

Cross-Cultural Conceptualization of Soul and Mind



This presentation is supported by the National Science Centre's grant (Poland) HARMONIA6 (UMO - 2014/14/M/HS1/00436) for the research project entitled "The involvement of language, culture-specific factors and folk intuitions in mindreading activity and social cognition"

Joanna Hryniewska (Uniwersytet SWPS)

Arkadiusz Gut (UMK, KUL)

Zhenxu Fan (KUL)

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

```
graph TD; A[DIVISION OF RESEARCH] --> B[Empirical research: Questionnaire survey and data analysis]; A --> C[Linguistic and literary research: Sample contemporary literature]; A --> D[Philosophical research: Text reading in classical philosophy];
```

Empirical research:
Questionnaire survey
and data analysis

**Linguistic and
literary** research:
Sample
contemporary
literature

Philosophical
research:
Text reading in
classical
philosophy

Objective

1. Research background and context:

It has been claimed that the Western Cartesian view of the mind-body distinction is not present and operative in Chinese thought Zijiang Ding (2018); R. Ames, 1993; Cheng, C. 2008; Bond 2010

The researchers who explore Chinese philosophy and Eastern mentality stress that “the concept of ‘mind–heart’ (xin) is different from the idea of an exclusively human soul, endowed with reason and able to make free decisions” (Santangelo 2007, 292). François Jullien similarly explains that because the Chinese saw what we would call the body, soul, and mind as nothing more than points along a continuous, constantly transforming spectrum of energy, “no dualism is possible” (2007: 69)

Whether or not such a strong claim is warranted will become clear over the course of our research. Nevertheless, the broad claims such as these make up the background of comparative, cross-cultural research of the kind we wish to conduct.

Objective

2. General aim

The general aim of the proposed research is to establish whether differences between conceiving of the mind and the soul in various cultural texts (e.g. philosophical writings) within the intellectual traditions of the West and the East are reflected in folk (implicit) ways of thinking i.e. in folk intuitions.

I. Empirical research: questionnaire survey and data analysis

Taking into consideration the two conflicting views present in the West and East on the explicit level (in philosophical tradition), we created a psychological questionnaire to study folk intuitions. Our aim was to find out whether the different ways of thinking that permeate China (holism) and the West (dualism) are reflected in folk intuitions at the level of implicit heuristics.

The questionnaire contains an array of ontological, functional, social and ethical questions. There is also a hidden measurement of internal and external religiousness. The central point of the questionnaire is that the same questions are asked in reference to the soul and the mind.

Examples:

When does the mind begin to exist? / When does the soul begin to exist?

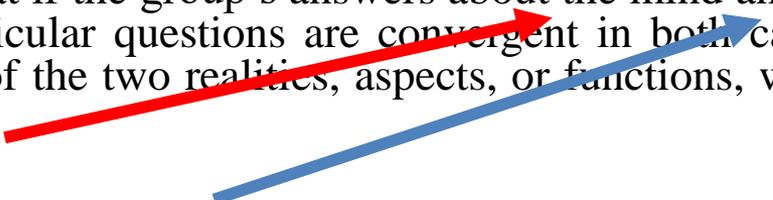
prior to conception at conception during pregnancy at birth

If I had lost my mind/soul, I would have lost... my ability to think:

no rather not not sure rather yes yes

Methodological note and Hypothesis

The philosophical hypothesis is that if the group's answers about the mind and the soul have the same tendency (that is, answers to particular questions are convergent in both cases), it can be taken as evidence for cognitive proximity of the two realities, aspects, or functions, which is a sign of holism (inclusive thinking).



People with holistic beliefs (in the two dimensions considered) will aim to
a/ Unite the spiritual with the physical and b/ Minimalize or avoid the collision between both entities (they should answer similarly to the questions about the mind and to the questions about the soul)

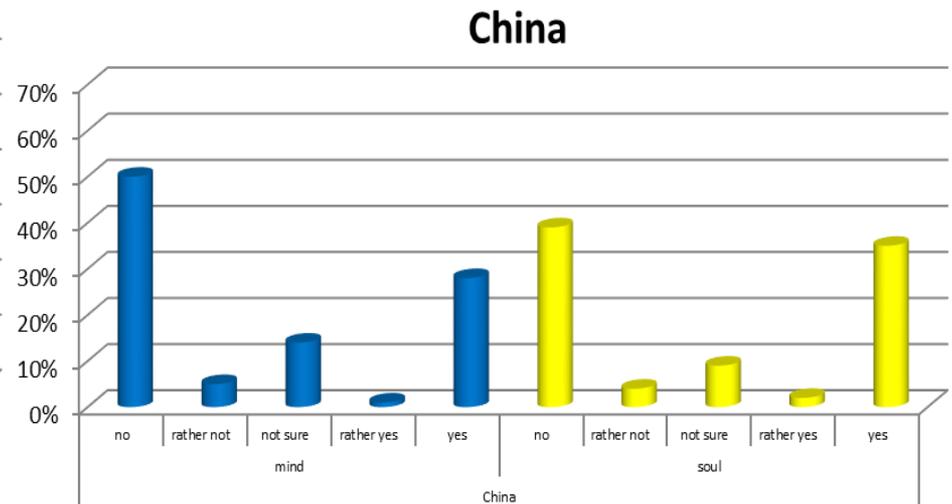
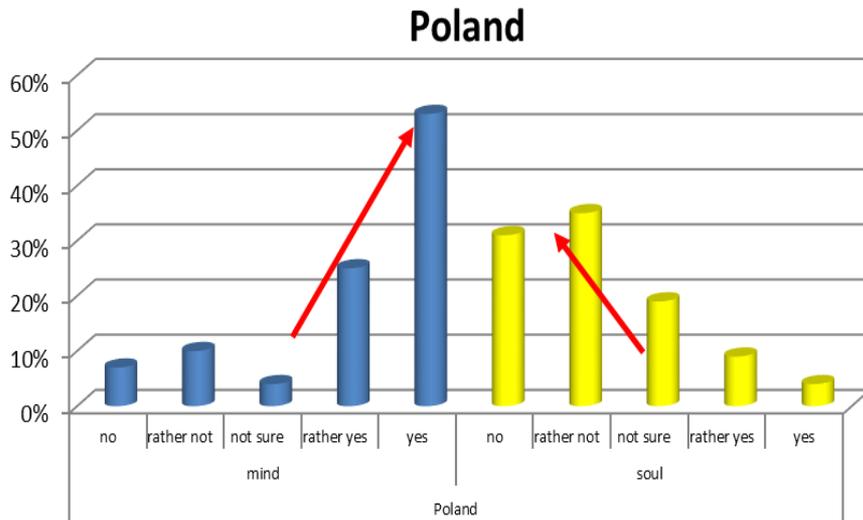
On the other hand, when the answers about the soul and mind are significantly different (that is when the answers are divergent, a mirror reflection of each other), it means that there is a separation of the two realities, aspects, or functions, which is a sign of dualism (disjunctive thinking).



People with dualistic beliefs (in the two dimensions considered) will aim to:
a/ Separate the spiritual and the physical b/ Contrast the both realities the emotional with the intellectual so they should answer differently to the questionnaire questions about the mind than to those about the soul.

Percentage of participants believe about when the soul and the mind begin

| Country | Object | prior to conception | at conception | during pregnancy | at birth | never |
|---------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------|----------|-------|
| China | Mind (<i>N</i> = 249) | 7.6 | 18.5 | 22.1 | 50.2 | 1.6 |
| | Soul (<i>N</i> = 223) | 15.7 | 27.8 | 17.9 | 35.9 | 2.7 |
| Poland | Mind (<i>N</i> = 221) | 4.5 | 33.0 | 42.5 | 19.9 | 0.0 |
| | Soul (<i>N</i> = 213) | 17.8 | 55.9 | 14.6 | 10.3 | 1.4 |



If I had lost my mind/soul, I would have lost... my ability to think:

no
 rather not
 not sure
 rather yes
 yes

II. Linguistic and literary research: Sample contemporary literature

soul/dusza and mind/umysł

**high-level synonymy in
contemporary Chinese language**

1. Synonymy in contemporary Chinese language

他加大 **jiada** 速度以超過前面的貨車。 – ‘He increased his speed to overtake the lorry’.
提高 **tigao** 部隊的戰鬥力
– ‘increase the combat effectiveness of the troops’
人口從10年前的120萬已增加 **zengjia** 到現在的180萬。
- ‘The population has increased from 1.2 million 10 years ago to 1.8 million now’.
通貨膨脹率已增長 **zengzhang** 了5%。 – ‘The rate of inflation has increased by 5%’.

人命 **renming** 關天，非同兒戲。
– ‘Taking someone’s life is a serious crime, it’s no joking matter’.
他沒有什麼崇高的人生 **rensheng** 目的。 – ‘He has no great ambition in life’.
他決定移居美國，開始新的生活 **shenghuo** 。 – ‘He has decided to emigrate and start a new life in America’.
醫生徹夜工作拯救傷者的生命 **shengming** 。 – ‘Doctors worked through the night to save the life of the injured man’.
節省時間等於延長壽命 **shouming** 。
– ‘To save time is to prolong life’.
差一點兒把性命 **xingming** 丟了。
– ‘nearly lose one’s life’.

2. 'soul' and 'mind': terminology in contemporary Chinese language

靈魂 (linghun) – soul

心靈 (xinling) – mind

靈魂 (linghun) – soul

靈 ling – ‘shaman’; ‘clever’, ‘sharp’, ‘intelligence’, ‘spirit’, ‘fairy’ etc.

魂 hun – ‘spiritual soul’; ‘mood’, ‘spirit’

- [1] 這些眼睛們似乎連成一氣，已經在那裡咬他的靈魂。(Lu, Xun 魯迅, 1921) – ‘These eyes seemed to have merged into one, biting into his soul’ (Lu, Xun, 1960).
- [2] 那股瀰漫田野的腥甜味浸透了我父親的靈魂 [...]。(Mo, Yan 莫言, 1987) – ‘The odor saturating the field drenched Father’s soul’ (Mo, Yan, 1994).
- [3] 金錢能腐蝕靈魂。 – ‘Money can deprave the soul’.
- [4] 可憐的、孱弱的、猜忌的、偏執的、被毒酒迷幻了靈魂的孩子，你到墨水河裡去浸泡三天三夜 [...]，洗淨了你的肉體和靈魂 [...]。(Mo, Yan 莫言, 1987) – ‘You pitiable, frail, suspicious, stubbornly biased child, whose soul has been spellbound by poisonous wine, go down to the Black Water River and soak in its waters for three days and three nights [...] to cleanse yourself, body and soul’ (Mo, Yan, 1994).
- [5] 將靈魂付託給上帝 – ‘commend one’s soul to God’
- [6] 你在墨水河永不歡樂的嗚咽聲中，去聆聽天國傳來的警悟執迷靈魂的音樂吧! (Mo, Yan 莫言, 1987) – ‘Amid the perennially mournful sobs of the Black Water River you listen for a lost soul drifting down from that kingdom’ (Mo, Yan, 1994).

soul – other terms

魂魄 hunpo

魄 po – ‘material soul’ → 鬼 gui – ‘ghost’

鬼魂 guihun

亡靈 wangling

幽魂 youhun

幽靈 youling

為了安慰被驚動的鬼魂 *guihun*，母親在墳墓前，燒了一刀黃表紙。 (Mo, Yan 莫言, 1987) – ‘In order to calm the frightened souls of the dead, Mother burned a stack of yellow spirit money at the head of the grave’ (Mo, Yan, 1994).

仍在大地上行走的迷惘的幽靈 *youling* 。 – ‘lost souls still walking the earth’.

心靈 xinling – mind

靈 ling – shaman, clever, sharp, intelligence, spirit, fairy, etc.

心 xin – heart, mind, heart-mind, soul

- [1] [...] 五官當中95%的信息是通過眼睛匯入心靈的 [...]. – ‘[...] among the five organs, the eyes transmit to the mind as much as 95% of all information [...].’
- [2] 他們那樣的心靈沒有辦法去感受這個世界和生命真正的美好。 – ‘Their minds are unable to experience the true beauty of this world and life’.
- [3] 這種熱愛和關心,可以啟開學生的心靈, [...] 增加學生的學習興趣,並使他們體驗到學校集體的巨大溫暖。 – ‘This kind of [teacher’s] love and care can open the minds of the students, [...] encourage them to learn and let them experience the warmth of the school community’.
- [4] 它[美育]在淨化學生心靈, [...] 促進學生全面發展中, 具有重要作用。 – ‘It [ie. art education] plays an important role in purifying students’ minds, [...] and in supporting their comprehensive development’.
- [5] 心靈美,行為美 – ‘the beauty of mind is reflected in the beauty of behavior’
- [6] 幼小的心靈 – ‘immature mind, childish mind’

mind – other terms

[1] 餘占鰲看著我父親的端正頭顱，看著我奶奶的花容月貌，不知有多少往事湧上心頭 *xintou* 。

– ‘As he looked at Father’s neat, round head and Grandma’s beautiful face, a torrent of memories flooded Granddad’s **mind**’.

[2] 羅漢大爺，心頭 *xintou* 火起，一歪一斜地轉著，想尋找一件利器。

– ‘With anger rising in his **heart**, he stumbled around the area looking for a weapon’.

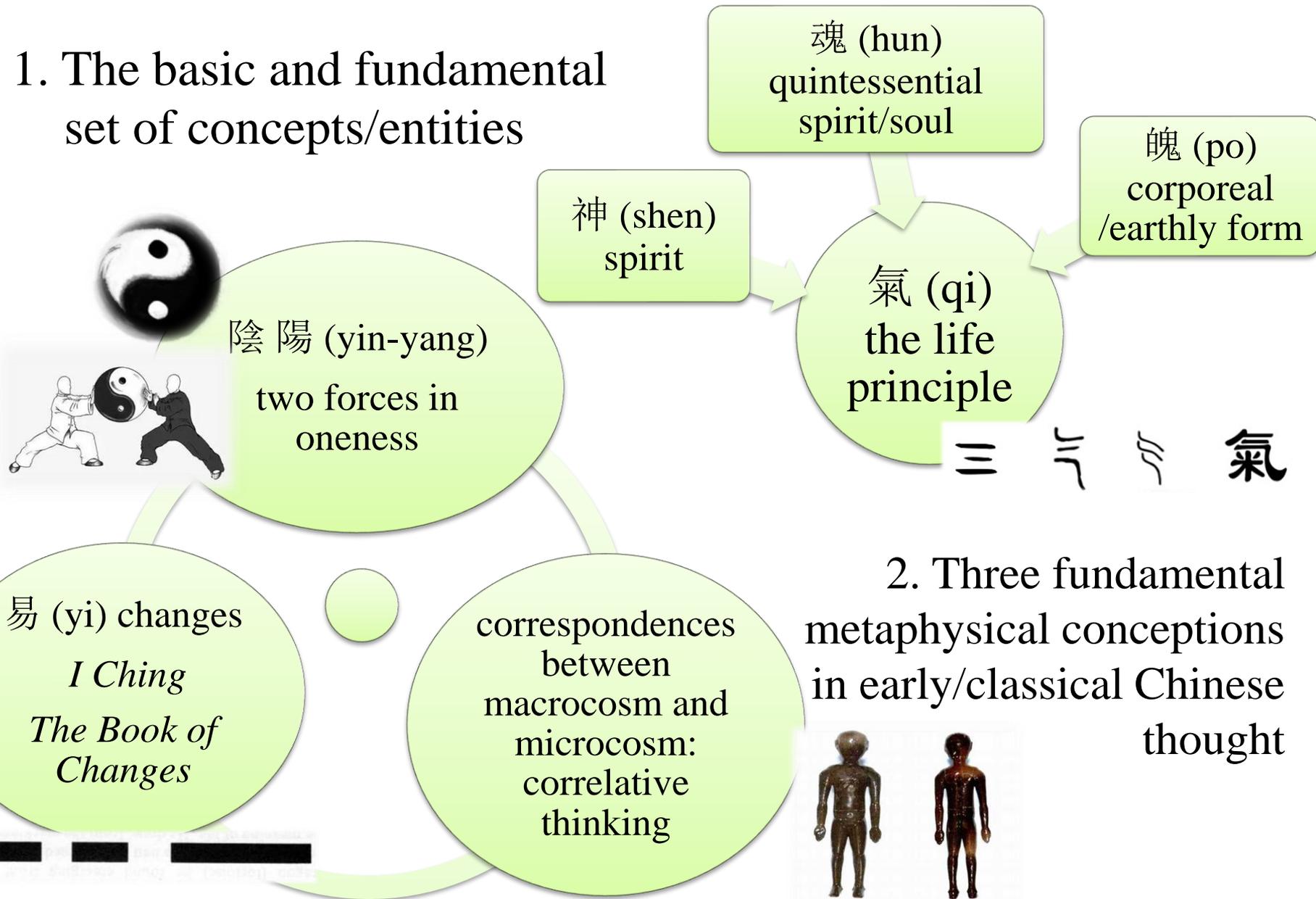
(Mo, Yan 莫言, 1987, 1994)

腦 *nao* – ‘brain, head, brains, mind’; 大腦 *danao* – ‘cerebrum, mind’, 腦袋 *naodai* – ‘head, brains, mind’, 腦海 *naohai* – ‘brain, mind’, 腦子 *naozi* – ‘brain, head, skull, brains, mind’, 頭腦 *tounao* – ‘brains, mind, head’

- [3] 但二奶奶烏黑發亮的肉體被金黃色沙土掩沒住的景象，卻牢牢地刻印在我的**大腦**的屏幕上[...]。 – ‘The sight of her blackened, blood-shiny corps being swallowed up by golden earth is etched forever on the screen of my mind’.
- [4] 單家父子遭殺，羅漢大爺在強烈的驚訝中，**腦袋**裡不斷地閃現出我奶奶的瘦腳肥腕。 – ‘In the midst of his shock over the murder of Old Man Shan and his son days later, the image of Grandma’s tiny feet and full wrist appeared and reappeared in his mind’.
- [5] 奶奶的**腦海**裡忽然閃過了一個從未見過的場面 [...]。 – ‘Scene she never witnessed suddenly takes shape in her mind [...]’.
- [6] 三天中的每一個畫面、每一個音響、每一種味道都在她的**腦子**裡重現。 – ‘Every scene from those three days, every sound, every smell entered her mind...’.
- [7] [...] 哭聲好像不是由她嘴中發出，而是來自遠方的為她**頭腦**中重重疊疊出現的美麗與醜惡畫面陪伴的音樂。 – ‘The sounds of crying seemed to be a distant musical accompaniment to the beautiful and hideous images appearing and reappearing in her mind’.

III. Philosophical-Medical conceptions of human soul in early China

1. The basic and fundamental set of concepts/entities



2. Three fundamental metaphysical conceptions in early/classical Chinese thought



图1 经穴髀人像正面 图2 经穴髀人像背面

Philosophical clarifications

- 1) Cosmogonic idea of 氣: first formulated in the *Commentaries of the Zhouyi / I Ching, Xici* 《繫辭》.
- 2) Laozi: implicitly as a cosmic force explicitly as an mental experience
- 3) Zhuangzi: describe the world of events as a profuse paradigm of 氣
- 4) Mencius: 浩然之氣 hao ran zhi qi
- 5) in 《淮南子》 *Huainanzi*
氣 as the original energy/force of the universe always in motion.

Humans, like everything else, are thought to be made up of 氣.

having an inexhaustible power of change and transformation

- 6) 氣 is in close relations with 道(dao) The Way, and/or 陰陽 (yin-yang) in all classical philosophical thoughts.

Medical applications

The Yellow Emperor's Manual of Corporeal Medicine

《黃帝內經 靈樞經 天年》

(Huangdi neijing Lingshujing tiannian)

- 1) A systematic understanding of the human body, seeing it as essentially organized by 氣.
- 2) 氣 refers to breath, invisible currents of vital energy, and then blood, other fluids.
- 3) Human being as a living organism is organized and explained by 氣, including any mark of living and consciousness.
e.g. the existence of bodily 氣 in Chinese acupuncture, therapy, martial arts.
- 4) In humans, exclusively 氣 is at work with 神(shen), 魂(hun), 魄(po).

Philosophical clarifications

- 1) 魂 (hun) quintessential spirit
魄 (po) corporeal/earthly form
魂魄 are two necessary and fluctuate components of human soul, as a binary pair, in human beings.

A correspondence in human microcosm to the binary 陰陽 yin-yang forces in the universe the macrocosm.

- 2) 神 (shen): human spirit/psyche
 - a) It is the basic power or agency within humans that accounts for life.
It must be cultivated to reach a clearer and more luminous state of being.
 - b) It has multiple dimensions of meaning related to religions and worships (e.g. spirits, gods, deities, the spiritual, referring to rituals) (Teiser, 1996).

Medical applications

Hun-po deficiency and ill health

- 1) 魂 (hun) and 魄 (po): discrete entities
Do not by themselves define the difference between life and death.
When hun and po take flight, the result is not death but disorders such as restless dreaming. Disorders and unbalanced mental equilibrium may lead to death.

- a) The organ locations that house the intangible entities (next slide).
- b) This fivefold system can be thrown off balance, so that the organs can have too much and too little of their vital energies 氣 qi. (Brashier, 1996)

My reading and explanation:

- 2) 神: the visible moments of human soul at birth, death, and during life span.
魂魄: individualized human soul.

In 《黃帝內經 素問》 *Huangdi neijing, Suwen*

| Organ | Tangible entity | Intangible entity |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Liver (gan 肝) | Blood (xue 血) | Hun (hun 魂) |
| Spleen (pi 脾) | Nutriment (ying 營) | Thought (yi 意) |
| Heart (xin 心) | Vessels (mai 脈) | Spirit (shen 神) |
| Lungs (fei 肺) | Breath (qi 氣) | Po (po 魄) |
| Kidneys/Testes (shen 腎) | Quintessence/Semen (jing 精) | Will (zhi 志) |

Huang Di asked Qi Bo: I wish to be informed [of the following in view of] the beginning of the life of a human person. Which qi constitute the foundation of his formation. Which ones are put up as his shield? Which ones lead to one's death when they are lost, and which ones one needs to keep to survive?

Qi Bo: The [qi of one's] mother constitute the basis. Those of the father serve as shield. Loss of the spirit results in death. Those who keep the spirit, they survive.

Huang Di: Which [qi] constitute the 'spirit'?

Qi Bo: Once the blood and vital energies are harmonized, the constructive and defensive circulation achieved, the five organs completed, the spiritual vital energies stored in the heart, and the hun and po both present, then the person is complete.

(*Huangdi neijing, Lingshu jing, Tian nian*; Unschuld's translation with slight modifications.)

Chinese medical macrobiotic hygiene in 2nd century B.C. and the lacquer medical figure from Laoguanshan Tomb 3

An exact medical model of the correspondence in between the macrocosm and the microcosm that reflects early Chinese thought in philosophy



图 1 经穴髹漆人像正面

图 2 经穴髹漆人像背面

Front and back of Laoguanshan tomb 3 lacquer figure

Form a philosophical perspective (with some religious aspects):

“The first transformation in human life is called po, and when the po is produced, its yang is called hun. By means of an abundance of material and quintessence, the hun and po then strengthen, and so the quintessential vigor reaches to point of spirit illumination” (*Chunqiu Zuo zhuan*).

“While living, a person possesses a qi and a po. Qi is what shen contains and holds” (*Kongzi jiayu*).

“The breath-soul returns to heaven; the bodily soul returns to earth. Therefore, in sacrificial-offering one should seek the meaning in the yin-yang principle” (*Liji Jiaotesheng*).

“Thus they looked up to heaven but buried (the body) in the earth. The body and po thus descended, but the intelligence and vital energy exist up above” (*Liyun*).

“The vital energy is what a spirit contains, and the po is what a ghost contains” (*Jiyi*)

A reflection:

1. The scholastic nature of hunpo dualism.
2. Hunpo deficiency and ill health.
3. A holistic conception of human soul in Chinese context:
 - 1) Necessary and sufficient conditions to have a ensouled human life: 氣(qi), 神(shen), 魂(hun), and 魄(po).
 - 2) The same words used in philosophy and medicine mean differently.
 - 3) The relations between Chinese philosophy and medicine in antiquity.

Thank you!