

SHEN: The Totality of Being

A New Horizon for Science, the Soul, and the Future of Mental Health

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Introduction: The Name That Unlocks a Universe

In several previous papers and online talks, I have explored and attempted to make a case for a radical paradigm shift in our understanding of emotion, health, and consciousness. [See 'Resources'] Together we have deconstructed the limitations of the prevailing brain-centric model of mental health and built an alternative based on the clinical work of American scientist Richard R. Pavek and the physics of the human biofield. In these previous writings we have followed Pavek's logic, from the tenacious dissonance of '**Incomplete Emotional Episodes**' (IEEs) to the biophysical mechanism of the '**Auto-Contractile Pain Reflex**' (ACPR) which can translate emotional pain into physical dysfunction and illness. We have traced the 1992 creation and formalization of the term '**Biofield**' by the National Institutes of Health, we have examined the ensuing NIH report '*New Horizons in Health*' and its sub-section on 'Biofield Therapies' authored by Pavek, and with particular interest we have seen the biofield's reflection in the perennial wisdom of ancient and indigenous cultures around the globe.

At the center of this new paradigm has been the therapeutic modality Richard Pavek developed, **SHEN®PhysioEmotional Release Therapy**. Until now, we have understood the name '**SHEN**' through the lens of a convenient, though retroactively applied acronym: 'Specific Human Emotional Nexus'. While technically correct in referencing the site-specific nature of felt human emotions, this acronym is but a shadow of the term's true and quite profound meaning—a meaning that, once fully understood, elevates the entire paradigm from a compelling theory of emotional health to a potential redefinition of life itself.

Having been mentored directly by Richard Pavek in the early 1990's, I can confirm that he did not pull the name from thin air. A man deeply versed in esoteric literature and ancient wisdom, he chose the name '**SHEN**' for two quite specific and deeply resonant reasons that form the true cornerstone and foundation of his work. The first inspiration came from an ancient Egyptian hieroglyph: a circle resting upon a flat line. Pronounced "Shen," this symbol can accurately be translated as '**The Totality of All That Is.**'

The second inspiration was its perfect conceptual counterpart from Taoist philosophy, a word also pronounced “Shen.” In this Chinese context, ‘Shen’ represents the sacred, triune unity of the Soul, the Heart, and the Mind.

This revelation is not a minor footnote; it is the key that unlocks the full implications of the Biofield Paradigm. It reframes Pavek’s work not merely as a highly effective, clinically-developed technique for emotional release, but as a practical methodology for realizing and empowering our own totality—for healing the foundational conflicts within our being in order to achieve a state of integrated wholeness. This expanded understanding makes the call for a ‘New Horizon’ more imperative than ever, offering a path to rescue not only the millions of individuals failed by the current mental health system but also to guide reductionist science out of its limited ‘downstream’ focus and into a more complete and integrated understanding of reality.

Chapter 1: The Clinical Reality—A Paradigm Built on Pain

Before we can appreciate the full philosophical depth of ‘**SHEN**’, we first must ground ourselves in the clinical reality from which it emerged. Richard Pavek’s work was not born from abstract theory but from decades of hands-on, scientific observation of human behavior and suffering, not the least of which was his own. He began with a simple but radical question that modern medicine and psychology have failed to adequately answer: Why do our emotions hurt, and why does that hurt persist?

His first conclusion was a direct challenge to the established order. He argued that emotions are not secondary byproducts of brain chemistry but are **primary, causal agents** that interface with and direct our biology and psychology.¹ Our thoughts and our brain chemistry do not create our feelings; our feelings dictate our thoughts and command our bodies.

From this premise, he identified the core mechanism of chronic emotional distress: the ‘**Incomplete Emotional Episode.**’ Drawing from the work of Gestalt Therapy founder Fritz Perls, who noted that emotions have a life-cycle that must be completed, Pavek observed that the emotional charge from significant uncomfortable life events, particularly traumatic ones, rarely dissipates when the event is over. Instead, it becomes embodied as one’s ‘unfinished business,’ an active, potent loop of charged emotional information that continues to run just beneath our conscious awareness,

often for a lifetime.¹ This is ‘the ghost in the machine’ — the old, unresolved pain that gets triggered in the present, causing us to overreact in ways that seem irrational to both ourselves and others because we are subconsciously attempting to fight old battles in new settings.¹

Pavek’s second and perhaps most critical clinical insight was the biophysical bridge that connects this emotionally-driven pain to tangible, physical illness: the **Auto-Contractile Pain Reflex (ACPR)**. He identified this as the body’s instinctual ‘splinting reflex’ — the well-documented involuntary spasm of soft tissue that occurs around a broken bone, effectively helping to prevent further injury.² His genius was in recognizing that the body’s cells cannot differentiate between physical pain and intense emotional pain. The anguish of grief, the terror of fear, or the searing pain of shame triggers this very same involuntary contraction in specific areas of the torso — the mid-chest, the mid-torso, the lower abdomen.³

Unlike the contracted tissues around a broken bone, which release once the physical pain subsides, the ACPR caused by an incomplete emotional episode becomes chronic. The charged emotional pain is trapped *inside* the contraction *it created*. The pain signal never ceases, so the reflex is never allowed to stand down and let go.³ This often decades-long squeezing of our internal organs and tissues restricts the flow of blood, lymph, and interstitial fluids, gradually starving cells of oxygen and nutrients, restricting the effective removal of metabolic waste from the cells, and leading directly to inflammation, degenerative disease, and organ dysfunction.² This is the observable, exquisitely simple mechanism by which our unprocessed feeling states can become physical illnesses.

Chapter 2: The Physics of Being — The Biofield, the Soul, and a New Law of Nature

Pavek’s clinical observations provided the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of emotional suffering. To understand the ‘where’, we must turn to his concept of the ‘Biofield.’ This idea, that we are more than just our physical bodies, that we are animated by and exist within a field of energy and information, is as old as humanity itself. It is the *pneuma* of the ancient Greeks, the *Qi* of the Taoists, the *Prana* of the Hindu Vedanta, the *Chi* of the

West African Igbo, and the *Mana* of the Polynesians.⁵ In 1992, this perennial wisdom was given a modern name when a National Institutes of Health (NIH) ad hoc committee of alternative health experts and researchers, on which Richard Pavek served, crafted the term '**Biofield**' to provide an acceptable, scientific container for research into energy-based healing.⁸

This was a landmark moment. The NIH, the bastion of the biomedical model, formally acknowledged a concept that transcends a purely chemical view of life. Through their efforts, 'Biofield' was officially adopted as a medical term, giving scientists a legitimate framework to study the physics of consciousness and life itself.

Pavek, however, was already putting these principles into practice. Four years earlier in 1988, he presented a paper at the First World Conference for Academic Exchange of Medical Qigong, in Beijing, China. In his paper entitled 'SHEN Qigong: Effects of Qigong on Psychosomatic and Other Emotionally Rooted Disorders,' he explicitly described his modality as "SHEN, a specific form of qigong."³² Qigong is an ancient Chinese practice focused precisely on the cultivation and manipulation of *Qi*, the very sum and substance of the biofield. By identifying SHEN as a form of Qigong, Pavek was situating his work within one of the world's oldest and most sophisticated systems of biofield therapeutics. In his paper he reported significant clinical success in treating previously intractable psychosomatic conditions like IBS and migraines by working directly with the body's *Qi* to release the underlying emotional causes.

A Point of Interest: The Motivating Backstory

Please note that the following sections of this document are the result of a decades-long search for 'the bigger picture,' a type of never-ending "What's it all about?" personal quest regarding the deeper roots of SHEN and the physics of the biofield. As both a Certified SHEN Therapist and Instructor, I have long been eager to further clarify the 'biofield paradigm' and its huge implications for contemporary mental health approaches and today's focus on brain-centric neuroscience. Interestingly, my forty-year parallel career path as an active choral and symphonic conductor trained me to always dig deep behind the notes of musical scores to discover the composers' intentions, their personal family influences, and the historical setting they were born into. Such investigations always enriched ensuing public performances. My hope is that the following added detail will further enrich your understanding of SHEN and your appreciation of the monumental contributions of SHEN's developer, Richard R. Pavek.

Bridging Qigong and Quantum Field Physics

In his unpublished manuscript 'How Medicine Discarded the Soul and Lost the Emotions,' Richard Pavek himself used a more traditional term for this field: the Soul.¹ As a physicist and chemical engineer, he clearly understood that the very thing his **SHEN Therapy** addresses is this very same fluxive vibrational field of energy—the frequency-based repository of our lived, felt experience. The NIH-validated existence of the Biofield, combined with the mechanism of the ACPR, leads to a conclusion that completely inverts the conventional understanding of both mental health and biology. Pavek begins his foundational 2001 treatise "The Nuts & Bolts of Emotion" with this paradigm-shifting observation:

"Our lives are made up of a long series of responses to emotional stimuli. Every response to a life-event starts with a primary emotional reaction; this reaction always precedes any secondary physical response to the life-event."¹

This leads to a complete inversion of the conventional, bottom-up model of biology. This new top-down causality is clearly articulated in a postulate by this article's author & SHEN Therapy's longest-serving instructor Russell Fox:

"Field physics fluctuations precede and dictate all biological, electrochemical, mental and psychological responses, adjustments and/or changes."¹²

This is the revolutionary and evolutionary central law of the new paradigm. It states that the *field is primary*. Before any neuron fires, before any hormone is released, before any thought is formed, a vibrational change occurs in one's biofield. This frequency-based fluctuation is the originating event. The 'field first' principle of "**Field Precedence**" means that the biofield is not just a passive byproduct of the body's electrochemical processes. Instead, **the Biofield is the primary organizing blueprint** that builds and sustains the machine, and tells it how to run.

The brain, then, is not the generator of our experience; it is a sophisticated biological **transponder**, an exquisitely tuned receiver that detects these shifting field signals and orchestrates the body's initial response. The anxiety we feel, therefore, is not caused by our thoughts; the anxious thoughts are the mind's interpretation of a frequency-based fear signature that the brain has detected in the Biofield.

Chapter 3: The Echo of Egypt—SHEN as ‘The Totality of All That Is’

With the above foundation in place, we can now begin to appreciate the profound wisdom encoded in Pavek’s choice of the name ‘**SHEN**’. His first inspiration, the Egyptian hieroglyph pronounced “Shen” depicts a circle resting on a horizontal line. It can accurately be translated as ‘The Totality of All That Is.’

This ancient symbol is a perfect philosophical map of the Biofield Paradigm. The circle represents the unmanifest, the infinite, the holistic field of pure potentiality—the Biofield, the Soul, the Tao. The line represents the manifest world, the physical plane, the timeline of our lived experience. The symbol illustrates that the totality of being (the circle) rests upon, gives rise to, and contains the entirety of our physical existence (the line). Some sources identify this ‘Ring of Shen’ as a single looped rope, the two ends of which form the straight line, thus further unifying the manifest and the unmanifest as a single lived reality.

Pavek’s choice of this name reveals his understanding that he was not working with a mere fragment of a person—not just their ‘mental health’ or their ‘physical symptoms.’ He was, in a very real way, working with their **totality**. The Biofield is not just an aura *around* us; it is the informational and energetic field that constitutes the totality of our essential core being. Our physical body is a ‘densification’ of this field, a precipitation of its data-rich information into matter. Our brain-initiated thoughts are the cognitive ripples that arise from its fluctuations. To work with the Biofield is to work with the source code of the self, the unified whole from which all parts emerge. This concept of totality stands in stark contrast to the reductionist model of modern medicine which breaks the human being into ever-smaller, discrete and disconnected parts, losing sight of the whole and, in the process, losing the path to true healing.

Chapter 4: The Wisdom of the Tao—SHEN as the Unity of Being

If the Egyptian ‘Shen’ provides the map of totality, the Taoist ‘Shen’ provides the detailed operating manual for achieving it. Pavek’s intuitive recognition of the synergy between these two ancient concepts is yet another mark of his genius. In Taoist philosophy, ‘Shen’ is not a single ‘thing’ but a triune concept representing three core aspects of a human being: the Higher Soul, the Spiritual Heart (or lower soul), and the Mind. The Taoist spiritual goal is to bring these three aspects, which exist in a state of constant conflict in most people, into a state of harmonious agreement and unity.

The Yuan Shen (The Higher Soul)

The Yuan Shen is the Higher Soul/Self, our original spirit. It is the pure, untainted and eternal aspect of our consciousness—a ‘fractal of the divine’ that is our direct connection to the Tao, the Source of all things. This is the “warehouse” of all potential information we might ever experience. The direct equivalent of the West African Igbo concept of ‘Chi,’ this is the personal divine spark that guides one’s Earthly destiny.⁷ The Yuan Shen is the part of us that is already perfect, whole, and wise. It is ‘the watcher’ and initiator of our personal journey, the benevolent, knowing presence whose voice is most often drowned out by the noise of our unresolved emotional lives.

The Si Shen (The Spiritual Heart / The Biofield)

The Si Shen, pronounced “Shü Shen” and often translated as the Spiritual Heart or Lower Soul, is the crucial link between the eternal and the temporal. This is the vibrational field-based aspect of Shen that serves as the “receiver” of information and the repository of all of our earthly experiences, memories, and our emotional responses to them. The Si Shen is the direct and precise equivalent of what Pavek called the ‘Soul’ and what the NIH has labeled the ‘biofield.’⁹ This is the field that becomes cluttered and distorted by the discordant information of ‘Incomplete Emotional Episodes’. It is the field where the vibrational pain of trauma is held, broadcasting its distress signals continuously. The whole-body nature of the ‘Spiritual Heart’—every cell has a portion— is experienced in the mid-chest that aches with grief, in the mid-torso that clenches with fear, and in the lower abdomen that seizes up with shame and guilt. The state of the Si Shen—whether it is clear, coherent and flowing, or stagnant, chaotic and dissonant—determines the quality of our lived experience.

This Tao concept of both a ‘Higher Soul’ Yuan Shen and a ‘Lower Soul’ Si Shen is clarified in the contemporary work *Tao Science* authored by Dr. Rulin Xiu and Dr. & Master Zhi Gang Sha, who define the Soul as the “content of information” within

one's quantum vibrational field, and specifically in the Spiritual Heart Si Shen as the "receiver" of this information."⁹ The Si Shen is, then, that vibrational field of information within which we physically reside, and to which our body continuously responds.

The Mind

The third aspect of Taoist 'Shen' is the Mind. In addition to being the sub-conscious control center for our many internal bodily functions, the Mind corresponds to our brain-based, survival-oriented and egoistic consciousness. Tao Science teaches that this is the "processor" of information, the generator of logic streams, and the architect of our defenses.⁹ In the context of the Biofield Paradigm, the Mind is the cognitive function of the 'brain-as-transponder.' It does not create our primary bodily feelings; rather, it senses the shifting vibrational frequency signals radiating from the Si Shen (the Biofield) and immediately begins to interpret them, label them, and build logical narratives around them to justify a response.

The Path to Unity: Healing the Inner Conflict

The common human condition is one of profound inner conflict between these three aspects of 'Shen.' Our Higher Self (Yuan Shen) may know the path to peace and wisdom. But our Biofield (Si Shen) is saturated with the fear, grief and shame of past traumatic events. In response to these discordant painful signals from our Si Shen, our Mind generates endless loops of anxious thoughts, defensive rationalizations and limiting assumptions to protect us from feeling the full reality of our own embodied pain. We are, in deed, a house divided against itself.

This triune model provides the ultimate context for **SHEN Therapy**. This 'biofield therapy' is a practical, effective means of transforming/purifying the Si Shen. By using the coherent biofield flow between the practitioner's hands to gently release the chronic contractions of the ACPR, the disruptive informational patterns—one's incomplete emotional episodes—are finally allowed to complete their life cycle and dissipate.² As the Si Shen becomes clearer and more coherent, its contents no longer broadcast constant alarm signals. The Mind, no longer needing to manage a constant state of emergency, naturally becomes quieter and less defensive. This allows the clear, quiet voice of the Yuan Shen—our true, higher self—to finally be heard and integrated into our conscious life. This is the Taoist goal of unity in action, wherein 'healing' is the process of aligning one's conscious Mind and one's emotional Heart with one's fully aware Soul. Likewise, in **SHEN Therapy** this same 'healing' is the natural outcome of addressing discordant emotional frequencies—one's Incomplete Emotional Episodes—held as dissonant frequencies in the biofield and kept active by

the body's involuntary contractive pain response. Effective 'Field Precedence' therapy is key to one's physical, mental, emotional and psychological wellbeing, health and healing.

Chapter 5: The Architecture of Reality—Shen, Chi, and Jing

This deeper understanding of the Taoist 'Shen' allows us to refine our understanding of another key Taoist concept: the Three Treasures of *Shen*, *Chi*, and *Jing*.

- **Shen:** This, as we have now explored, is the primary, all-encompassing principle of consciousness and information, with its three aspects of Higher Soul, Spiritual Heart/Biofield, and Mind.
- **Chi:** In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) this refers specifically to the vital, body-bound energy that flows through a network of meridians. This is the energy system that modalities such as acupuncture and many forms of Qigong are designed to influence.¹¹ It is the subtle-energy 'wiring' which, in the TCM framework, animates the physical body. It is distinct from the *Wei Chi* or 'protective energy' that both surrounds and permeates the body, which is more closely related to the Biofield.
- **Jing:** This is our physical essence, the dense matter that makes up our cells, tissues, and organs. More than just the physical body, this also includes its by-products, its movements, even the words we form and speak into existence.¹¹

This creates a clear, top-down hierarchy of manifestation that aligns perfectly with the Biofield Paradigm's 'Field First' postulate. A field disturbance first occurs at the level of **Shen** when a discordant, frequency-based informational pattern disrupts the Si Shen/Biofield. This field fluctuation disrupts not only the Mind by dictating the brain's self-defense responses, but also disrupts the efficient flow of **Chi** in the body's energy circuits and nervous system. This dissonant energy signature, combined with the direct mechanical stress of the Auto-Contractile Pain Reflex and the ensuing restricted flow of our body's internal fluids, can ultimately manifest as organ dysfunction, inflammation

and potentially as degenerative disease in the **Jing**, our physical body.

SHEN Therapy is a biofield modality that intervenes at the highest causal level: By clearing the incoherent informational disturbance in the Shen/Biofield, it allows the Chi to flow and the Jing to heal.

Chapter 6: Redefining Life—Implications of the Unified ‘SHEN’ Paradigm

When we synthesize the Egyptian and Taoist understandings, we arrive at a definition of staggering depth. **SHEN is the process of manifesting ‘The Totality of All That Is’ by assisting the Soul, Heart, and Mind to find unified harmony.** This is not merely a new theory of mental health; it is a new definition of a healthy, actualized human being.

This ‘Biofield Paradigm’ has profound implications for how we view ourselves and our place in the universe. We are not biological robots animated by a ghost of consciousness. We are multi-layered fields of consciousness (*Shen*) expressing ourselves through an energetic matrix (*Chi*) as a physical form (*Jing*). Life is not a random series of chemical reactions, but a purposeful journey toward integrating these layers into a coherent, harmonious whole.

This reframes our most common struggles in a new, empowering light:

- **Anxiety** is not a brain disorder; it is the felt, contractive, symptomatic experience of a conflict between a biofield (*Si Shen*) broadcasting fear from the past, and a Mind desperately trying to control the present and immediate future.
- **Depression** is not a serotonin deficiency; it is the palpable, physiological weight of a biofield overwhelmed by the simultaneous unresolved contractive energy of grief, fear and shame. The drop in serotonin levels is a downstream symptom, not a cause. This was verified in a major 2022 University College London umbrella study and commented on by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).^{13, 14,15}
- **Chronic Illness** is most often not a simple ongoing mechanical failure, but the long-term, contractive physical manifestation of a biofield distorted by chronically-held, unresolved discordant frequencies of emotional pain.

- **Healing** in the realm of mental health is, therefore, not about suppressing symptoms. Nor is it about silencing the brain with medication or out-thinking our feelings with logic and understanding. It is the essential work of cleansing the field (our *Si Shen*) of held discordant responses to life's traumatic experiences so that the wisdom of our Higher Self (*Yuan Shen*) can flow unimpeded through our Mind and into our lives.

As for healing our body, our Jing, it has often been said that “the body can heal itself of almost anything *if the right conditions are set.*” Those ‘conditions’ must include relieving long-held Auto-Contractile Pain Reflexes and the embodied incoherent biofield frequencies that initiated them.

Conclusion: The New Horizon Is Within

The crisis in our global mental health system is, at its core, a crisis of paradigm. The brain-centric, biomedical model, for all its undeniable contributions, has reached the limits of its explanatory power. It has left millions still feeling broken, pathologized, and disconnected from their own inner resources for healing. The need for a new horizon is not just an academic and/or philosophical desire; it is a societal and humanitarian imperative.

The expanded understanding of **SHEN** provides the map to that new horizon. It shows us that the wisdom to heal our deepest physio-emotional wounds is not a new invention but a rediscovery of perennial physics-based truths, echoed in the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt and the foundational texts of Taoist sages. It provides a framework that honors both the rigorous observations of science and the profound spiritual depths of our shared human experience.

The Biofield Paradigm and its foundational “Field Precedence” understanding do not call for the abandonment of science, but for its expansion—an evolution from a science of matter alone to a science that includes the physics of consciousness, information, and life itself. The path forward requires a dual commitment. First, a commitment to **rigorous inquiry**: we must conduct additional clinical science research necessary to

further validate and map the biofield, thus providing the empirical evidence needed for its full integration into mainstream healthcare. Second, a commitment to **courageous collaboration**: mental health professionals and biofield therapists must begin to work together, creating a truly holistic model of care wherein the energetic roots of suffering are addressed alongside their psychological manifestations.

Ultimately, the message of **SHEN** is one of profound hope and empowerment. It tells us that our pain is not a permanent pathology but rather a temporary, energetic distortion that can be released. It tells us that within each of us—beneath the noise of the mind and the weight of the emotional heart—lies a soft-spoken, wise, and ever-present non-physical Self. Our journey of healing is the journey back to this Self, the process of reuniting our conflicted parts into a harmonious whole, and in so doing, experiencing our own divine truth: our ‘Oneness with The Totality of All That Is.’

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