

Your Belly, Your Universe Part 5

by Lisa Sarasohn

What's in a belly?

To review: Your belly plays host to **100 trillion** bacteria. These single-celled creatures — your gut microbiota — shape your **physical** and **mental** health. When the many kinds and varying populations of your belly bacteria maintain a dynamic balance, they vitalize your digestion, immunity, hormone production, nerve communication, and more.

Imbalance among and depletion of the gut bacteria likely plays a key role in **body-mind disorders** such as anxiety, autism, obesity, irritable bowel syndrome, autoimmune diseases, and allergies.

If certain kinds of detrimental bacteria predominate, such imbalance can manifest as a specific infection. But even if infection is not evident, imbalance within the microbiome can cause persistent inflammation. As a result, the immune system remains on constant alert and the stage is set for chronic disease.

In previous installments, you've read how ancient icons of the Sacred Feminine may document the gut microbiome's healing power, how traditional cuisines replenish your belly's supply of beneficial microbiota, how soil microorganisms riding in on the organic vegetables you eat constitute a crucial component of your microbial population.

You've also considered the role that movement and breathing exercises — by compressing, expanding, rotating, and twisting your belly — may play in mobilizing your gut microbiome, energizing your bacterial to serve your physical and emotional health all the more effectively.

Medical research on the gut microbiome calls into question conventional concepts of the body, health, and disease. With only 10% of your genetic material sporting the DNA that is uniquely yours, who are you and what exactly is your body?

Researchers and science writers are grasping at metaphors.

In **Germes Are Us**, for example, the New Yorker's Michael Specter quotes Martin J. Blaser, chairman of the Department of Medicine and a professor of microbiology at the New York University School of Medicine, as saying “We are an endlessly variable stew of essential microbes.... But the microbiome is never static or simple; often it's a battleground between species. The difficult job of medicine is to control that battleground.”

Contemporary Western culture — invested in the primacy of the rational mind — typically considers the body to be a soulless **machine**. Genetics provides the blueprint for putting the machine together.

Specter offers a different image: “Each of us seems more like a farm than like an individual

assembled from a rulebook of genetic instructions. Medicine becomes a matter of cultivation, as if our bacterial cells were crops in a field.”

We might think of ourselves as a farm, or garden. Or a zoo.

Scientific papers characterize the gut microbiome as a [human organ](#); the body as a [habitat](#), a [host ecosystem](#); human beings as “[superorganisms](#).”

What’s so “super” about playing host to trillions of bacteria, a.k.a. germs? It’s incredibly humbling to know that we humans, the pride of eons of evolution, depend on single-celled microorganisms for our most intimate physiological functions. It’s humbling to know that these life-or-death dealing microorganisms outnumber our *homo sapiens* cells by a ratio of 10 to 1. Bacteria? They’re so primitive.

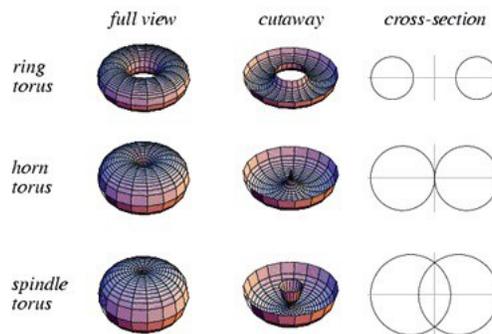
In the previous installment, I promised to address microbiome, human body, and Body Earth in an imaginative, intuitive way. I asked you to stay tuned for these codewords: Primordial. Gaia. Torus.

Here we go. Let’s take *torus* first.

If you’ve eaten a doughnut, you’ve ingested the structure of the universe. That tubular circle enclosing a double-vortex void: That’s the [torus](#). That’s the shape of the universe and everything in it. That’s you.

As [Foster Gamble](#) of the Thrive Movement says, a torus is an “energy vortex that you can see everywhere ... in atoms, cells, seeds, flowers, trees, animals, humans, hurricanes, planets, suns, galaxies and even the cosmos as a whole.”

The torus guides energy into motion and matter into form in every corner of the universe. The doughnut or “ring torus” is actually just one toroidal form. Others include:

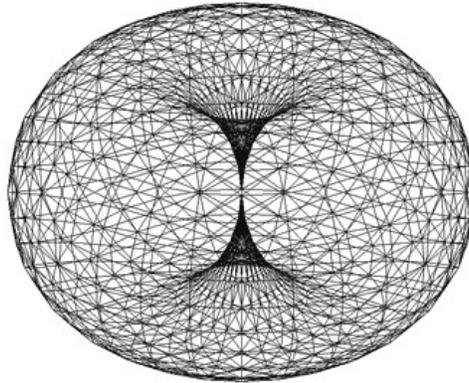


Source: Weisstein, Eric W. "Standard Tori."
MathWorld: mathworld.wolfram.com/StandardTori.html

Picture a sphere open at top and bottom, rotating around its vertical axis, lines of energy swirling up and around its curving surfaces. Arriving at the opening at top, the swirl of energy descends through the sphere’s inner core, a vortex narrowing as it tunnels downward into a single point at

the sphere's very center. From this point, the swirl widens as it continues to descend, eventually spiraling outward to define the opening at the bottom of the sphere, then returning to the sphere's outer surface and continuing to trace the continuity of exterior and interior, fullness and emptiness.

Or look here:



Source: Wendy Howard, [Does it Matter?](#)

An apple is a torus. You are a torus. Stand with your feet more than shoulder-width apart, signify an upward-pointing triangle: Earth your base, your legs the equilaterals, your belly center the apex.

Now with your arms extending from this same belly center, raise your arms up to the Heavens, shape an upward-pointing triangle.

You, this emblem of Heaven-and-Earth, your downward- and upward-pointing triangles emerging from, returning to unite at a single point: your belly center, your sourcepoint.



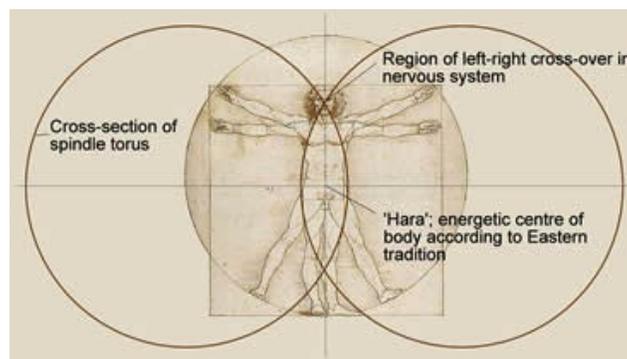
Source: Lisa Sarasohn, [Rite for Invoking the Sacred Feminine](#)

Breathe out who you are, send your gift through to the far reaches of the universe. Breathe in who you are, the gift that streams from the far reaches of the universe into your body's center.

Breathing out and in, rooting downward and reaching upward from your body's center, now imagine yourself spinning, being spun around your central core. Your legs and arms, the conjoined triangles you signify, define the torus' interior emptiness and its exterior fullness.

You are a torus. You are a vessel for the inflow and outflow, the continuing circulation of the life energy that juices the universe. Stop that flow, put a lid on it, close the trap door, and you're setting yourself up for a cosmic battle. The spoils of such a war: fatigue, boredom, frustration, anger, resentment, illness. Did I mention weight gain?

You are a torus. From mouth to anal opening, you are the somewhat convoluted passageway open to the comings and goings of the universe. Your belly — your body's center, your *hara* — is central to the sacred shape called *vesica* that the torus in cross-section delineates.



Source: Wendy Howard, [Does it Matter?](#)

You are also *primordial*. And *Gaia* incarnate. How? That's for the next installment.

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