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Quantum Physics and Shiatsu (Patrizia Stefanini)

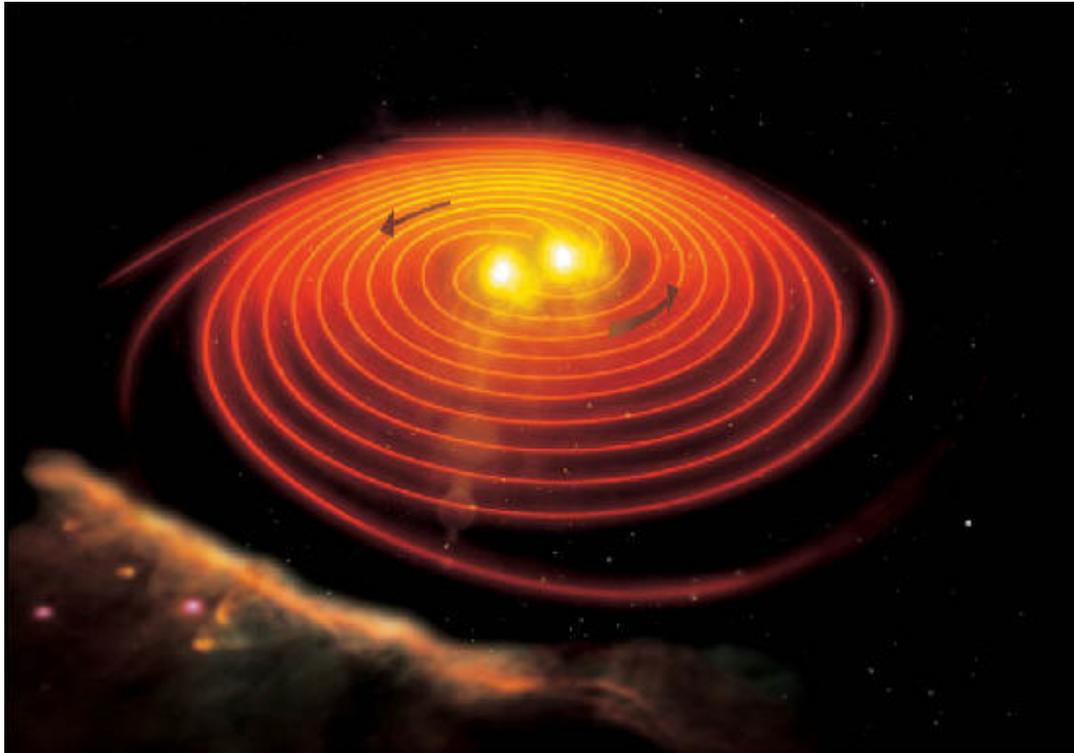
Do quantum physicists and Shiatsu practitioners understand the world in very similar ways? Patrizia Stefanini suggests that the physicist's view of life as a series of energetic interactions may reflect practitioners' direct experience.

The tendency of science over the last three to four hundred years has been to try to set up an absolute division between subject and object, mind and nature. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was the first person to make extensive use of experiments to investigate natural phenomena (he was subsequently imprisoned by the inquisition for daring to suggest that the planets revolved around the sun). 'Measure what can be measured and make measurable what cannot be measured.' (Galileo), became the basis of modern scientific thought and philosophy, and underlies the western approach to health and medicine today. Scientists working in many fields continue to demand objectivity, but the foundations upon which this approach to knowledge is based can be questioned, as in, for example, this recent comment on social construction theory: 'A strong version of social construction, which drives scientists mad, holds that there is no such thing as objective knowledge. Depending on their religious, cultural and social background, different scientists view a problem through different eyes, ask different questions and may arrive at different conclusions based on the same data.' (Mike Holderness 'Houses of What', New Scientist 9/10/1999.)

In addition to this, the twentieth century exploration of the subatomic world has shown that there is an intrinsically dynamic nature to matter. Matter is no longer assumed to be made up of fundamental building blocks that can be precisely located in space and time.

'The constituents of the atom are dynamic configurations which don't exist as isolated quantifiable entities, but as integral parts of an interdependent network of interaction.'

An 'interdependent network of interaction'. Isn't that a wonderful description of the meridian system we use in Shiatsu? Indeed the current vision of the subatomic world contains the seeds of a much larger vision of man and nature, where energy and matter are no longer separate entities, where the observer and the observed can no longer be separated.



Physics and mathematics form the foundation of all science. In physics the old Newtonian/Cartesian vision of atoms as building blocks has been replaced by a highly complex vision of interdependence and interaction, energy and probability.

Current practice in Western medicine continues to want to subdivide and categorize. Meanwhile at the subatomic level, the message we are getting today is that our 'reality' is just far too complex for such a simplistic approach. If we think of an atom in the liver as a vibrational interacting energetic probability, is it not then wise, by logical extrapolation, to think of the organ itself in the same terms?

In a similar way Masunaga's system of meridians moves away from precise anatomical located points. Instead Masunaga gives us suggestions as to how to 'feel the meridian' and, by using an attitude of mind, or by thinking of the function of a meridian while we are working, we can energetically resonate with the vibrational quality of the meridian we are trying to contact. Paraphrasing Masunaga; The meridians represented on his energetic map have a mutable nature and profundity and how they manifest will depend on the nature of the treatment given and nature of the interaction between the therapist and client in that particular moment.



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Reading Masunaga's books, understanding how he and his team developed their theories, by an applied scientific methodology over a ten-year period, re-awoke in me the knowledge I had acquired in my years studying for a degree in physics. The vision of classical, determinist physics, where everything is definable and locatable finds a parallel in the Traditional Chinese Meridians, their lines and points. The energetic or wave based vision of quantum physics where there exists only a probability of presence and everything is interdependent and interacting, fits better with Masunaga's vision of meridians and the very personal and 'of the moment' interaction of practitioner and client.

It is not that one model is right and the other wrong, but each gives us a vision of the world using a different focus and different spheres, or fields, of competence (signs and symptoms in the case of Traditional Chinese Medicine, The Person in his or her life stage, according to Masunaga).

We can change the objective of the treatment because we hold a different 'Vision of the World'. Really, nothing in our daily lives allows us to understand the strange phenomena of the subatomic world. Einstein himself said, 'Reality is an illusion, albeit a very persistent one'. In the subatomic world, particles appear as waves and vice versa, electrons lose their identity and change depending on who is observing them. A single photon, or ray of light, can seem to be in two places at the same time.

When the observer and the observed are thought of as part of the same phenomenon it doesn't make sense any more to try to compare what you find in the Hara with what I find. What manifests when two people meet is unique to those two people, in that moment of time.

Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity has at its core the concept that the four dimensional reality of space-time (x, y and z + time, the world of our senses) had no objective significance as an independent physical entity. Everything is relative and the co-ordinates used to define space-time are only elements in a language which can be used by an observer to describe his environment.

Both modern physics and the philosophy of the ancient mystics come to the same conclusions, that the world is in constant dynamic change and transformation, and all the phenomena of the world are interconnected and interdependent. The fact that science today, at least at a subatomic level, confirms that it is impossible to separate the observer from the observed phenomenon, takes us back to one of the fundamental principles of Oriental Philosophy, where the structure and the phenomena observed in nature are nothing other than the creation of our mind which measures and classifies. Maya is the name given it in Hindu, whilst the Buddhists call it Avidya.



Doing Masunaga Shiatsu we search for a vibrational quality which has the maximum probability of expression along one of the lines represented on his map. Doing this work we are not tied to the four dimensional reality of space-time, the fixed laws of nature or even the energetic concept of Yin and Yang. The Chinese model, similar to the western model before Galileo and his telescope, places man at the centre of the universe, between Earth and Heaven. Masunaga's vision is no longer so anthropocentric. Man is in the universe, where he is no more than one of an infinite number of interacting energetic bodies.

If we talk about meridians as waves, the spectrum of different frequencies of vibration contains the spectrum of all different wave meridians in all their possible manifestations. The frame of reference is no longer one- or three-dimensional space and the time factor is no longer a simple



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linear function. In this model really it makes no more sense to talk about a 'before' and 'after'. All is in a sense appearance, what is manifesting in the ever present moment, The Universe as She unfolds and reveals Herself, before our senses. The concept of Kyo and Jitsu consequently take on a new significance; no longer is there a before/need/cause (Kyo), which is compensated for by an after/effect (Jitsu), instead there is a manifestation Kyo/Jitsu which represents a movement in life' of that Human Being.

Einstein's famous equation $E=mc^2$ encapsulates and expresses in a modern way the concept of Ki. 'The Chinese character for Ki contains the radicals for both 'steam' and 'rice'. In its refined forms Ki moves and flows almost invisibly, like steam. In its denser aspect it slows or coalesces into form, such as rice.' Carola Beresford-Cooke, Shiatsu Theory and Practice.

Einstein's equation tells us the energy of any object can be determined by multiplying its mass by the speed of light squared (which is a constant value). Any finite object can therefore be expressed directly as a finite quanta of energy. Energy and mass are therefore expressions of the same basic phenomenon, Ki is steam and at the same time it is rice.

This phenomenon, which encompasses everything in our known universe, can simply be represented by a wave form, energy in dynamic change through time. If we think of a sea wave it has that relentless quality of movement and change and we can think of Kyo and Jitsu, Yin and Yang, as expressions of this wave, as expressions of movement in life.

Using another analogy, just as in the light spectrum we can only 'see' within the visible spectrum, which is only a fraction of light rays hitting the retina of our eyes, so in Shiatsu we can only sense a limited spectrum of the energies expressed by the meridian. Music is an expressions of energetic vibration (as is painting, poetry, all the arts really seek in a sense to harmonize vibration, that's the common link between Tracey Emmett's bed and a Zen Rock garden). We all instantly recognize if a guitar is out of tune, or if a peice Lacks rhythm and harmony. If you remember Pythagoras from) school maths, it may surprise you to know that he considered himself above all a healer and that he used music as a remedy for every manner of sickness (See Jamie James, The Music of the Spheres).

So it is with Shiatsu. We instinctively use vibration and rhythm as an instrument for synchronizing with energy at different levels (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual). This can perhaps explain why more static styles of Shiatsu are effective on a more physical and emotional level. It also helps us to explain why it is not advisable to have too fixed and preconceived notion of how to work Kyo and Jitsu. Sometimes a Kyo (with a predominantly spiritual expression) needs to be worked faster, with stronger pressure than a Jitsu which has a predominantly physical expression.

There are therefore many combinations of meridians and levels of work which give us, from the



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same symptomatic expression, very different significance and consequently very different models for working with Shiatsu.

When I work I try to have no prior model or idea of how I'm going to work, how I am going to meet this other Person. I try to meet them with an openness in my touch, allowing me to listen to their expression. In this way I can adapt my response, looking for resonance, 'echo vitale', which gives me the information I need to work. Sometimes, in just a fraction of a second, a whole life seems to manifest before you. We can even pick up on things that seem to come from outside this current life. Our approach can only be one of the most profound and humble respect. The question I ask myself is what can I do to help this person use all the resources, or meridian energies, he or she has to best effect.

*I would like to thank Pauline Sasaki and
Clifford Andrews for their generous and
illuminating teaching.*

Translation: Steve Scott

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© Patrizia Stefanini, graduated in theoretical physics from the University of Pavia in 1982 and took up Shiatsu in 1983. She is now both practitioner and teacher with the European Institute of Shiatsu, setting up a branch of the School in Milan in 1990 (published in Shiatsu Society News, No. 72, Winter 1999) Patrizia Stefanini, graduated in theoretical physics from the University of Pavia in 1982 and took up Shiatsu in 1983. She is now both practitioner and teacher with the European Institute of Shiatsu, setting up a branch of the School in Milan in 1990 (published in Shiatsu Society News, No. 72, Winter 1999)