

THE EARTH ELEMENT, Chinese Medicine Classics II

An Instructive Discussion (from; Larre & Rochat, 1990: Su Wen, Chapter 5)

SU WEN CHAPTER 5

The central region produces Dampness....

The central region produces dampness

Dampness produces Earth

Earth produces the sweet

Sweet produces the Spleen

Spleen produces the flesh

Flesh produces the Lung

The Spleen is master of the mouth

That which in Heaven makes dampness

On Earth makes the earth

In the body makes the flesh

In thesaurization makes the Spleen

In the coloured aspects makes yellow

In the notes makes the note gong

In the noises makes singing

In movements reacting to change makes eructations

In the orifices makes the mouth

In the Tastes makes the sweet

In the instances of will makes meditative thought

Meditative thought injures the Spleen

That which victoriously balances out meditative thought is anger

Dampness injures the flesh

That which victoriously balances out dampness is wind

Sweet injures the flesh

That which victoriously balances out sweet is acid

Elisabeth Rochat: We continue with Chapter 5 of the Su Wen which shows another way of giving the relationships of the Earth Element with the Spleen and other functions in the body. We saw in Chapter 4 of the Su Wen the central region and the yellow aspect of the Earth in connection with the Spleen and its Essences, and with all the things in the universe which have the same quality of Breath, such as domestic animals, cereals and so on. Now in Su Wen Chapter 5 we look more precisely at the human body.

中
央
生
溼

The central region produces dampness

What is the meaning of that, and how can the central region produce dampness? It must be because the central region, like the Earth Element, has the quality of being able to receive - to receive good irrigation in watering, good seeds and richness. And at the same time it has the ability to give forth something, to give birth, to produce cereals and so on and to give other things food, cereals or irrigation. In the Chinese tradition the explanation of the central region producing dampness is that the central region has the ability to water the four directions, the four sides of space. It's like a reservoir. In the same manner the end of the Summer is that special period when the warmth brings up the humid Breaths of the Earth for evaporation. It's the idea of the Earth penetrated with dampness and humidity and worked on by the warmth, so that at the end of the Summer you arrive at this stage of damp Breaths which evaporate, and the warm vapours rising from the Earth give form and shape to clouds, and that makes rain and dew. As a result we have the fertility of Earth, and cereals can be produced. So this humidity of Earth, or of the central region is the ability to be very fertile.

溼
生
土

Dampness produces Earth

Perhaps this is because Earth, humus, soil, dampness or central region are a place or a function where all kinds of things can simmer together in order to release good Breaths for the maintenance of yin and yang, zang and fu, all the meridians and so on. It is also because Earth, or humus, or soil, mixed with dampness, is the best way to give form to something - like pottery. With the Earth, which has been worked on by dampness, there's the idea that something could be modelled or formed into something. The idea of fertility is this idea of taking shape and form together, and we saw that the great function of the Earth Element is to give form by transformation. So it's exactly the same for the Spleen inside the body.

土
生
甘

Earth produces the sweet

We saw previously the relationship between Earth and sweet: that Earth produces sweet in that the Earth producing cereals, and all kinds of food, produces at the same time the well- harmonized composition of these Breaths of food. That is the basic meaning of what is sweet. It's by the function of Earth simmering things together that we have sweet. Sweet, as a taste, is here at the highest level, it's like a basic structure which appears between Heaven and Earth (Earth with the meaning of di). For this reason, "Sweet produces the Spleen".

甘
生
脾

Sweet produces the Spleen

The pattern of sweet can also be the inner pattern for this function which in the body is called the Spleen. And of course, in a healthy body, the food which contains Essences with sweet qualities can maintain and renew the function of the Spleen.

脾
生
肉

Spleen produces the Flesh

The meaning of this sentence is that this activity which we awkwardly call Spleen, and which is basically a function, expresses itself through all the levels of the structure of the body or the person, through thought and through physical structures and in bodily structures is just flesh. Flesh gives form to the body, and flesh is the place for the circulation of all Breaths and all nutrition, and this circulation reaches to the extremity of the four limbs. We have flesh in the general form of the body but within the flesh we can also see large and small valleys. This is very interesting because the ideogram for valley, gu, is an homophone with the ideogram for cereals, gu, and sometimes in modern Chinese the ideogram for valley is used as the abbreviated form for the ideogram for cereals.

Breaths of cereals and Breaths of a valley are not exactly the same, of course, but there is a natural link between them both. If cereals, by the activity of the Stomach and Spleen, can give form to the body through the flesh, flesh itself has specific forms, for example the form of each muscle. There are muscular valleys and all the inner, smaller valleys which penetrate into the mass of the flesh and enable all kinds of circulation - of Blood and qi and so on.

I think this is another example of the two-fold aspect of activity and stability of the Earth: to have form and transformation at the same time, because it's impossible to have life or form without transformation. Of course you know that if our Breaths and the activity of the Spleen are in a well-balanced state, our flesh will be in a good state. All the activity of the Spleen in transporting Breaths, liquids and nutritional Elements through the body means that flesh should be in good form.

肉
生
肺

Flesh produces the Lung

Next we have this quite bizarre sentence "Flesh produces the Lung". We have to understand how Spleen or Earth or all these aspects of the movement of life, can produce Lung or Metal. We can see how the power and strength of Earth, through the Spleen, can make the Essences and Breaths of the Middle Heater rise up into the Upper Heater and give the Lung the opportunity to distribute Breaths rhythmically through all the body. So, of course, the Lung needs these Essences and Breaths of food to fulfil its task. There is a very common Chinese expression: "Spleen is the source for the production of Breaths and Lung is the pivot for the Breaths".

The relationship between Lung and Spleen is very close, of course, because they are both tai yin. We see in Su Wen Chapter 11 that the explanation of the importance of the pulse on the meridian of tai yin of the hand is also linked to the function of the Spleen, the tai yin of the foot. But in Chapter 5 we have "Flesh produces the Lung", and it's quite strange. The meaning is that one Element, and one zang can produce, give birth and life to another zang or Element through its own activity and its own production. Flesh is a product of Spleen when the resonances of Spleen are manifested, because we can see and touch the flesh - but it is very difficult to be in touch with the Spleen, because the Spleen is not exactly a visible mass. Yet because the function of the Spleen can manifest its virtue in the flesh of the body we can have a real effect which produces the other Element or zang, and helps this other Element or zang to fulfil its task.

In the presentation of Su Wen Chapter 5 this is absolutely systematic, in the case of Liver, and the East and so on, we have the Liver producing muscle and muscle producing the Heart. In the case of the South, Heart produces Blood, and Blood produces Spleen. This sentence "Blood produces Spleen" can be interpreted as the Blood of the Heart bringing to the Spleen all that it needs to be well nourished, and the spiritual orientation which is necessary for the power of the Earth and the Spleen.

Also, the Heart which is master of the movement of circulation and animation of the Blood inside the body brings the Spleen the possibility of having this movement of distribution for liquids and nourishing Breaths etc.. Perhaps the relationship between the movement of the Spleen and the movement of the Lung takes place thanks to the flesh, because if we see the flesh as being overrun with valleys and ravines, what are valleys and ravines but channelways for the circulation of Breaths which are distributed from the Lung and the centre of the chest?

Claude Larre: One of the difficulties of explaining this section of Chapter 5 is that the Chinese character sheng is used six times to make a connection between two aspects. The first is that the central region gives birth to, produces, makes appear, or makes come forth, humidity. And life is produced through humidity, but humidity itself has to be somewhere. Humidity might be in the sky, but the humidity for making life come forth has to be the equivalent of Earth. First humidity, then Earth, for the producing of life. If we want to see grass we need humidity and we need humus. Life is produced as life in itself by the fact that there is no difference between the central region and humidity. When we say sheng we must understand the producing of life starts, as far as the central region is concerned, from humus, and then we can progress to another connection between central region, humidity and Earth. Then we come to what Earth is for ourselves, and the Earth for oneself is the Spleen. Each time we move from one stage of life to the next we are coming nearer to ourselves, because man is the Centre of the operation of Heaven and Earth, and the organizational factors of life are the zang. Here the zang chosen is the Spleen.

A more internal view of the same thing is that qi has to be somewhere, and the qi which makes life more and more powerful is in the valleys and ravines inside the flesh. The flesh is much more full of empty spaces than solid places. The solid places are just there to relieve the interval spaces for the qi. As we used to say in molecular or atomic work, there's much more void in this table than it seems there is, and even in titanium and uranium, which are the heaviest metals, there is enough void to draw the energy which is there. So there is a connection between void and energy, so much so that to speak of the movement of life we have to speak of flesh, and speaking of flesh we are speaking of those places where energy is resting and is ready to be used. That was the reason why Elisabeth was talking so much about flesh, not visible flesh, but flesh for the emptiness, which is a requisite for life.

And all this is connected with sheng, because in those empty places full of Breaths there is production - production of the organ through which the animated Breaths are regulated, the Lung. The Lung is the chancellor of life, the highest administrator of life, the Prime Minister over all the other ministers, because the only point of being a living being is to manage well the Breaths that we have, both the Breaths we first received and the Breaths we draw from outside to build and replace what has been exhausted by our own activity. When we come to the seventh sentence of this section of Su Wen Chapter 5, it no longer uses the sheng character but another one, zhu. So six characters make the relationship between two sets of characters using sheng: the central region and humidity, humidity and the Earth, Earth and sweet, sweet and pi, pi and flesh, flesh and Lung. So how do we feel about the fact that there are six relationships here?

Elisabeth Rochat: Two for Heaven, two for Earth and two for Man.

Claude Larre: Yes, most probably there are six because Heaven, Earth and Man are in relation, so 3 x 2 is 6. That's obvious, but it has to be verified, and you have to see if it gives something. We are not supposed to make mechanical explorations of the text, but we are using mechanical exploration of the text to see if we understand more or less. If we understand more then we can say it is intended to show this and that, and if it doesn't tell us anything then we drop it.

All this is to make you understand that when using this sheng character, to produce or give birth, we are obliged, by means of our own imaginary power, to change the English translation because if we just say to produce or give birth, the connection between Lung and flesh is not seen. It's easier to say that the Earth is producing something than to say that the flesh is producing the Lung.

Elisabeth Rochat: Sheng is not only to produce and give birth but also to maintain life, or life itself, and the fact of being alive.

Claude Larre: The fact is that life itself wants to go on, so between 'to live' and 'to maintain' there is no difference where life is concerned.

脾
主
口

Spleen is master of the mouth

Elisabeth Rochat: We saw that previously. But this is not a relationship of producing or giving birth, it is a relationship of mastering because the mouth is like a servant of an overlord, and the overlord is the Spleen. The lord and king is the zang and the orifice is like an official, guan.

其
在
天
為
溼
在
地
為
土

*That which in Heaven makes dampness
on Earth makes the Earth*

What is 'that'? 'That' is the mystery of life, the mysterious transformation of the influence of the Spirits of Heaven into what happens on Earth and to all the ten thousand living beings. This 'that' is

the mysterious heart of life which we can never express or explain; but we can see five rays of light springing out of this unlabelled mystery of life. If we look at one of these rays we see the central region, dampness, soil, flesh, Spleen and so on, with a very organic link between them. In the same way when you play a musical note on certain instruments you can hear all the harmonics of that note. It is the same. Look at these rays of light, and like harmonics I can see all that we call correspondences. They are organic, vital, living - exactly like this because they are not correspondences but the same movement of life.

So we know that that which in Heaven makes dampness, which is one of the six aspects of the unique Breath of Heaven, on Earth, di, makes the Earth, tu, one of the Five Elements.

在
體
為
肉

...in the body makes flesh...

...the form of the body and the place for circulation of Breaths and Blood and so on.

在
藏
為
脾

...in thesaurization makes the Spleen...

...the great thesaurizer of permutations of all kinds of Breaths, of transformation, transportation and nourishment.

在
色
為
黃

...in the coloured aspects makes yellow

...the colour that you see in millet, and that you can see if you look at loess, the Yellow River and so on.

在
音
為
宮

...in the notes makes the note gong

This is the first note of the pentatonic scale, and the basis for the elaboration of the other notes.

在
聲
為
歌

...in the noises makes singing

What is the difference between notes, yin, and noises, sheng ? Notes are a celestial vibration. The five notes are a typical example of this division by five, and the five notes are very close to the numbers. A complex and subtle play of numbers establishes each of the five notes in its own length of vibration. [See Granet: La Pensee Chinoise]. Numbers are invisible and untouchable, but they are real because through numbers and numerology you can understand the way in which Heaven and Earth build life, and the inner pattern of life. And notes are something like this in the field of vibration. Notes are the pattern that we can't hear, but through which we can understand the building of all sound. These five notes allow all kinds of music, through sounds that you can hear. Noise, sheng, is quite difficult to express in French or English, but it's the sound that you hear when the vibration is passing through a tube, like a musical pipe. In this case the pipe, or the musical instrument is not a piano or a harpsichord or bagpipes, it's our own body.

When sound which is in harmony with the first note, with Earth, Spleen and so on, passes through our body like a pipe, it is singing. Why singing? Because when all is well harmonized, when we are full of satisfaction, as with sweet and aromatic, we are happy, and the natural expression of that is singing. You know that Spleen is linked with thought or thinking, and if you are thinking you are thinking of something, and this is very near to having the desire for something. If you can realize your desire you are happy, and you sing. It's also that there's good connection between Spirit and Essences through the good harmonization of all thinking and willing and Breaths and Essences which come from all directions and are well harmonized in the Centre. When that happens, you simply sing.

在
變
動
為
噦

...in movements reacting to change makes eructations

Up until now it has all been a description of the normal way of things, but now we have a description of a reaction to a bad change, an inversion of the normal situation. If the aggravation affects the aspect of life near the Spleen, then as a result we have this kind of response, eructations, which are a counter-current movement of the Stomach, and the too quick and violent rising up of the Spleen. This is pathological, although usually it's not very serious. Sometimes you can simply have this kind of eructation because you ate too quickly, or too much. In fact it's very polite in China to have a little eructation after a good dinner. If you just say, "It was such a delicious dinner, my dear," that's not enough, you have to manifest that it is really true by this inner movement of your Spleen.

在 在
味 竅
為 為
甘 口

...in the orifices makes the mouth

...in the Tastes makes sweet

We won't remain longer on this issue.

在
志
為
思

*...in the instances of will, zhi
makes meditative thought, si*

Zhi is linked with the Kidneys, but here we have instances of will for each of the five zany. If zhi, the will, is the vital tension of life inside the deepest foundation of life, Kidneys, then we can also see this tension of life at the level of each zany. In this case we speak of the five wills, wu zhi, and the meaning is that which is, at the mental or emotional level, the expression of the vital tension of each zany. And for the Spleen we have these meditative thoughts. For the Liver we have anger, which is not exactly the kind of anger which we see as an expression of a certain kind of violence, it is more like a vital impulse. For the Heart it is elation, not joy but elation, which can be very, very good allowing the circulation of Blood and Breaths throughout all the network of animation. But if this elation is too strong it can be very dangerous and can release the vital sources, the Essences, Breaths and Spirits. But in the case of the Spleen we have meditative thought.

We saw this kind of thought when we studied Ling Shu Chapter 8. The ideogram is made up of heart, and in the upper part the primitive representation of the brain. The classical explication of this ideogram is that if the Spirits of the Heart are in good communication with the brain you can have thought. This belongs to the Spleen, of course, because the Spleen takes care of the maintenance and renewal of Essences, and the Essences permit the Spirits to express themselves. If you remember Ling Shu Chapter 8, the purpose, yi, is the first process which appears when the Heart is acting. When we have a Centre to take charge of all beings, the first thing the Heart can do is apply itself, and this application of the Heart to what is presented is yi. Yi is a superior activity of the Spleen, of the Earth, of the Centre of the body and so on.

The text of Ling Shu Chapter 8 continues:

When the will that remains changes at the same time, that is thought.

The meaning is that you can have attention and will, like the vital impulse and attention to something or somebody, but that is not thought. Thought appears when through that attention and with this will, you are able to look at other possibilities and to look at the very best way to realize something. It's not that the will changes like a weather vane, but it's like a good consideration of the diverse aspects of the situation, while you remain very firmly on the way to something. That is thought.

Claude Larre: It's more or less circling the issue that you want to do something about. First you have this something which is like a point. But that something has to be enriched by consideration while you are still with your own will, which is fixed on that object. But you are able to set your mind free and keep your will. So at the same time there is this constant will and there is a free circulation of the Breaths within around your intention, so to speak. This complex situation is thinking thought.

Elisabeth Rochat: You can see that both stability and transformation are necessary for thinking - which is just a refinement of the fundamental notions or processes linked with the Earth, the Spleen and so on. If you remember the text of Ling Shu Chapter 8, after the becoming of thoughts there is the ability for them to spread out far and wide very powerfully. Afterwards, as a result, you have lu, reflection, meditation, planning and projection. We can find in this spreading out far and powerfully

the expression of what we, rather later, call the yang of the Spleen, the ability to distribute and transport and so on. You can understand now why, when in pathological terms we say the yang of the Spleen is not enough, thought and reflection are disturbed and weak. It's exactly the contrary of being able to go far and powerfully. If the yin of the Spleen Essences are not enough then thinking is poor and you lose your memory because there is no longer the presentation of something to the Spirit of the Heart, and the Spleen is no longer able to give or to maintain forms in thinking, such as ideas and memories.

思
傷
脾

Meditative thought injures the Spleen

At the end of Su Wen Chapter 5 you have the pathological aspect of these meditative thoughts. When meditative thought is unable to go far and powerfully the thought turns around, and in this case meditative thought injures the Spleen. There is no distribution, there is no giving of form, just churning something over and over. Meditative thought turns into worries and concerns.

怒
勝
思

That which victoriously balances out meditative thought is anger

In the ke cycle you have this, but what is the meaning of the ke cycle? It's that anger is the expression of the vital impulse which goes far and powerfully, because it's exactly the meaning of Liver, Wood, East, Spring and so on. This is exactly the function of Liver in the organism, and exactly the definition of anger in the emotions. For this reason anger can give good balance to meditative thought which lacks this movement and ability to go far and powerfully. You can see it in terms of movement and quality of Breaths.

Claude Larre: As for anger, you know 'anger' is one of the English words used for translating the character nu, but it would be wise to forget so-called anger, and think of any sort of violent movement with this vital force or strength. Conventionally we call it anger, but behind the English word we must understand that it is the vital strength acting on this meditative mood which counterbalances it and may restore the force you need to think things over and achieve your aim.

Elisabeth Rochat: The meaning of this sentence is not that if someone is depressed because of their Spleen you have to make them angry in order to cure them!

Claude Larre: But it is true that it works!

Elisabeth Rochat: True sometimes! But its aim is to restore in the person this aspect of the movement of life at the level of the emotions, because it's at the level of the emotions that the person is disturbed.

溼

Dampness injures the flesh

傷

肉

We have exactly the same schema with dampness and wind. Dampness injures the flesh because dampness provokes a kind of loosening in the flesh, a flaccidity, and there is no longer any transformation, movement and circulation.

風

勝

溼

That which victoriously balances out dampness is wind

Wind balances out this kind of over abundant dampness because wind can dry, and it can establish circulation again so there's no more blockage. The wind can sweep things aside. These are the qualities of wind we find in the Chinese text.

Question: What is the character for 'victoriously balances'?

Elisabeth Rochat: Sheng. Sheng is to dominate. This is the ideogram which is often used in the Nei Jing instead of ke, as in the ke cycle. Ke appears very few times in the Nei Jing, usually you have this ideogram sheng. Sheng is a homophone of the other sheng, to give birth, to produce and so on - so we have two cycles, sheng and sheng. To dominate is a very common and useful ideogram. It's used for seasons, for Elements, for all things which dominate each other, in the manner of the so called ke cycle. This ideogram ke is a little bit stronger and a little more aggressive than sheng.

Claude Larre: We must mention that the two sheng characters have a different tone, and the Chinese would not consider this to be a homophone if the tone is not the same. Sheng is a victory and a

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victory has something calm about it because the work is done, so victory is equivalent to peace. But to repress or to conquer is ke, so there is a difference in the feeling the Chinese may have when they are talking of ke and when they are talking of sheng. One is more aggressive and repressive, and the other is just the fact that now things come back to order through the intervention of something very powerful which counterbalances what was going astray.

Elisabeth Rochat: Perhaps the explanation is very simple. In the Nei Jing Chapter 5 the focus point is essentially on the exposition of the deep and intimate inner mechanism of normal life, and the pathological aspect is just the disturbance and imbalance of this normal life. In the commentaries and other medical books the focus is on the diversity of pathological aspects and their treatment, and in this case ke is a good word because the person is ill and there is a ke effect, not only a sheng effect, which is the succession and equilibrium of all things, sometimes with disturbance, of course. So this is the ideogram which is translated 'victoriously balances out'.

甘
傷
肉

Sweet injures the flesh

According to the Nei Jing too much sweet has an effect of loosening the flesh and the result of loosening is bad circulation because there is no impulse and no tension for circulation.

酸
勝
甘

That which victoriously balances out sweet is acid

For this reason what victoriously balances out sweet is acid, because the property of acid is to draw together or shrink, it has an astringent quality.

Question: You said that dampness injures the flesh and gives a flaccidity, now the sweet injures the flesh and loosens it, so could you explain what the difference is?

Elisabeth Rochat: Dampness and sweet are exactly the same at the level of the Breaths of Heaven or the Tastes of the Earth, qi and Essences and so on, so their effects must be the same according to the level of reality and the property of qi, Breaths of Heaven and Tastes. The result is something very similar because we are in exactly the same harmonic. Sometimes the same vocabulary can be employed by the Chinese as we saw with the Earth and the ox, for example.

SUMMARY

Claude Larre: I will take ten minutes to review all this and try to see how this description in Su Wen Chapter 5 is coherent. First, I don't feel they are talking of Heaven for Heaven's sake, or Earth for

Earth's sake, it seems to me that it is the same wording and the same representation as we saw when they say in Ling Shu Chapter 8:

Heaven in me is virtue

In Ling Shu Chapter 8 are they talking of Heaven or me? They are talking of me, but they say that the presence of Heaven constitutes the initiative for having self, and it is the virtue of Heaven which makes the appearance of myself and which maintains my self.

Su Wen Chapter 5 is not a description of everything in the universe, it is a description of how man is constituted - so it starts from the direction, the location, which here is the central region, because that is the starting point of any individual. Then it comes to the first expression:

That which in Heaven makes dampness on Earth makes the soil or the Earth element.

This is equally true for me as for the universe, and if it is quoted here it is not to talk of Heaven or to talk of Earth, di, but to talk of dampness and to talk of soil, ie. the Earth element, tu. Not only the dampness you have outside, but the dampness you have inside, and not only the tu, the Earth as such, but the tu you have within yourself. Because you are really a crossing point of what makes Heaven Heaven and what makes Earth Earth.

When we want to know how a Chinese text is organized we have to look at the end, and from the end we have to come back to each of the pronouncements and relate them to the final sentences. When we say Heaven, Earth and Man it is not unusual for Man to be in the final position, it is normal to proceed from the start and come to the end. And that is very important because if we don't do that it's impossible for us to see how the text is coherent. In my opinion it is not a description of three powers, it is a description of the condition of Man.

That which in Heaven makes dampness, on Earth makes the Earth element, in the body makes the flesh.

This third part, in the body makes flesh, is the important point and relies on the two first pronouncements. In the following sentences 'that which' is implied although the character itself is not repeated. The governing character is zai, to be in among, no longer sheng, to produce. The zai character is used eleven times. The first six lines of this presentation used sheng, the seventh was zhu, to master and now what comes next? After the seventh character zhu what is the situation? The situation is that there is dampness. Now if I go on with this exploration of the condition of dampness then it no longer refers to Heaven but to Earth, and it will be the soil. Coming back to Ling Shu Chapter 8 we see that:

Heaven in me is virtue and Earth in me is Breath

so we understand that they are making some sort of division. There is virtue in Heaven, that is true, but what is there on Earth? On Earth there is the virtue of Heaven working through Earth. How can I speak of that? What new word can I coin for the occasion? It must be Breath. So Breath is the same

thing as virtue, but seen not from the viewpoint of Heaven, because then it would have been virtue, but from the viewpoint of Earth. Why do I say that is the same thing? Because I know that Earth imitates Heaven, and Earthly Breaths are really a replica of Heavenly virtue. So now I understand that Heavenly virtue in me is virtue and dampness, and that the Earthly part of myself is the Breath and the soil. So there are Breaths inside the soil and I myself am some sort of ground or soil where there is the power of Earth which is the Breath of Earth given by Heaven but under the dominant organization of Earth. The coming together of Heaven and Earth is my body, and within my body what should I call it? I call it flesh.

Then we can come back to what we have been saying, that flesh is more a place for qi, which is under Heavenly virtue, and this is very consistent with the teaching of Zhuang Zi Chapter 2.

So why do they now go on to talk about the five zang? Because when man is built, in order to have the highest life for that organization and organism, a new word has to be coined, and the word is thesaurization or zang. The organs are zang, and the effect of these organs is thesaurization, zang, because there is no choice in the Chinese vocabulary to say whether zang is more the function or more the location where the function takes place. The life of man is exactly at the crossing of Heaven and Earth, so whatever has been said of Heaven and Earth has to be said of Man. The governing organs of the body are the zang, and at the level of the central region you call this particular zang, Spleen.

Then we go from one instance to another and we see that everything falls in line at the right place in this elaboration of the Spleen, and we have aspects, notes, sounds, and movements etc.

Elisabeth talked of the five instances of will which are not exactly wills as we understand it, because for us will is an intellectual process, but for the Chinese will is just an expression of life when it is rooted in the zang. We have to understand why they are talking of will here in connection with thinking, and how there is some sort of central position in their thinking, because everything has the connotation of the central region. Because Man occupies the Centre of the universe it is proper for him to be a thinker.

Also, because it is a medical book, we have to understand how all these Breaths can go astray and if they do, how we can compensate for it. This is given in those different items about how you can counteract the violence done by dampness, and what happens when the taste is not in equilibrium, and what is the difference between taste and dampness. Elisabeth was saying that if you are considering the air, or the sky, or Heaven, or the atmospheric agents, there is a place for the organization by five. But if you want to take all that inside the Earth where all the products for your own assimilation are produced then you have to refer to the sweetness inside the taste, and that is something common between sweetness and dampness. It is quite obvious because Earth is just a replica of Heaven.

I want to stress the phenomenal brightness of the Chinese presentation in Chapter 5. Elisabeth and I have been doing a lot of work on this chapter in order to prepare a presentation of how Man is organized under the meeting of yin and yang, and the only way to see that is not to place Man outside the universe, but on the contrary to see how Heaven and Earth pour out their influences to make us come forth. That for me is the logic of the chapter.