and choosing the best location for certain (spiritual or religious) structures. Today, Feng Shui is also used to influence health, relationships, and prosperity.

Feng Shui and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) have a variety of concepts in common, notably the use and auspicious conduction of Qi Energy and the idea of Yin-Yang balance.

The Feng Shui practice is part of the Chinese holistic approach to health, taking into account that not only TCM treatments, such as herbal medicine, acupuncture or cupping are important to restore or maintain health, but that one’s environment (home, colors, furniture, garden, air

quality, water, plants, forest, creeks or rivers, and so on) can also contribute to or — by contrast — can damage one's health.

## Healing Touch (HT)

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Healing Touch (HT) was created by Janet Mentgen in 1989. HT is a Biofield Therapy or [Energy Medicine](#) and uses gentle touch to influence both the energy system around the body (Biofield or Aura) and the energy centers (Chakras) that control the flow of [Life Force](#) from the energy field to the physical body.

A HT session utilizes the hands to clear, energize, and harmonize the human and environmental energy fields. By doing this, the HT practice stimulates the receiver's self-healing mechanisms, thereby promoting physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health.

It's thought that Healing Touch therapy can facilitate wound healing, reduce acute and chronic pains, decrease anxiety, tension, and stress, prepare for medical treatments to manage side-effects, and support the dying process, among others.

Healing Touch can complement other healing practices, such as medical care in hospitals, clinics and in-home care, massage, guided imagery, music therapy, acupressure, biofeedback, and psychotherapy.

## Kiatsu Ryoho

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The word *Kiatsu* is composed of two parts: *Ki*, which means “Vital Life Energy,” being the equivalent of the Chinese Qi or Chi, and *atsu*, which means “pressure.” The word *Ryoho* in the phrase *Kiatsu Ryoho* stands for “therapy.”

Kiatsu Ryoho was developed by the Japanese Sensei Koichi Tohei (1920 – 2011), and is a therapeutic system of treating physical and mental illnesses by pressing with the fingers on body locations, and extending or sending Ki Vital Life Energy (also called Universal Energy) through the body of a person. Kiatsu is an integral part of Koichi Tohei’s personally developed style of *Aikido* (Aikido is a modern Japanese martial art).

Master Koichi Tohei’s style of Aikido is officially called *Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido* (meaning Aikido with mind and body unified), also known as Ki-Aikido. Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido itself is based on Aikido and Shinshin-Toitsu-Do aka Japanese Yoga.

Kiatsu directs Ki through the Energy Channels i.e. [Energy Meridians](#) rather than working with specific acupressure points. One connects with another person through Ki, and fills their mind and body with Vital Energy, stimulating and accelerating healing processes.

To practice Kiatsu, one needs to use the following four principles of mind, body, and spirit coordination (or unification):

### 1 – Keep One Point



Calmly realize your mind at the central point in your lower abdominal region i.e. [the Hara](#).

**2 – Relax Completely**

Release all tension from the entire body, mind and emotion.

**3 – Keep Weight Underside**

Let the weight of every part of the body settle at its lowest point.

**4 – Extend Ki**

Ki is extending or sent naturally.

After applying the principles mentioned above, the therapist is then ready, and touches the part of the body that needs to be treated, using a mild to moderate amount of pressure.

Kiatsu Therapy can be given to a receiver by a specialized therapist, but it's also used as a Self-Care and Self-Healing technique.

## Kundalini Yoga

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*Kundalini Yoga* gets its name from the term *Kundalini*, which in Indian Hinduism and spirituality is believed to be Divine Energy located dormant at the base of the spine in the Muladhara Chakra. Muladhara is the root Chakra and one of the seven primary [Chakras](#) according to Hindu [Tantrism](#).

The practice of Kundalini Yoga aims at awakening this [Kundalini Energy](#) through the practice of mantras, chanting, pujas, tantras, yantras, Yoga, devotion, self-discipline, self-study, bandhas, [Pranayama Breathwork](#), Tantric visualizations, and meditation, or directly through mediation and initiation by a Guru (spiritual teacher).

It's believed that by awakening the dormant Kundalini Energy, it will be channeled upwards through the other Chakras, along the spine, up to the crown Chakra (Sahasrara Chakra) resulting in a process of creative and spiritual perfection, Divine Union, Enlightenment, and Bliss.

Today, that what's known as Kundalini Yoga are rather modern practices and interpretations, which have gained traction in the West between the 1960s and 1980s.

These renewed Kundalini Yogic practices are primarily based on the works of Swami Nigamananda Paramahansa (1880 – 1935), Swami Sivananda (1887 – 1963), and Yogi Bhajan (Harbhajan Singh Khalsa | 1929 – 2004), and are a synthesis of Bhakti Yoga (devotion and chanting), Raja Yoga (physical practices and meditation), and Shakti Yoga (the expression of feminine power and energy).

## Laying on of Hands

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*Laying on of Hands* is considered one of the oldest, most widespread forms of healing known to mankind, already used among a variety of ancient cultures and civilizations worldwide.

Although often associated with religion, such as Laying on of Hands in Christianity and in some Native American religions, it's likewise a practice used in many different alternative and traditional medicine systems without necessarily having a religious or spiritual connotation.

Today, it's generally thought that the Laying on of Hands practice in fact manipulates our so-called [Biofield](#), which, depending on the definition or style of healing, may consist of etheric, pranic, magnetic, or electromagnetic fields or energies, among others.

Some examples of contemporary Laying on of Hands therapies include Reiki, [Healing Touch \(HT\)](#), and Therapeutic Touch® (TT).

## Magnetism (Magnet Therapy)

*Magnetism* (also called *Magnet Therapy* or *Magnetic Therapy*), in the context of alternative medicine, is about using the weak static magnetic fields or weak electric fields created by permanent magnets.

Magnet Therapy should not be confused with [Mesmerism](#), the latter being another type of therapy, which uses the concept of a “magnetic fluid” that occupies all space (including human bodies), and can flow from one body to another for healing benefits.

In any case, practitioners of Magnet Therapy apply the weak magnetic fields of permanent magnets to (locations of) the body to achieve beneficial health effects.

Typically, it's thought that magnets can either improve blood flow in underlying tissues, or stimulate Life Force Energy flow across the body.

The magnets used by a therapist or by a person for self-healing may include magnetic bracelets, jewelry, and crystals, magnetic straps, plasters, and patches, magnetic shoe insoles, magnetic blankets, magnetic creams and supplements, among other products.

## Meditation Practices

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There are many types of meditation, with different aims, but certain types of meditation are specifically used to move or circulate Vital Life Energy through the body in order to influence both the physical and so-called [subtle body](#) for health benefits.

Meditation applied as a form of Energy Healing will often be accompanied by breathing exercises or [Breathwork](#), such as Pranayama, or by certain Yoga postures (Asanas) that are thought to be beneficial to open Life Energy Channels, such as the [Yoga Nadis](#) or Meridians, or Life Energy Distribution Centers, such as the Chakras and [Dantian](#).

Some types of meditation that are associated with manipulating Life Energy flow in the body are Chakra Meditation, [Kundalini Meditation](#), Hara Meditation, and Taoist Meditation, among others.

## Ovarian Breathing

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Ovarian Breathing is part of ancient [Taoist Sexual Practices](#) and aims at cultivating Jing Chi sexual energy. The exercise involves a deliberate contraction of the *Chi Muscle* while simultaneously drawing and pushing Jing Chi through the [Dantian](#).

According to Taoist concepts, the Chi Muscle is an ensemble of muscles that surround the anus, perineum, vagina, and urethra, and provides support for the reproductive organs. It basically consists of the pelvic floor muscles, the sphincter muscle of the anus, and muscles located in the perineum area.

In Ovarian Breathing, which is a form of Taoist Sexual Alchemy, you use your mind to draw vital ovarian egg energy (which is Ching Chi, also called Jing Chi) up the spine, to your head and to the third-eye, down through the tongue, the heart and solar plexus, to be stored in the navel area (for later use as pure Chi or Qi).

The goal of this exercise is to extract, transform, and circulate the condensed, powerful Sexual Life Force (Jing Chi) which is stored in the ovaries, and use it for healing benefits on the physical, emotional, and sexual level.

This ovarian energy is the energy generated by the ovaries, eggs, and hormones themselves. The practice is described in detail in Mantak Chia's book *Healing Love through the Tao: Cultivating Female Sexual Energy*. The exercise can be enhanced by simultaneously using a Yoni Egg.

## Pranayama Breathwork

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Simply said, *Pranayama* is the Indian Yogic practice of conscious breath control. Nevertheless, throughout the centuries Pranayama has seen significant changes in the way it is applied and even today it depends very much on the goal and type or lineage of Yoga how Pranayama is used.

For instance, it can be applied as synchronization of the breath during or between Yoga postures (Asanas) and movements. Alternatively it can be practiced as an exercise on its own, before or after Yoga exercises, or at any moment of the day.

The word *Pranayama* is generally considered to be a conjunction of the words *Prana* and *Ayama*, where *Prana* means “breath” or “air,” and *Ayama* is translated in a variety of ways, such as “suspension,” “expansion,” “restrain,” and “control,” among other interpretations.

In older authoritative Hindu texts, such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the goal of Pranayama is to get into a trance-like state by stopping all breathing with an aim of detachment, liberation of bondage, and finally Spiritual Enlightenment.

Another influential text, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, essentially considers Pranayama exercises as a means to acquire deep concentration, subsequently followed by meditation, with, again, the ultimate goal of attaining Spiritual Enlightenment.

In Hatha Yoga, various Pranayama techniques are used, for instance, between movements, or in so-called bandhas

and mudras. They are applied to attain higher spiritual or awareness levels, controlling and directing Vital Life Energy (Prana) for several aims, or as a means of therapeutic healing, among other applications.

Today, in mainstream health and bodywork practices, Pranayama is used for stress relief, as a means of mindfulness, better concentration and improved cognitive performance, better sleep, and a lower blood pressure, to name some of the more common contemporary applications.



## Pranic Healing®

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The idea of healing with [Prana Life Force](#) is a very ancient concept, already applied for millennia in India, for instance. In fact, a range of treatments in Ayurveda Medicine and many Yoga practices work with Prana to achieve health benefits.

Nevertheless, Pranic Healing® as a trademarked healing modality has been developed in the 1980s by *Choa Kok Sui*, a Chinese-Filipino scientist, chemical engineer, Yogi, and healer.

Pranic Healing is a non-touch [Energy Healing](#) system based on the concept that the body has the inborn ability to heal itself. As such, the therapist utilizes Life Force Energy (Prana) to stimulate i.e. promote the patient's body innate capacities to heal itself.

A Pranic Healing session is a non-touch treatment that usually contains three distinct steps: scanning the patient for imbalances or irregularities in their Vital Energy flow, flushing out negative energies, and replenishing the patient with “fresh Prana” through the healer.

By its practitioners, Pranic Healing is thought to be able to alleviate or heal a variety of physical and psychological conditions, such as headaches, flu, ulcers, anxiety, stress, back pains, asthma, migraines, mental illnesses, multiple sclerosis, among other health conditions.

## Qi Healing Practices and Fa Gong

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*Qi Healing* is a general term for balancing Qi Life Energy in the body, removing blockages in the [Meridians](#), and focusing or redirecting Qi to bodily areas that need it.

Different types of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) treatments will accomplish this in different ways. In fact, herbal medicine, Tuina Massage, acupuncture, [Qigong](#), moxibustion, cupping, to name some TCM treatments, are all aimed at Qi Healing, among other goals.

Nevertheless, there's also a form of Qi Healing that directly emits, transfers or transmits Qi Universal Energy from the therapist or healer to the patient. The practitioner doesn't need to physically touch the receiver of the treatment. This kind of Qi Healing is called *Fa Kung* or *Fa Gong*.

Fa Kung healing is usually done with the patient standing up. Without touching the patient, the healer senses Qi energy blockages with the palm of the hands and removes them. After the treatment, the receiver is sometimes given specific Qi Gong exercises which will keep the area open i.e. unblocked.

## Qigong (Chi Kung)

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*Qigong* or *Qi Gong*, also written as *Chi Kung*, is an ancient Chinese tradition and art that has its focus on cultivating, circulating, and harmonizing [Qi Life Energy](#) with the primary purpose to become stronger, to heal oneself, and to increase wisdom and spiritual knowledge.

*Qi* (or *Chi*) is usually translated as “Life Energy.” *Gong* (or *Kung*) is described as “cultivation” or “work,” but definitions include denotations like practice, skill, mastery, merit, achievement, or accomplishment, among others.

The Qigong exercise system consists of sets of coordinated body postures, movements, [breathing](#), and meditation. People practice it across China and worldwide in many countries for fitness, recreation, relaxation, self-healing and moral self-cultivation, preventive, alternative and complementary medicine, for meditation, promoting spirituality, and for martial arts training.

With its origins in ancient Chinese culture and going back at least thousand years, a very broad variety of Qigong forms and styles have developed which — on top level — perhaps can best be segmented in Inner Qigong (Nei) and Outer Qigong (Wei) forms.

Another classification is that of Dynamic or Active Qigong (Dong Gong) which incorporates slow flowing movements, and Meditative or Passive Qigong (Jing Gong) which focuses on static positions and inner movement of the breath.

The application of Qigong exercises is very diverse. For instance, in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Qigong is used for preventive and curative treatments, in Confucianism to support longevity and improve morality, in Taoism and Buddhism it's part of meditative practices, and in the Martial Arts it's used to improve combat competencies.

Today, Qigong training and exercises often integrate many other ancient Chinese or Taoist practices into the art, such as Neidan or Inner Alchemy, Zhan Zhuang or Standing Meditation, and Tao Yin or Taoist Yoga, to name a few TCM modalities.

## Quantum Healing

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*Quantum Healing* is an [Energy Healing](#) modality that is influenced by quantum mechanics, psychology, philosophy, and neurophysiology.

One of the core ideas behind Quantum Healing is an early quantum mechanics concept that matter *is* in fact energy, and becomes only real or manifest as a material phenomenon when observed. That is, matter needs an observer to become reality.

As such, the observer plays a pivotal role, and by changing the way we observe the world and ourselves we can influence our reality, and have an outcome we desire.

The thought behind Quantum Healing is that the types of awareness, consciousness, and meditation we apply to phenomena are of great importance to achieve certain changes in our lives, such as improving health, wellbeing, and spiritual development.

## Reiki Energy Healing

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Originating in Japan, *Reiki Energy Healing* is a practice that “channels” so-called Universal Energy (Life Force, Vital Life Energy, Ki, or Qi ) from the Reiki practitioner into another person. Reiki can be applied for oneself also.

To channel energy, the primary technique used in Reiki is *palm healing* (that is, one transfers Universal Life Energy with the palm of the hands). This is also called hands-on healing or Laying on of hands. Additionally, some Reiki practitioners heal over long-range distances.

Reiki Healing was developed around 1922 by *Mikao Usui* (1865 – 1926), who used it as a spiritual, alternative therapy for the treatment of physical, emotional, and mental diseases.

To be able to use Reiki one needs to be “initiated” or “attuned,” that is, the ability to do Reiki for others or for oneself is transferred to you by a Reiki Master. After the initiation you are then able to “tap into an unlimited supply of Universal Life Energy” to enhance the health of others or your own health.

Some of the benefits attributed to Reiki are deep relaxation, pain relief, calming, nurturing, revitalizing, but also trauma, emotional and spiritual relief.

Reiki training is usually offered in 4 levels: Reiki 1 and Reiki 2, which includes Self-Healing, healing others, and advanced training, and subsequently a Reiki Master training and Reiki Teacher Training.

## Sexual Qigong

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Sexual Qigong — sometimes also referred to as Sexual Kung Fu — is by many regarded as an inner form of [Qigong \(Chi Kung\)](#) and suitable for both men and women. Its origins are thought to lie in Taoist interpretations of Qigong.

It's based on the idea of cultivating our powerful sexual energy, and transforming and redirecting it as Qi Life Energy to create better physical health, prolong life, improve vitality and creativity, and refine sexuality into more spiritual realms.

It's also used to heal sexual or genital problems, like erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation, difficult (sexual) relationships, low libido, prostate problems, energetic blockages of reproduction organs, PMS (Premenstrual Syndrome), and other menstrual problems, to name some health issues.

Additionally, it's also exercised to have a better sex-life and better sexual vitality and “performance,” for instance to become “multi-orgasmic” in one's sexual relationships.

The art of Sexual Qigong boasts advanced exercises and techniques, including meditation practices — for both individuals and couples — which are specifically designed to cultivate, store, and redirect sexual energies.

Think of practices such as the male and female Taoist Deer Exercises, [Ovarian Breathing](#), Jade Egg applications, Orgasm Control, Taoist Sexual Meditation, and the Taoist Breast Massage, to name some techniques.

## Tai Chi

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*Tai Chi* (*T'ai Chi Ch'uan* or *Tai Chi Chuan*) is a centuries-old internal Chinese martial art and a set of physical exercises that aim at defense training, mental balance, general health benefits, and meditation. The practice is considered part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and the Chinese martial arts.

The etymological background of the phrase “Tai Chi Chuan” relates to *Tàijí*, meaning the “absolute” or “source” in Chinese cosmology, and *Quán*, which means “fist” or “boxing.”

The philosophical martial arts take on Tai Chi is that one shouldn't directly counter or resist an incoming force, but engage it in softness, follow its motion and direction, while remaining in physical contact until the incoming attack drains itself or can be redirected. When performed correctly, one achieves Yin-Yang balance in combat. Lao Tze, the great Taoist Master, wrote: “The soft and the pliable will defeat the hard and strong.”

As for the health benefits, Tai Chi stimulates blood and [Qi Life Energy](#) circulation, promotes balance and coordination, mental and physical relaxation, and mobilizes joints. A great number of clinical studies with regard to specific diseases and health issues have shown the safety and health benefits of Tai Chi exercises.

Currently, there are a variety of modern Tai Chi styles of which five are considered the most important ones: Chen style, Yang style, Wu Hao style, Wu style, and Sun style.



The styles are named after the Chinese families from which they originated.

Apart from the styles mentioned above, there are solo and partner forms of Tai Chi, aesthetics forms, weapon-based Tai Chi (using swords, spears, or sticks, among other tools), and differences in speed and leverage of performance.

A sometimes confusing issue is the difference between [Qigong](#) and Tai Chi. Some see Tai Chi as a type of Qigong, and others see Qigong as a type of Tai Chi.

Nevertheless, they are two closely related arts, with Qigong playing an important role in training for Tai Chi, and with many Tai Chi exercises performed as part of Qigong.

Qigong typically focuses more on health and meditation, and Tai Chi more on martial art applications. Another important difference between Qigong and Tai Chi is the way the practices work with Qi Life Force. In Qigong, Qi is typically directed and held at certain points in the body to stimulate opening and cleansing of the [Energy Meridians](#). In Tai Chi however, Qi is used as a continuous flow, stimulating the development of power for use by the practitioner.

In the past few decades, Tai Chi has become popular around the globe. Tai Chi training that primarily emphasizes physical fitness, vitality, and general health is offered in, for instance, hospitals, clinics, sport and fitness schools, and community centers. Additionally, Tai Chi Chuan in its original form is still taught and used as an inner practice of martial arts and meditation.

## Tantric Healing

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Tantra is an Indian philosophy, religion, and lifestyle that boasts an extensive set of practices, which became prominent around 500 CE as a mixture of esoteric and mainstream religious traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism. The scope of Tantra is incredibly vast, which explains much of the contemporary confusion of what Tantra actually stands for.

Tantra may deal with spiritual, cosmological, and religious topics, addressing the evolution of the world, male and female deities, ritual worship, magic, sorcery, divination, esoteric practices, the awakening of Kundalini Energy, techniques for the purification of body and mind, self-realization, spiritual enlightenment, and divine sexuality, using a variety of techniques and methods, such as rituals, sacred texts, pujas, physical exercises, meditation, [Breathwork](#), visualizations, sexual intercourse, chanting, devotion, mandalas, mantras, yantras, nyasas, Tantra Yoga, [Kundalini Yoga](#), dance, and massage, among other tools.

Tantric Healing, notably modern Neo-Tantric Healing and Sacred Sexuality, independent of the techniques and methods used, strongly focuses on liberating and transforming our sexual and vital life energies for physical, emotional, mental, and — last but not least — spiritual health benefits.

Deeply rooted in Yoga philosophy, concepts such as Prana Energy flow, Nadi Energy Channels, Marma points, and [Chakras](#) play a pivotal role in Tantric practices and healing work.

Tantra Yogis, for instance, use multifaceted poses (Yoga Asanas), sequences, and muscular exercises to control the flow of breath and Vital Life Force (Prana) through the Nadis, while emphasizing the awakening of [Kundalini Shakti Energy](#) with the goal of liberation from suffering and the cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

## Tao Yin (Do-In)

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*Tao Yin* or *Dao Yin*, also called Tao Yoga, Do-In, Chinese Yoga, or Taoist Neigong, is a system of Taoist body and mind unifying exercises practiced to cultivate Jing Essence and direct, cultivate, and refine [Qi Life Force](#). The modality is considered part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practices, but is also popular in Traditional Japanese Medicine (TJM).

The exercises are usually divided into *Yin* lying and sitting exercises and positions, and *Yang* exercises, which are standing and moving positions. The practice includes using Self-Massage, Self-Acupressure, and Meridian stretches.

It's thought that Tao Yin was a forerunner of [Qigong](#) and Tai Chi Chuan, being practiced in ancient Chinese Taoist monasteries for health, longevity, and spiritual cultivation. Additionally, it's also said that there are influences of Indian Yoga to be found in Tao Yin, notably the deep stretching exercises that resemble modern-day Yoga, but also aspects of [Kundalini Yoga](#).

Benefits of practicing Tao Yin are thought to be harmonization of Qi Life Energy, enhancement of the autonomic nervous system, stimulation of the immune system, increase of mental capacity and mind control, increased perception and intuition, tranquility of mind, spiritual growth, relaxation of the abdominal muscles and the diaphragm, and general improvement of health, fitness, and structural body alignment, to name some advantages.

## Taoist Sexual Practices

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The Taoist Sexual Practices — also called *Fangzhongshu* or the *Arts of the Bedchamber* — are ancient Chinese-Taoist directives on practicing sexual activity. Historically, the roots of Taoism can be traced back to the 4th century BC and the techniques concerning sexual practices evolved gradually in the next 1,500 years, spanning various Chinese imperial dynasties.

Fangzhongshu techniques deal for the most part with sexual skills, methods, and techniques with regard to intercourse between men and women. The basic concepts cover sexual harmony and how to reach it, attention for flirting and foreplay before sex, and artistic ability in sexual behavior. In fact, the Fangzhongshu has a lot in common with the well-known ancient Indian Kama Sutra texts.

It also contains many directives and techniques for treatments that cure erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation, anejaculation, and other kinds of sexual dysfunction or problems. That is, the Fangzhongshu describes a large number of special sexual positions and exercises that serve to cure or prevent illnesses and discomforts.

The Fangzhongshu practices are also known as “Joining Energy” or “Joining the Essences,” and this is important because it’s claimed by several sources that the real meaning of the Fangzhongshu is not so much the sexual arts itself but using sexual activity to stay in good health, retain and produce Jing (a nutritive essence and one of the so-called Three Treasures Jing, Qi and Shen), promote

Life Energy (Qi essence) and longevity, and to grow in Spiritual Wisdom (Shen essence).

For instance, many Taoist practitioners connect the loss of ejaculatory fluids to the loss of Vital Life Force, resulting in premature aging, illnesses, and general fatigue. Thus, it's believed that decreasing the frequency of — or even totally avoiding — ejaculation is essential preserving life essence. Yet, female orgasms, on the other hand, are claimed to be spiritually energizing, and not draining.

Over time, Taoists developed different methods to control ejaculation such as pulling out immediately before an orgasm, certain breathing and focusing techniques, or applying pressure on the perineum and thereby retaining the sperm.

Another important idea is that the union of a man and a woman (i.e. lovemaking) can result in the creation of sexual energy and Jing essence, which in its turn can be transformed into Qi to replenish Life Force. This process is called Sexual Alchemy (part of Neidan Inner Alchemy practices). In fact, having as much sex as possible, doing it the right way, one has the opportunity to transform more Jing and experience many health benefits.

The Fangzhongshu is certainly not only for men. For instance, well-known practices for women are the Taoist Breast Massage, [Ovarian Breathing](#), and the use of the Jade Egg (Yoni Egg). Besides that, women should be stimulated and pleased also in order to be able to benefit from the sexual act. If sex is performed in this manner, women can create more Jing, benefitting both men and women.

## Therapeutic Touch® (TT)

*Therapeutic Touch*® (TT), developed by Dolores Krieger (1921 – 2019) and Dora Kunz (1904 – 1999), and also known as Non-Contact Therapeutic Touch, is a body Energy Field manipulating practice with the goal of encouraging healing, and alleviating pains, stress, and anxiety.

TT works with the receiver's [Biofield](#), that is, the receiver's Energy Field that surrounds the body. Touching is not required during a treatment session, although some practitioners may gently lay their hands on body parts.

Practitioners place their hands on, or near, a receiver to be able to detect and manipulate the receiver's Biofield. In fact, the concept behind TT treatments is to incorporate the intentional and compassionate use of [Universal Energy](#) in order to promote balance and wellbeing.

## Trul Khor

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*Tsa Lung Trul Khor*, often just called *Trul Khor*, is a Tibetan Yoga practice (or Movement practice) with Tantric roots, and consists of [Pranayama](#) (breathing exercises), visualizations, incantations (mantras), and asanas (Yogic postures and poses).

Trul Khor can be practiced in a simple way for immediate physical and emotional health benefits, such as relaxation and stress relief and alleviation of common ailments, but it can also be a more advanced [meditation practice](#) with an aim to realize the “natural mind” or achieve spiritual enlightenment.

The Tibetan phrase *Tsa Lung Trul Khor* means something like “channels, inner breath currents, and magical movement instrument.” The short form *Trul Khor* is often translated as “magical instrument” or “magical wheel.” In *Tsa Lung*, the word *Tsa* means “subtle channels” and [Lung](#) refers to “Vital Breath” or Prana.

Today you will sometimes see Trul Khor labeled as *Yantra Yoga* such as popularized by the late Tibetan Dzogchen Master Namkhai Norbu (1938 – 2018). This Trul Khor form consists of 108 movements. By the way, this is not the same as the Yantra Yoga practice of India (which is associated with geometric images and symbols).

Another form of Trul Khor was introduced in the West by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, a Dzogchen Master of the Bon-school. This Tibetan Yoga lineage is often referred to as *Trul-Khor* (explicitly with the dash [-], and not written Trul



Khor without the dash [-]), which is a very subtle and sometimes rather confusing difference in naming.

In Tibetan Yoga, there's less emphasis on static forms, and one doesn't stay long in a pose or position (asana). In fact, Tibetan Yoga is more about a continued sequence of movements where rhythmic breathing and breath retention play an important role. It makes it a rather vigorous form of Yoga movement exercises.

Another significant aspect of Trul Khor is that one holds the breath during the entire movement process of an exercise and only releases it at the end of performing the complete posture.

Tibetan Yoga shows remarkable similarities with Thai Reusi Dat Ton (Thai Traditional Yoga). The elements of holding the breath during an exercise, the short duration one stays in a position, the dynamic flow between movements, and its vigorousness, clearly indicate mutual roots.

## Zero Balancing

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*Zero Balancing* is a manual touch therapy devolved in the 1970s by the osteopath, surgeon, and acupuncturist Dr. Frederick Smith.

It's said that the name Zero Balancing came about when a receiver described their feeling after a session as "I feel so well-balanced, like I'm zero, zero-balanced." However, in another version, it's claimed that the receiver described the experience of the session "as being brought back into balance, back to zero."

In any event, the modality is influenced by Osteopathy, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Structural Integration, Rolfing, and [Vitalism](#), claiming that the Energy Field or Biofield of human beings can be manipulated by manual operations in order to achieve health benefits.

More particularly, Zero Balancing addresses the energy flow of/in the skeletal system with the idea that this type of energy can affect physical and mental well-being.

As Frederick Smith states: "Zero Balancing teaches that the deepest currents of energy are in bone, that memory can be held in tissue, that energy fields in the body underlie mind, body and emotions, and that imbalances in the field precede pathology."

In a Zero Balancing session, the therapist works with acupressure and traction techniques on joints, bones, and soft tissues, which typically takes between half an hour and an hour. The session is applied on a massage table through the client's clothing.

# Appendix

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