

## Qigong, Self-Healing, One of the Ways to Achieve a Healthy Lifestyle

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### Abstract

The article discusses contemporary interest in the practice of qigong and the nature of the latter. On the one hand, the statements of Danila Susak, the world champion in health qigong, are cited, on the other hand, the doubts of a number of Russian doctors and psychologists who draw attention to the uncertainty and even mythological nature of the central concepts of qigong - "qi", "channels", "points". The author also raises several questions regarding the concept of qigong. He then takes an excursion into the history of Chinese qigong, showing that initially statements about qigong were obtained on schems, and the schem of water channels that were created to irrigate fields in agriculture was taken as the main diagram for understanding what happened in the practice of qigong. The concept of a scheme and the features of the scheme, which has become the main one in qigong, are characterized. The concept of domestic psychologists of channels and points in qigong as "functional organs" is discussed. The author then outlines his own concept of qigong, based on his teaching about psychic realities. He claims that in the practice of qigong, a second pyramid of realities is formed, blocking the existing one with its problems and illnesses. This new pyramid of realities suggests a different way of life. The question is raised whether qigong, as presented by the author, can be integrated into modern social life. In the author's opinion, the strategy should be different: not to create pockets of new life in the existing sociality that may conflict with what already exists, but to immediately work on the "correct life", including qigong in it for those who want it (at the same time understanding the right life requires discussion and social consensus).

**Keywords:** *Qigong; Lifestyle; Energy; Channels; Movements; Thought Forms; Organism; Vital Activity; Formation; Self-Healing*

We are witnessing a real boom in interest in qigong. "To date", write the authors of the article "The Functional Organ Hypothesis as a Psychophysiological Scientific Basis of Medical Qigong", "thanks to tourism, migration and globalization, qigong from China has become widespread throughout the world. The fashion for qigong is spreading as an addition to Western medicine, research, training and advisory centers of qigong have been opened in Europe and North America... The Russian society "Qigong" was created, periodical publication comes out of the magazine "Qigong and Life", was published, an international congress was held, and training centers were created. In big cities it is noted that previously popular yoga is beginning to be replaced by qigong" [2, p. 160].

And how can you not get carried away if almost all qigong masters who promote the latter and offer corresponding services promise not only health improvement, but also healing of the sick. For example, Danila Susak, to whose work we will turn, in an advertisement for his club "Xamata" states that "in most cases, the human body is capable of self-healing if it is given an impetus and the recovery processes are activated", naturally, this means qigong, and in the version of Susak, by the way, the world champion in health qigong [5]. Susak promises, if a person takes up qigong, preventive protection against many diseases.

It cannot be said that official medicine treats qigong favorably. The group of authors already cited, while recognizing the success of this practice, points out that the foundations of qigong are absolutely unclear, rather mythological. "It is necessary to first overcome the mystical fog that involuntarily arises when trying to understand qigong logically before moving on to its practical development. However, if we translate the concept of "qigong" literally as the work of "gong" with the energy of "qi", we get nothing but an initial distrust of the subject. What is "qi", what kind of energy is it? How to imagine its existence? And how to work with something whose physical existence is difficult to imagine? And in the scientific world there is still no consensus on qigong. Despite the generally accepted practical results of its effectiveness, the main concept of qigong - qi energy - has not yet received a scientific explanation, which gives rise to doubts about the actual effectiveness of qigong... channels and collaterals (bypass paths of blood flow. - V.R.) represent an even greater mystery for understanding one of the main provisions of qigong. All qigong manuals describe the movement of qi through channels and collaterals and say that the human body has a special system of channels that connects the surface with the insides, the upper parts of the body with the lower parts, and connects dense organs with hollow ones. Moreover, the channels and collaterals that form this system are not blood vessels or nerves. They are reservoirs of energy and form the main lines, and their nature is expressed in terms of yin and yang... Despite repeated efforts, the channel theory has not been confirmed by scientific study. Therefore, in recent years, many scientists, even Chinese ones, have become critical of the channels, some even doubt their existence. And the following paradox emerges: the existence of channels is recognized by the majority of acupuncturist practitioners, while theorists question it" [2, p. 160, 161].

There are other questions. Whether qigong classes really lead to healing of a sick body, individual examples here are unlikely to be proof. Each qigong master has his own set of exercises and recommendations, which is understandable, since they were discovered in practice; Are all these different programs really helping and healing? In China, many older people practice qigong; their body ages, loses many of its capabilities, but here comes the promise of healing. Susak insistently asks his clients to practice qigong constantly, as soon as they have a few free minutes. But if healing has occurred, then why continue? There is no doubt that qigong helps, but one wonders why, maybe not because the students follow the master's instructions and try to accurately reproduce the movements he recommends, but because they changed their lifestyle, spend more time in the air, became different breathe and eat? Susak explains the effect of the recommended movements and actions by the fact that they directly affect the blood, lymphatic and nerve pathways (for example, he says that since there are many blood vessels passing through the collarbone, working the muscles of the collarbone affects their functioning). But who has proven that such physical actions actually affect blood flow and, moreover, in the right direction? The desired direction is characterized by Susak as normalizing the balance (resources consumed by the body and received in the form of food, oxygen, blood, lymph, etc.), disturbed due to an incorrect lifestyle or illness.

To prove his points, Susak simultaneously refers to both the medical model of the human body and the human structure, as it is presented in Chinese works on qigong, i.e. its concept is hybrid. However, are modern medical and ancient Chinese ideas about man compatible? To understand this, let's take a closer look at the latter. "In 1960", write Ma Jiren and M.M. Bogachikhin, "the director of the Tangshan Qigong Therapy Clinic, Wang Jinbo, arrived at the Shanghai City Qigong Therapy Clinic, where specialists discussed issues of terminology, because "if the name is not given, then how to name? They decided not to understand the hieroglyph "qi" narrowly and to rely on the practical meaning put into it, based on the fact that the method and theory of independent training of body and spirit has gone through a long path of development among the people. By mastering poses, adjusting breathing, relaxing the body and calming the heart (soul), focusing and directing attention, performing rhythmic movements and other special actions, you can regulate and improve various mechanisms of the human body, evoke and increase the forces hidden in the body. This has a healing and general strengthening effect, promotes disease prevention and longevity. The use of qigong for the latter purpose constitutes the methods of qigong therapy" [3, p. 7].

From the point of view of ancient Chinese ideas, such a practice, which includes working with three main elements - the energy "jing" (the energy of conception, food and water), "qi" (the energy of air, water and food) and "shen" (soul and thoughts), allows you to establish the correct flow of qi in the body and thereby promote health and even healing. Streams of energy (Ching, qi, shen) flow through "channels"

and are regulated, on the one hand, by the natural relationships of yang and yin (in the “Complete Book of Shining Peak” it is stated: “Yang in deficiency - cannot be exhaled, yin in deficiency - cannot be inhaled” [3, p. 14]), on the other hand, by the artificial influences of qigong.



**Diagram 1:** *Tai Chi Diagram - diagram of the great limit consisting of yin and yang.*

In Lingshu, in the chapter “Main Repositories”, it is explained that “the blood qi passes through the channels, they nourish yin and yang, moisten the joints and bones, benefit the outposts and joints”... The secret that yin and yang can achieve balance (also at Susak this is probably the idea of balance. - V.R.), consists of relying on the normal functioning of the longitudinal and transverse channels (Jing and lo)... The discovery of channels, like all similar discoveries in the field of medicine, is the result of many years of struggle by the Chinese healers with diseases. Qigong practice is closely related to the channels, so sometimes as a result of training you can feel movement on the paths of the channels. Therefore, master Li Shizhen in the book “Exploration of the Eight Channels of Miraculous Passage” pointed to “internal tunnels that can only be observed with a directed gaze”. This is a significant finding. In the book “Compass of Acupuncture and Moxibustion” (“Zhen Jiu Zhi Nan”) there is the following entry: “Students of acupuncture and moxibustion should diligently train themselves”... The “quiet sitting” technique is the opening and closing of the passages of flows and changes of qi in the longitudinal channels of the body” [3, p. 22-23].

In my opinion, the following two points help to understand these statements. First, these statements were obtained on diagrams; second, the diagram of water channels that were created to irrigate fields in agriculture was taken as the main diagram for understanding what was happening in the practice of qigong. “In Introduction to Schemology (science of schemes): Schemes in Philosophy, Science, Literature, and Design”, I show that the primary way of knowing in the ancient world was based on schemes. “In the Tupi language”, writes E. Taylor, “a solar eclipse is expressed in the words: “a jaguar ate the sun”. The full meaning of this phrase is still revealed by some tribes in that they shoot flaming arrows to drive away the ferocious beast from its prey. On the northern continent, some savages also believed in a huge sun-eating dog, while others shot arrows into the sky to protect their luminaries from imaginary enemies who attacked them. But next to these prevailing concepts, there are also others. The Caribs, for example, imagined the eclipsed moon as hungry, sick or dying... The Hurons considered the moon sick and performed their usual charivari with shooting and howling dogs to heal it” [10, p. 228].

Here the narrative “the jaguar ate the sun” is an example of a scheme. A scheme is a structure, a “semiotic invention” that allows one to resolve a “problem situation” (in this case, a lack of understanding of what is happening, fear of an eclipse), sets a “new reality” (a jaguar in the sky attacking the sun), allows one to “understand” what is happening (the disc of the sun disappears into the mouth of the jaguar), and also what can be “done” (drive away the jaguar).

<b>Problematic situation</b>	→	<b>Scheme</b>	→	<b>New action</b>
		↓		
		<b>New reality</b>		

**Table**

What problematic situation emerges in the case of the formation of qigong practice? There is air that a person breathes, food without which he cannot live, soul, thought, will, internal organs, blood, nerves, breathing, activity, body, arms, legs, stomach, postures, etc. - all these are different, unrelated things. But here’s a miracle: in the practice of qigong, they begin to influence each other and become connected. How to grasp these connections and influences, what is the reality here? There are clues: the leading soul and thought, then breathing, body postures and movements, they affect the internal processes and state of a person, blood and lymph flow inside and there are different organs that depend on these flows and regulate them themselves. What does all this remind you of? Someone realized - water flowing in canals created by man, irrigating fields, water regulated by a person who either locks the floodgates or opens them. This scheme was taken as the main one. Qi is like a jaguar in the sky: both liquid, understood as energy flowing through invisible channels inside the body (starting from the sky and food, passing into blood and lymph, etc.) and air, and prana, and blood, and lymph, and lust - and all this is directed and regulated by soul and thought, breathing and movement. Qi and channels, postures and movements, thought and breathing are the supporting structures of the reality of a person included in the practice of qigong. That is why there are no exact, consistent definitions of qi and channels, because they are components of reality, given by the scheme. Similarly, whether it is possible to accurately characterize a jaguar that attacked the sun, everyone sees something different in it.

Why do some people begin to see channels and qi? The fact is that deep penetration into the reality of schemes sooner or later leads to a transformation of vision. The author’s teaching about realities shows that under certain conditions, schemes begin to determine our sensuality. Our sensuality is formed precisely on the basis of a certain “schematization” (schemas), this becomes especially clear in deviant forms of behavior. “Sometimes”, writes psychotherapist G. Nazloyan, “patients are surprised by the shape of their ear, nose, the pattern of their eyes, lips, and chin. This is the first way out of autistic captivity, the first look at oneself from the outside, the first attempt to compare oneself with other people without vicious mythologization and dysmorphophobic attitudes that distort the vision of the world in general and the world of human relations in particular. Sergei V., for whom the forehead was a “testing ground”, the surface of the nose was a “launching pad”, and the mouth was a “cave”, in the end he recalled this with an ironic smile, as well as a developed delusional system and inappropriate actions associated with the fact that he is an Alien from the Future. Another patient, Vladimir U., who has yet to be treated, “sculpts” horses, cats and other animals from his cheeks, and then “erases” them. What is hidden behind all this? [4, p. 23].

As I show, schizophrenics’ vision of their own face, and even the basic sensations, are completely determined by the features of the deformed reality, which was formed as a result of the formation of the anthropological image of the patient. The displacement of the pyramid of realities that existed before the illness and the final victory of the deformed pyramid is perceived by the schizophrenic as entering a new world, where there is a different sensuality and events. So, precisely because Sergei V. considers himself an alien from the future and, therefore, an astronaut, he perceives his nose as a “launching pad”, and his forehead as a “space testing ground”.

An interesting explanation of the reality of qigong was offered by the authors cited above. These are special organs formed by humans, but not physical, but functional. "This hypothesis of the emergence and existence of canals as functional organs", they write, "has not yet been put forward in medical science. The idea of a functional organ itself was proposed by the Russian physiologist A. A. Ukhtomsky back in 1923. According to his definition, a functional organ is a new anatomical and physiological structure, including both parts of the body and parts of the central nervous system, working as one whole. Ukhtomsky determined that these organs, after they have been formed to perform a certain function, exist virtually and are observable only in execution... it becomes clear by what patterns channels can appear in qigong. And the qigong manuals say that channels and collaterals develop gradually during training. This means, as the compilers of the manuals themselves write, that before the start of qigong training, channels as such do not exist on the body; they are formed as a result of systematic exercises and training. The main condition for their formation is the high motivation of the beginner, i.e. the dominant... The formed channels are identified not only by subjective criteria (sensation of qi movement), but also by objectivable electrophysiological characteristics. The more motivated a person is, the more immersed he is in the internal work of mastering the essence of qigong, the faster and more fully he practically masters the techniques and mastery of qigong" [2, p. 162-163].

However, it is difficult to expect "high motivation" among hundreds of thousands of men and women who practice qigong; in addition, the mechanism of formation of qigong as a functional organ is unclear. I would offer another explanation based on the concept of realities [6, p. 350-397]. Let us pay attention to the fact that the vast majority of actions (movements, breathing methods, thought forms) differ from the usual ones implemented in normal life. This means that there are no established patterns, stereotypes, or abilities for their implementation. A person has to create new - new patterns of movement, breathing, imagination, thinking. On the basis of these schemes, a new "pyramid of realities" begins to take shape (precisely a pyramid, since some realities act as a condition for others). "Immediate reality" (i.e. understood as what actually exists) for those practicing in qigong are qi, points, channels, "derived realities", for example, new movements, breathing methods, thought forms - necessary conditions for the formation immediate reality [6, p. 384-385]. Since the new pyramid of realities provides new life activity, because practicing qigong requires leaving at least for a while the usual activities and habitual behavior and mastering unusual, new life activity, the new pyramid of realities determines the formation of a new (second) personality of the qigongist, healthy from illnesses.

Due to the systemic unity of the body, the following tripartite process unfolds. On the one hand, a new growing and increasingly complex pyramid of realities is gaining strength and conquering more and more living space. On the other hand, the new pyramid of realities blocks the old one, with which problems and illnesses are associated (hence Susak's persistent requests to practice qigong constantly are understandable). From a psychological point of view, blocking realities means the impossibility of functioning of the corresponding mental structures and processes, including those responsible for diseases and problems. On the third hand, the new pyramid of realities is still forced to share with the "outgoing" pyramid (at the body level with oxygen, blood, lymph, bile, etc.), which also contributes to healing. Ideally, the old pyramid of realities with all the problems and illnesses should eventually leave the stage of a person's life (stop functioning). What remains is new, without problems and diseases. Isn't this really the mechanism of healing? What role do "points" and channels play in this process? I will make an assumption: they form the basis of a new physiology and physicality, working for a new pyramid of reality. Take, for example, unusual twisting of the body or stretching of the body simultaneously in opposite directions. Their implementation requires other coordination and control paths. A person practicing qigong, performing these unusual movements for him, begins to catch (discover) the paths and coordinations that are built in response to his efforts and actions. They make up points and fragments of channels.

Let me also explain my statement that blocking realities means the impossibility of functioning of the corresponding mental structures and processes. I analyzed it, analyzing the nature of homeopathy. "Today the effect of a homeopathic medicine is explained by the fact

that it carries information. However, in what sense, since an organism is not a person? This does not mean that a homeopathic medicine informs the body about something. However, it is true that homeopathic medicine carries certain information. To resolve a similar dilemma, I introduced the principle of “psychosomatic unity”, arguing that every mental process requires its own somatic (physiological) support (support) and, conversely, a somatic process cannot unfold unless it is supported at the mental level with the help of certain mental processes, stresses and events.

Let’s take articles from the Homeopathic Bulletin about the effective treatment of colds in children, for example by Dmitry Khramov [11]. Somatic processes are known - hypothermia, fever, often, but not always, runny nose, cough, coated tongue, sore throat, etc. A disease like a cold at the psychological level must be supported by such processes as headache, lack of appetite, weakness, the same cough as a psychological reaction, difficulty breathing, sore throat, etc. By launching the corresponding psychological processes, a cold as a somatic process (processes) seems to inform the psyche.

If the principle of psychosomatic unity is correct, then it is clear that the reaction from the action of a homeopathic medicine must also be supported on a psychological level. Thus, homeopathic medicine, as it were, informs the psyche. Let us now think about what happens when the psychological support of the homeopathic reaction in terms of symptoms coincides with the symptoms of the disease. In this case, as I assume, and specifically analyzed the material of acupuncture treatment of alcohol addiction, the stronger somatic effect of a homeopathic medicine draws on psychological support [8, p. 170-171]. The fact is that our psyche can only support one clearly defined “package of somatic processes”. That is why, as Hahnemann shows, with the simultaneous development of two dissimilar diseases, “the disease from which the patient initially suffered, as a weaker one, will, with the onset of a stronger one, be removed and suppressed until the latter completes the cycle of its development or is cured, and then the old disease will appear again uncured” [1, p. 61-62]. In this case, the processes are also dissimilar (a natural disease and a reaction from a homeopathic medicine), and they have a common somatic basis (similarity of symptoms). As a result, three cases are theoretically possible: interference of both processes, their integration and intensification, and finally, the displacement of one by the other. As I show, in the case of acupuncture, and probably homeopathic effects, the third case most often occurs [8, p. 171]. In general, in the human body, especially the old one, all three cases are observed: how often some processes strengthen others (trouble has come - open the gate), overlap each other, displace each other, and all this against the background of the action of systemic processes; therefore, diseases often go away on their own, without any treatment, but also reappear.

So, with homeopathic treatment, the somatic processes that form the somatic basis of the disease are deprived of psychological support. What does this mean? Probably the fact that they can no longer flow freely, be realized, and the patient must recover? Hardly. Firstly, illness, as well as recovery, are systemic processes (reactions) of the body as a whole. Once they start, they go on their own, but under certain conditions. Secondly, the recovery process is not automatically triggered by blocking psychological support for the disease process. It still needs to be launched and supported both at the somatic and mental levels. This is what we observe in reality. The doctor assigns the patient a hospital regime (in this case, heat that was wasted during hypothermia, bed, special food) and inspires him that treatment has begun and he will soon recover. Deprived of psychological support, the systemic process of the disease begins to be blocked, and another systemic process (recovery), supported at both levels, gradually takes its place” [7].

### Conclusion

The understanding of the practice of “qigong” proposed here, however, presupposes one condition, namely, that a person practices qigong not occasionally, not as an addition to already existing classes. To begin to feel better, not to mention healing, the practitioner of this practice must radically change his lifestyle, as Soren Kierkegaard wrote, to be reborn (of course, not immediately, but in the process of mastering qigong).

All of the above, in my opinion, is also true regarding yoga and a number of other bodily practices, for example, karate, which the author has been practicing for many years. With one amendment, these practices, in addition to health improvement, set other goals, for example, achieving unusual states in yoga, victory in karate over oneself and the enemy.

The last question is whether Qigong, as it is presented by the author, can be integrated into modern social life, because according to his version, Qigong is a kind of alternative way of life ("the hearth of a new life", as they said in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century)? I think the strategy should be different: not to create pockets of new life in the existing sociality that may conflict with what already exists, but to immediately work on the "correct life", including qigong in it for those who want it. At the same time, understanding the right life naturally requires discussion and a certain social consensus [9, p. 28-40].

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