

## QI

Qi has been variously described as 'the origin of the five grains grown in the earth and of the stars in the sky' (下生五穀，上為列星), 'something that is vague and not completely tangible, yet real' (恍恍惚惚) and 'the vital force for living beings; without it, life will not be sustained' (有氣則生，無氣則亡). There are no spatial constraints on Qi. 'It is everywhere in the universe, and it is in everything in the universe' (氣化生萬物).

### WHAT IS QI?

Ancient Chinese viewed everything in the universe as being constantly in the process of transformation, changing 'from nothingness to existence, from existence to nothingness' (有無相生). In other words, all physical existences come from Qi and they will eventually return to Qi.

*Everything is changing all the time. Nothing remains static*

Qi and Dao (Dao referring to the laws that govern the change of Qi and of everything that exists), are the two corner stones of traditional Chinese culture. Qigong and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) are examples of practices based on these laws.

What exactly is Qi? It is a fully integrated form of *material* (a very fine substance that at this stage no machine is capable of measuring), *energy and information*. You can now see why we don't use the word 'energy', even though this is the term in English that comes closest to describing Qi. Qi is far more than just energy. Since there is no English word that has a meaning equivalent to 'Qi', it is more appropriate to use the original Chinese term.

What is the role of Qi in human life? We can say it is the foundation of life and health. In other words, it is the life force. Without it, life cannot be sustained. When it is not in good condition, problems can be expected.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JING, QI AND SHEN

Human life consists of three major elements - the physical body (Jing), Qi, and Shen (which includes the heart and consciousness). These three elements constantly interact with one another, influence one another, support one another and transform into one another. Their relationships are complex.

*One crucial point to remember: Shen is the master of Qi and of life.*

Activity of the heart and the consciousness is a process of transmitting information that will, to a large extent, guide and influence changes in Qi. Because Qi and the body transform into one another, the change of Qi will, in turn, bring about physical change in the body. In this sense, we can say:

*Qi is an important intermediary between Shen and the body.*

When Jing, Qi, and Shen are working together harmoniously, the result will be a healthy life. Understanding the interdependence of Jing, Qi and Shen in forming the total reality of human life is central to our learning, for it is in recognition of this interdependent relationship that the REN XUE approach to healing has been developed. As you begin to grasp the implications of this, you will start to see that, when something is wrong in your life on one level, addressing it on that level alone is unlikely to be fully effective. A physical problem is not likely to be a problem of Jing only; nor is an emotional problem likely to be a problem that only concerns Shen. Indeed, any time we focus on one level of life to the exclusion of the other levels, problems can arise, or progress can be impeded.