

## Beware the Rampaging *Hun*

by Steven Alpern, L. Ac.

Human beings engage an amazing adventure in life. An individual *Shen* (Spirit) resides within the *jing* (essence), which has been consolidated by mixing the *jing* of both parents. A person is born, who experiences the interactions of life, acts to sustain his or her individuality, and records everything that happens. Individuals have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of themselves and the universe through their presence and cultivation until the final crowning of life, when they return to the *Dao*.

Everybody cultivates something; a few even do it with conscious intention. Our lives are a *qigong* practice, because we breathe life into every moment. Many modern people cultivate some form of food stagnation through intemperate eating habits, which follow common compulsions. Far more than satisfying needs for sustenance, these people use food and drink to address desires, including the desire to be distracted away from unresolved emotional or spiritual struggle. This particular means of coping with emotional distress also provides “excess” humors (blood, fluids) into which the embodied spirit can embed its unfinished business.

Habituated lifestyle choices support and nourish each individual’s particular mix of *qi* and blood stagnations. Many modern people nourish and support “adrenal exhaustion,” which we might label *yuan* (source) *qi* depletion, by overtaxing themselves and accumulating stagnations. That process is further sustained when “exhausted” individuals develop dependence on stimulants to activate their *qi* in the morning. A healthy person arises and is awake, because *wei qi* – the post-natal expression of *yang* (activation) – moves to the exterior with the opening of one’s eyes. When *wei qi* is entangled in various stagnations, the individual often needs to stimulate it to come out, so he or she can engage the activities of the day.

The habituated interpretations and reactions that an individual cultivates become the context through which all of his or her interactions flow. Attachment to entanglements begets struggle. When individuals experience their interactions through entangled interpretations they form conflicted emotional relationships with their lives. Generating smooth flow of *qi* and blood from that experience requires either suppression/repression of unresolved struggle, or substantial conscious attention to releasing blockages and stagnations. The former may appear functional in the short-term by displacing entanglements and stagnations into dormancy, but that capacity is limited.

The *Neijing* (*Inner Classic*) articulated profound theories for differentiating the struggles of individual human life. Individuals typically project habituated interpretations, which are contained in the distinct channels, onto current circumstances and events processed through the primary channels. The unresolved byproducts of everyday life *colored* by those unconsciously projected interpretations accumulate in either the *luo* vessels or divergent channels. They may be embedded in various humors at myriad locations, depending on specifics of the individual’s process for suppressing or repressing them.

Individually embodied spirits engage and accumulate experience through the combined agency of the five aspects of *Shen* (Spirit) – the five *shen*. Each of these *shen* is associated with the primal movement of one of the five phases (*wuxing*), is contained within its *zang* (vital organ), and expresses interactions through its paired *fu* (storehouse). Together the five *shen* provide both the motive force of the individual’s life, and his or her capacity to learn and grow.

*shen* (Fire) – the light of awareness which allows sensory input  
*yi* (Earth) – the ability to contain consciousness and embody  
*po* (Metal) – the ability to identify with the body’s immediate needs  
*zhi* (Water) – the willingness to polarize toward the world as an individual  
*hun* (Wood) – the capacity to accumulate individual experience

Each individual’s life relies on his or her ability to use and contain the light of awareness to fulfill the embodied spirit’s immediate needs. Doing so exercises the individual’s willingness to maintain his or her separate life, which then records all experience. Individuals grow and evolve through life by integrating into both their spirits and bodies the processed results of their experiences and actions.

Among the primary channels in the familiar “time-clock” sequence, the liver is last. It accumulates and stores the emotional residue of all experience, which has been processed by the other channels. In somatic theory the liver “stores blood.” Since blood is the mother of *qi*, stagnations of accumulated blood support *qi* stagnations, so the liver and gall bladder are also responsible for enforcing the smooth flow of *qi*. This is done through both:

- generating forceful and assertive impulse to penetrate through any blockages or accumulations
- displacing unresolved struggles or conflicts away from the primary channels into dormancy. It’s no wonder that Chinese medical thinkers chose so many gall bladder points in representing the *daimai*, since it provides the constitutional capacity to suspend unresolved issues.

The classical Chinese worldview identified three *hun*, which is the aspect of spirit that resides in the liver. These represent three modes of being, through which individuals accumulate experience:

The *hun* of Nothingness -- dis-identifies from any meaning or significance that may be projected onto circumstances and events (a particular ideal of Buddhism and Daoism)  
The *hun* of Oneness – dis-identifies from the perception of separateness (a particular ideal of Christianity and many other religions)  
The *hun* of Duality (or Causation) – identifies with the meaning and significance the individual’s point of view projects onto circumstances, events, people and things.

The uncultivated consciousness of virtually all individuals exhibits the *Hun* of Duality. While accumulating the emotional residue of experience, that *hun* places the individual either above (superior to) the embodied spirit’s experience or inferior to it. The *Hun* of Duality arises from the individual compulsively grasping at the veracity of his or her projected point of view. When an

individual's *hun* runs rampant, his or her self-talk maintains a superior (or inferior) position relative to all experience. That orientation impedes new inputs from entering, or distorts them to match the individual's impacted interpretations about life.

Though each person's "rampaging *hun*" exhibits a primary orientation – either above or below, each also projects a complementary one to preserve the sense of balance that each soul requires. A few sample pairs include:

- Anger/pride and sadness
- Rage and shame
- Arrogance and depression

These are functional pairs, as they arise directly out of each other. For instance, a person dominated by rage always feels extremely superior – to the point of not recognizing the legitimacy of another's needs and feelings. In their rage they do something terrible and hurtful. In a calmer moment, they recognize the nature of their act, and become ashamed. The shame of their violent acts haunts them, and they feel worthless, as shame moves the embodied spirit to the lowest of lows.

Eventually, the individual's attachment to survival recognizes that IT must get the personality extracted from the pit of its self-imposed hell. The force that raises the embodied spirit out of shame is the very same that becomes rage when it gets stuck on some event or circumstance that challenges the individual's sense of value. This cycle continues until the person recognizes his or her folly.

Likewise, anger or unbridled pride naturally pushes other people away, and then the embodied spirit can experience the sadness of isolation and alienation. Sadness naturally descends, so it brings the angry individual under better control. It may also mire him or her in depression or insecurity. Overtaken by this gloom, the individual rebels against his or her perceived victimization, and asserts his or her being and value.

The more wildly one oscillates between the poles of these functional pairs, the more completely the rampaging *hun* dominates the individual's personality and experience. Such people are often emotionally volatile and unpredictable, because the internal component of every experience can shift so wildly. This situation expresses somatically as internal wind, which the embodied spirit often tries to control by weighing it down with either dampness or phlegm. Those factors and stagnant blood, which is the somatic version of stagnant emotions, accumulate to block vital function.

The flux of experience generally comes fast and furious, especially because of the individual's projected entanglements. Each "new experience" combines the events and circumstances that occur (externally), and the individual's (internal) disposition toward them. That disposition is unconsciously projected onto everything that occurs. There is one enduring question that almost every rampaging *hun* can benefit from considering:

Would you rather be right or be happy?

True happiness is far more than feeling well entertained by life. It entails letting go to allow Liver blood to nourish Heart *qi*. Rather than being entangled in stagnation, such an individual cultivates release and liberation. Are the emotional conflicts sustained by the rampaging *hun* worth devoting one's life and vitality toward maintaining?

In addition to mirroring individuals in their own dramas, the rampaging *hun* is blind to the subtle workings of *Dao*. The *hun* of Duality separates the individual's awareness from the complex fabric of influences that support us all, and enrolls in the delusions of its own point of view. The *Dao*, including its expression within the microcosm of an embodied spirit's physiology, can only be known by seekers who are willing to notice and release the "monkey mind" to be present in the moment. We are most dangerous when we **think** we understand. Beware the rampaging *hun*!

Mr. Alpern will be teaching a weekend seminar on the divergent/distinct channels in Sept., 2009 in Albuquerque, NM. For more information about this seminar, contact Golden Flower Chinese Herbs.