

THE WOOD ELEMENT: in Chinese Medicine Classics**An Instructive Discussion, part I** (from Larre & Rochat, 1994, *The Liver*)

SU WEN CHAPTER 2

**The three months of spring
Are called spring forth and display.
Heaven and Earth together produce life,
And the 10,000 beings are invigorated.**

**At night, one goes to bed, at dawn, one gets up.
One paces in the courtyard with great strides,
Hair loose, body relaxed,
Exerting the will for life;
To give life and not to kill,
To give and not to take,
To reward and not to punish.**

**This is the way that is proper
To the qi of spring,
Which thus corresponds
To the maintaining of the production of life.**

**To go against this current
Would injure the liver,
Causing illnesses in the summer due to cold,
Through an insufficient contribution to growth.**

Su wen chapter 2

Claude Larre: Su wen chapter 2 might be titled 'A Distribution of Life through the Four Seasons'.

This is all about the process of explosion, expansion, exhaustion and contraction, as seen through the year. Spring is like a spring, it makes a movement, while summer conserves the same movement and gives it stability. You take your vacation in summer not because you are tired but because it is time to let the qi go freely outside. Then at a certain moment when the general condition of the universe is no longer in the ascent, when the yang has given most of its expansion, the other side of life, the yin, has to take its turn being dominant and you have autumn. Autumn is somewhat strange in that sometimes it is closer to summer and sometimes closer to winter, but usually autumn is the time when we amass, harvest and hoard things while awaiting winter. Then we have to close the doors, take care of our condition, draw from the reserves which we have collected during the autumn and quietly wait

for the renewal of life in ourselves and in nature at large. This cycle is so important that there is no way we can treat people ignoring the season in which the treatment is given.

So what about the liver in relation to this question of the four seasons? The text says:

此
謂
發
陳

春
三
月

The three months of spring are called spring forth and display

Often the Chinese use an expression made of two characters, in order that the beginning of the process will be clearly indicated and the tendency of the process demonstrated. So spring is a time when life is sprouting. The character fa, to spring forth, is very expressive. The upper part is more or less the crust of the earth, or some sense of opposition. Below is a bow and arrow and a man who will be shooting it.

This is the way in Chinese characters to represent the condition of the universe when life is ready to come forth, to spring up and to sprout. There is a tension in that movement as in a drawn bow. The initiative for life is seen to be on the side of heaven's power, but the actual display of life is seen on the ground. There is an earthly effect that is springing everywhere, so it expands as much as it springs, and this is taken as being on the side of earth. Since every one of the 10,000 beings is ruled by the combination of heavenly and earthly energy, it is normal that I should feel heaven in myself and that I want to accompany the movement with some sort of horizontal extension. I get up and I expand, and that is spring. This is done for the production of life. Heaven and earth together produce life, and life being produced the movement goes on to maintain and sustain it. So the text says:

Heaven and earth together produce life and the 10,000 beings are invigorated.

The text continues:

At night one goes to bed, at dawn one gets up. One paces about in the courtyard with great strides, hair loose, body relaxed, exerting the will for life; to give life and not to kill, to give and not to take, to reward and not to punish. This is the way that is proper to the qi of spring which thus corresponds to the maintaining of the production of life.

To go against this current would injure the liver, causing illnesses in the summer due to cold through an insufficient contribution to growth.

At this point the liver is mentioned for the first time in the text. So an insufficient contribution to growth has something to do with the state of the liver, and an excessive contribution to growth is also a state which has to be dispersed in order that the harmony of the other functions is kept well. For example, if you give too much to someone in a family, perhaps the others will start to press their demands, and it is never good to give too much without taking care of the effect on the general

balance and harmony. If you feel very excited in spring you may tolerate it because it is in the nature of the qi then, but if you feel very excited in other seasons then you endanger other functions. A little excitement is normal because nothing can be so regulated that it stands still, and it depends on what sort of person and age you are, and also what sort of acupuncturist you meet with!

Elisabeth Rochat: In Su wen chapter 2 we can find all the great principles of the physiology and pathology of the liver. The three months of spring which are described as springing up, spreading out and developing, extend all the effects connected with the function of the liver, being at the beginning of all movements. This function is described as making things flow or propagating, shu xie. In the liver it is the vital impulse which is necessary for the manifestation of life. And this aspect of being the manifestation of a source of life or a strength of life is the answer to the question from Father Larre as to why the liver is both the general of the armed forces and this principle of life. The liver is a manifestation of strength and the great and visible impulse of life, and in the natural world or in the universe this is the power of spring and of vegetation in the spring when flowers and herbs just spread out on the earth. At the level of society this must manifest most clearly in the armed forces. Obviously this strength is based on the kidneys. In Su wen chapter 2 we find it said in the section describing the three months of winter that if we go against the current proper to the qi of winter, then we injure the kidneys causing a weakening in springtime which is exactly like an impotence, or a lack of the power of life. This is the connection between the kidneys and the liver.

The same thing has already appeared in the first chapter of the Su wen, because in that chapter very few organs appear, just the kidneys, liver and heart. The heart appears as the centre of human life and has to be peaceful and empty like a void, so that all circulation can take place. In the period of reproductive life, which Father Larre was talking about, everything is stated with reference to the kidney qi. Then, at the end of the time when a man has the power to produce another life with his own, the liver is mentioned. The liver qi declines because its basis lies in the kidneys, and as their power decreases you do not have the strength to draw back the bow and fire the arrow. This image is found in the first ideogram we mentioned when talking of the three months of spring, fa.

We can find this connection between the kidneys as a basis, and the liver as a spreading out effect in many circumstances. For example in the relation between muscular forces and bones. The muscular forces make a connection between the bones and the flesh in order to make movement. This makes visible not the interior deep strength of the kidneys but the visible movement of the whole body. During springtime heaven and earth together produce life, and this is the same junction through the liver of yin and yang, blood and qi. We will see this later, but there are two sides of the liver: the substance which is in the blood and yin, and the side which is the effect produced, the qi. This is the yang force which is the strength of the liver to spread out and make circulate. Each of the organs has this conjunction of yin and yang but in differing ways.

萬物以榮
天地俱生

**Heaven and earth together produce life
and the 10,000 beings are invigorated.**

In the character for invigorated, rong, we can find the ideogram for wood. Above are two fires, and beneath there is a roof and wood. This ideogram is very similar to another which is that for the nutritive qi, ying. In ying the idea is to bring together all the elements which are necessary to build the body and mind and so on. There is a structure which is something like a military camp or a palace or some kind of building like that.

Ying is the movement of structuration, of construction and building, while rong is the movement of making the sap rise and invigorating the life of plants and trees. Rong is also found as the name of one of the series of five element command points. Naturally one function of the liver should be to invigorate all the body through the distribution and regulation of the quantity of blood, and to invigorate the muscular forces.

夜卧早起

**At night one goes to bed,
at dawn one gets up.**

We can find here the movement which follows the natural breaths inside and outside, because this is the regulation of waking and sleeping, of moving and ceasing to move.

以使志生

被髮緩行

廣步于庭

**One paces about in the courtyard with
great strides,
hair loose, body relaxed,
exerting the will for life;**

This is the beginning of motion after the hibernation of winter. The muscular forces must be unleashed again. The qi must circulate freely now, and go up to the top of the body which is the end of the liver meridian.

If you remember it is the only yin meridian which has this kind of pathway through the head to the summit and the meeting point of all the yang qi.

Claude Larre: Confucius, in every description of him, is said to have had a sort of depression in the skin and bone at the top of his head in order to collect all the yang. It is the point of the 100 meetings, bai hui, or the meeting place of the 100 animating powers. Speaking of 100 always implies the full expanse or totality of something.

Elisabeth Rochat: Because Confucius was the ideal of wisdom, some special connection with the strength of the kidneys had to be manifest. This depression at the top of the head was to collect the benevolent influences coming from above in the same way that water is collected in a hollow or a pond. The great Emperor Shun had two pupils in each eye because he could see everything and show the radiance of life from his own interior light and spirit. Lao zi had big ears resting on his shoulders to collect the sounds of the world. The wisdom of Lao zi was so great that it strained the forces of the kidneys which was why the ears, the special orifices of the kidneys, were especially developed. During spring and during this movement in the universe, which in a human being is called the liver, the muscular forces and all the body have to begin to move. But you have to take care not to go too far and not to get too tired. For this reason we find in the pathology this tiredness. The liver has responsibility for the quality and quantity of movement, for the quantity of blood, and for the mastery of the muscular forces. Also, through the spirit of the liver there is the decision and determining of where and when to stop. The hair must be loose, the body relaxed without being too tired because above all the great function of the liver is to make the qi circulate well. Expressing the will for life has the same meaning as the expansion of life. This is expansion, not in the same way that the heart or spleen expands, but expansion as an impulse with an upward direction. It is an exploding impulse. It is a pushing of life, pushing up and out, like the ideogram sheng. If we go against this current we will injure the liver, and in summer we will have illnesses due to cold. And if not exactly illnesses then some kind of blockage in growing upwards. It is like a plant which has caught the frost, and then never grows properly because the qi can never circulate and penetrate everywhere very well. For this reason in the pathology of the liver we find these kinds of blockages in the circulation of qi, and the balance between the blood that is stored and reconstituted in the liver and the qi of the liver which must be very well preserved all the time.

SU WEN CHAPTER 4

The aspect of natural green of the eastern quarter penetrates
and spreads to the liver,
It opens its orifice at the eye,
It stores the essences in the liver,
Its disturbance is indicated by starting and trembling,
Its taste is acid,
Its own species is grass and wood,
Its domestic animal is the cock,
Its cereal is wheat.

Corresponding to the 4 seasons, in the heights it is the planet Jupiter,
Consequently the qi of spring is in the head.
Its note is the note jue,
Its number is 8,
Consequently its illness is seen in the muscular forces.
Its smell is rancid.

**Su wen chapter 4**

Claude Larre: Let us turn to chapter 4. Chapter 2 is very well known as containing the presentation of the four seasons, and the development of what makes spring the spring, summer the summer, autumn the autumn and winter the winter. The Chinese use analogy as a principle for understanding the deepest meaning of their ways of thinking about life. They observe life, but they do not just create an idea out of it. They place their mind in such a way that although remote from the intellectual feeling, they can give different names to that feeling according to the different phenomena which are manifest in resonance with it. Chapter 4 starts with the east which is the spring, and with the aspect or colour, se.

有東方青色
入通於肝

The aspect of natural green of the eastern quarter penetrates and spreads to the liver.

The character se is usually translated as 'colour', but what is colour? Colour is the aspect, and the visible aspect of nature in the spring is a sort of green. Behind this impression there is the reality of the vision before the colour is declared, and that is the aspect. We do make a very profound distinction between the aspect of things and the colour they have. The chapter goes on with the division of space into 4 or 5 regions. If we are talking of 4 then it is east, west, north and south.

If we are talking of 5 then it is east, west, north, south and a central region. When we have to enter into the movement of life the addition of the centre is necessary.

The same is true with time. We may oppose one season with another, spring and autumn, winter and summer. Spring and autumn are transitional periods of time, and winter and summer are a confirmation of that initial transition. In this way we only need the distribution of time through 4 seasons. But if we want to look at the interplay of one season with another, an additional season is necessary to see how one season progresses, contradicts or glides into another, having some kind of dominance or recession.

We start with what we call a quadrant. A quadrant is a division by 4, a division of space. The east is a portion of space, if it were only a direction we would call it the eastern direction.

Elisabeth Rochat: The two ideograms ru tong are translated 'it penetrates and spreads'. Tong is to be in vital communication with, to receive qi from heaven or from something which constitutes the structure of the thing. Tong is vital communication which is absolutely free and without blockage, and which communicates the virtue of the thing which is in this relationship with something else at the very highest level. For instance, all living beings are in a relationship with the qi of heaven in order to be alive and remain in life. This is at the most general level, but the first particular level of the dissemination of qi through time and space makes the eastern quadrant and the 4 seasons.

Claude Larre: If it were only the impression of colour seen by your eye it could not be said to penetrate. It is a specific quality of qi of which the aspect is qing, the natural green, and that quality of qi penetrates and spreads to the liver. You see then the immense difference of approach between what you see and what is acting. Chapter 4 demonstrates what the qi related to this eastern quadrant is doing.

開
竅
於
目

It opens its orifice at the eye

The liver itself is not visible to us deep within the body, but if something can penetrate it, it has to have an opening on the exterior part of the body. Likewise if something has to move from your own interior self outwards, then it needs some sort of orifice to get out. The eye is the orifice corresponding to the liver.

'Open' in Chinese has two important and different meanings. One is just to open, and the other is to make something move, for example like starting a car. When you say in Chinese 'I open my car' you mean I am starting the engine. Therefore, to open or to have an opening imply a function, not just a location of the orifice. The meaning of open is then the connection between the interior and the exterior, or from the exterior to the interior, all of which takes place via the eye.

Elisabeth Rochat: The first part of the text is just a penetration, a profusion of qi, and the certain quality of qi which constitutes the liver, and then finally at the end of this movement is the eye. It is the extension of this qi of the eastern quarter, which communicates life in the form of the liver within the human body, and which going further and further results in the eye. The eye is the highest orifice, and is in a very intimate relationship with the brain. Through the eyes a human being can project very far away, with a powerful look, and with radiance. The orifice is just the continuation of this movement from the liver, and through the liver out to the exterior world.

Claude Larre: I would like to clarify a point. Since we are adults we have a body and we have eyes, and we talk of bodies and eyes from our standpoint. But actually that is not the case in the text. There we find just what there is. We start from the most pure and indistinct aspect of what exists. As far as life is concerned it is to be found first in the eastern quarter or quadrant. From that you build, or you look at the self-building of different beings, and it happens that the sort of light which is emitted through the power of life coming from what we call liver, forms and acts in a way which finally results in the physical eye which you all know. So it is not saying that the eye is made from this and that, it is the reverse. Things are, and they evolve, and they come to that point at which it is safe to call that function 'liver', whatever liver might be. And this function has the relation to the external world and a relation to what I call myself which is identical to the self of the universe.

It is very important not to make the Chinese think and talk as you do. We just need to try to follow the movement of the text which is already made. This is the reason we insist on knowing certain characters, and knowing the connection from one character to another. If we do not enter through that door everything will be accommodated to our thinking and never be like the Chinese text.

藏
精
於
肝

It stores the essences in the liver

It is proper to the zang to store or treasure. The liver stores essences, jing, but what sort of essences? In fact every kind of essence may go there. The essences will necessarily go to where they pertain, and nothing is stored but the purest, since what is not pure causes trouble and is rejected. If it is not rejected then the liver is endangered. The proper place, the proper time and the proper thing are necessary for the upkeep of life.

Elisabeth Rochat: The second part of the text begins 'it stores the essences in the liver'. So the liver is now able to become a centre of structuration because it fulfils its responsibility as a zang storing essences. When the liver forms a structure in the body, it is able to express itself as muscular forces. Muscular forces are like the liver or wood or plants because they can bend and stretch and then straighten out. This is the great characteristic of the wood element, a kind of firmness together with flexibility. Muscular forces, which are not flesh but are the link and the connection between flesh and bones, are exactly like vegetation or wood, and the ideogram jin is actually made with the bamboo character along with the radicals for flesh and strength. Bamboo is very firm, yet flexible and useful. Jin is ordinarily translated as muscular forces or muscles or tendons, and there is the expression jing jin, the muscular meridian which is the same character. There is the link between bones and flesh through the motion of muscular forces which we call movements. The wind is also characterised by this kind of beginning of movement, like the leaves of a tree in a breeze. This is a good movement for life, for the liver and for the muscular forces, because the liver gives the impulse to the qi to make good circulation and good nourishment of blood.

Claude Larre: In this question of the character jin I would remind you that each time you see a character you have to understand the meaning on two levels. There are tendons which you see them when you cut inside the body, but it is not usually that aspect which is being referred to, it is rather the fact that something has been able to produce this physical form which we call a tendon. The meaning is always the tangible, physical, material aspect which makes a tendon something you understand very well, but at the same time the living body needs inspiration so as not to be dead flesh but to be real and acting.

All this is understood as a 'fusion', as how the heavenly power meets the earthly in order to produce a tendon, a function and the thing which permits the function to exist. Whenever a part of the body is alluded to you must recall in your mind the double aspect of heaven and earth, and the crossing at which human life is possible. So the composition of a character with bamboo, flesh and strength is more than a physical description, and it is the combination of the three parts which makes possible this bending and stretching of life. If you look at that from the point of view of earth then the tendon is not the liver, if you look at it from the point of view of heaven the tendon and the liver are the same. If you look at it from the point of view of the crossing of heaven and earth then the tendon

comes from the liver and the liver is for the tendon. This sort of very simple logic has to be kept in mind in order that you don't stumble on the French or English word used to convey the meaning of the Chinese text.

其
病
發
驚
駭

Its disturbance is indicated by starting and trembling

After the normal state of a healthy man is described you have the disorder. The disturbance in the liver is indicated by something visible, starting and trembling. The character for starting, jing, is made with the ideogram for horse, ma, on the underpart. Horses are very sensitive, and when you move a horse you have to speak to it and stroke its body in order that it won't be surprised. Starting is the most inner feeling at the beginning of the movement of a horse. Trembling is the most external effect of this starting, just as in a car you start the engine and the engine trembles within the body of the car and there is a shaking movement.

This is an exact description of what is done when the essences which are stored or hoarded in the liver with this special combination of qi and blood, are set in motion. The character for trembling, hai, is also made with the horse radical. So this question of the horse is very interesting. Whenever you see a horse walking around in a medical text you can be sure that it is something to do with fear and surprise.

Elisabeth Rochat: When the quality of movement of the liver is disturbed we have a lot of illness with trembling, and this is very important in the pathology of the liver.

其
味
酸

Its taste is acid

Claude Larre: Just as I was describing in the question of aspect and colour, there is a similar situation with taste. When you taste good wine you have the feeling on your tongue and palate, and even in your mind, that it is a really good burgundy or whatever.

French wines are just a little better than others of course! What you have is the impression on your tongue, and this is built from a more important combination of structures which mean that the external sun has been able to be captured by the foliage of the vine, and has been elaborated on in the cellar under certain conditions to produce the taste. But when the Chinese are talking of the 5 tastes they are talking primarily of what constitutes the basis for your appreciation of a taste: the colour, the notes,

the perfume, the savour. All that is understood in Chinese as two different aspects. One is the thing itself, and the other is the effect of that thing on your own organs and sense organs.

Elisabeth Rochat: As Father Larre said taste is a way of testing the internal structure of something. An internal structure is like the essence, it is a very deep living component of something, which can show an aspect like natural green or a taste like acid.

其類草木

Its own species is grass and wood

You can note that the Chinese text in this chapter does not just say wood but 'grass and wood', all the vegetable world with its fibrous aspect.

其畜雞

Its domestic animal is the cock

Claude Larre: The corresponding species to grass and wood in the animal kingdom is the cock. The cock is full of animation, with his red crest and his demeanour in the courtyard. All that is the external sign of the special energy which in the animal kingdom makes him the king, and related to the liver.

Elisabeth Rochat: There is also a very classical connotation because we find it in the Yi jing. A cock is not only a proud and haughty animal but also the one which carefully chooses its food, pecking on the ground for seeds. This is the double aspect of the liver which is the general of the armed forces but which also has the function of conceiving of plans and assessing circumstances, choosing very carefully and selecting a good path to follow.

其穀麥

Its cereal is wheat

This is very difficult to understand. Some classical commentators say it is because wheat ripens early, like the spring, but really I do not know.

上為歲星
其應四時

**Corresponding to the 4 seasons,
in the heights it is the planet Jupiter**

In the second part of this text we are no longer in space or in structure. We are now in the cycle of time, and in this cycle there is a model of time in the form of 5 planets. Above us the circulation and permutation of these planets is like the ideal pattern for all the cycle of time on earth, not only seasons but all cycles of time inside a body, during a lifetime.

The five qi in Heaven form the five planets which are the model for all cycles, seen on Earth as the five elements. The five planets are the visible aspect of the quality of influences coming from above. According to the configuration of the five planets in the different months and years, we may know how Heaven is giving its orientation to life.

Claude Larre: If we go to the planets, the one related to the eastern quadrant is Jupiter. The stars are planets, and the planets move in a way which is different from a constellation made of stars. In order to be complete and to observe life we have to observe the sky, and to make a place for 5 planets. The trouble is that there are more than 5, but they don't care. They only care for the planets which enter the classification!

在頭也
是以春氣

Consequently the qi of spring is in the head

Coming to the position of the qi of spring, since; everything is rising up, in a man we come to the head. The liver qi goes everywhere. There is an ascending motion for expansion and extension, and it goes to the highest place. So it is said that the qi of the spring is in the head, and there is a lot of pathology connected with the head and with the connection of the head with the trunk.

其
音
角

Its note is the note jue

The note is not the sound, it is not what you hear, but rather the specific organization towards hearing which precedes what you hear. When I bang something you hear the sound, and the sound is under the control of a certain note. If you change the instrument you change the sound but you may play the same note. It proves that there is a difference between the note and the sound.

Elisabeth Rochat: The qi of this vibration is the same in quality as the note jue possesses, and it has a corresponding echo in the same quality of qi in the liver and in all those movements represented by the jin. We know from the Book of Rites, Liji Yueji, what the quality of each note is.

There is an intimate relationship between the third note, jue, and the people. If the third note is defective, the sound is sad and the people are discontented.

When this note is well played, at the right time and in the right place it must make people happy, full of the joy of life, and the pushing of this life. If not the result is sadness.

Claude Larre: This needs some comment. When you are playing music it is impossible to only play that note in spring and another note in summer and so on. You have to understand that it is not referring to music as such, it means something different. It means that if you transfer that which is liver to a sound in the order of notes, the proper note is jue. And if you play this note in the springtime, you will fully understand what spring is and what music is. It does not mean that you do not hear the other notes. It is just a way of singling out one note which corresponds to the state of qi constituting the universe and your own liver in all its functions. Thus you can receive the true feeling of the exact connotation between the universe and sound, just as when you see the colour natural green in the spring you do not have the same feeling as when you see it in the autumn. You may have green plants in your house all year but when you see them in springtime you understand what these plants actually are.

This adjustment of notes and colours to the universe as represented inside and outside yourself gives you the proper references for the distribution of life. Actually, in the course of time in different spaces all of it is mixed, and there are places where spring comes just at the time when you are expecting autumn. But that is all contingent. The important thing is to know how everything is built according to a very strict network of forces, of qi. We do not speak of 'energy' in the European School of Acupuncture. Energy is only the yang aspect of this character, and would be to misunderstand the general and very well balanced view of dao in the universe.

其
數
八

Its number is 8

8 may be explained in different ways. My feeling is that it is the number of the winds. There are 8 winds, and there are 8 winds because there are 4 directions which permit the subdivision of the 4 into 8, just to indicate some sort of movement. The 8 winds are not a static division of winds. They are the representation of the movement proper to the atmosphere between heaven and earth, which is so important because it is the cause of so many diseases.

Elisabeth Rochat: In Su wen chapter 4 each organ has a special number between 5 and 9. 8 is 3 + 5. 5 is the first achievement. There is a first set of numbers from 1 to 5, and each one is attributed to an element. According to the fundamental treatise Hong fan, 1 is the number of water, because water is the ancestor of all living beings, 2 is for fire because fire comes to mix with water and to make the kind of hot liquid which is a quality of life, 3 is the number of wood, 4 of metal and 5 of earth. 1 and water are the same thing, like the sea and the mystery of the deep ocean. It is a reservoir of life. Through fire life can then appear, so fire is 2. We also know that there are two sides of fire: ministerial fire and imperial fire. 3 is the number of wood, and also the number of qi. Life appears between water and fire, between heaven and earth and through qi. 5 is the number of the earth, and the earth gives all forms and shapes. Perhaps metal is the element that must be in a very strong, concentrated shape? Metal is the concentration in earth.

Claude Larre: Earth is never simply earth, it is always a mixture as there are so many things which make up humus. But gold is gold, silver is silver and lead is lead. When it is pure it is difficult to divide because it is pressed into itself. Liquid has no specific form, fire is always expanding and rising up, and wood is animated by some sort of vibration. Metal is different from these, but similar to earth. The contrast with earth is that it is pure and made only of itself. It is like one part of earth. The other aspect of earth is that being divided it is made up of everything else like some permutation of all qi put together.

Elisabeth Rochat: For this reason 5, or earth, is the place of all exchanges. If we add this number of exchange and permutation to the other numbers we get a second series: 6 for water, 7 for fire, 8 for wood, 9 for metal and 10 for earth.

Question: Does the explanation for these numbers come from the Nei jing or do you take it from the Yi jing?

Elisabeth Rochat: From the Hong fan, which is a treatise in the Shi jing, Book of History, from the Yi jing and from the commentators who write on these books.

One thing is repeated by all commentators. This first series of numbers is for giving life, in order to write the notes of different qi which can make life. The second series is for the work of life to achieve and to compenetrated and compose all the elements in order to make perfect something which was only in its beginning in the first series.

Claude Larre: The first series is more the potentiality of things, and the second is more the actual being. The actual being is made from this origin when it is worked on by earth. There is nothing actual which does not come out of the earth. It is the same difference as that between the stomach and what exists before the stomach. The stomach is the place where every life may be restored through the essences when they enter and remain there for transformation. The stomach is not a primitive potentiality of life, it is the actual place where life is restored. So we always have to stay within the Chinese frame of life, whether it is a medical book, a painting or philosophy at large. We always have to take into account that sometimes they are talking of things with a specificity but they are not actual things, and sometimes they are talking of an individual thing or being. You have to move from above to below, like things in heaven which are just the so-called images of things, while the actual things have to be drawn to earth and come forth there.

To summarize this, there are two levels of consideration. The first series of numbers is the potentiality of a thing, and if you want to understand things in their potentiality you have to go through 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. That is the level of heaven. But when you come to actual beings, actual beings spring out from the earth, so the second series is 5 + 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Since 10 and 1 are the same thing in the mind we sometimes just stop at 9, which is the reason why you see that often they do not talk of 10 but stop at 9.

Elisabeth Rochat: You can see that if an element has an odd number in the first series it has an even number in the second. It is transformation by the action of the permutation of qi through earth. Water, at the level of creation and production, was the unity, 1, the first. It penetrated all things, including the depths of earth. But at the number 6 it is like a structuration through yin and through all liquids and essential body fluids. The fire, which at the level of 2 is like a condition of life after water, is now, in the number 7, like a spreading out of life, with communication and with tension. Wood, which was with the number of qi, 3, is now with the number of the winds, 8, which is the occupation of space through qi like wind. So you can see that there is some equation in this presentation of element, number and organ.

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**Consequently its illness
is seen in the muscular forces**

Claude Larre: As we saw earlier there is a strict connection between the constitution of the muscular forces and wood. Looking at wood you see it as muscular forces, and looking at muscular forces you see them as made up of vibrating fibres, expanding, stretching and bending just as wood does. But since it involves blood and qi, when we are not rooted the variety of motion is much bigger. However, there is this similarity between mankind and plants, and human beings are just walking plants.

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Its smell is rancid

In the Leamington college they say that the study of the perception of smell is essential to make a diagnosis. It is probable that J. R. Worsley, building his own personal approach to Chinese medicine in speaking of the 5 elements, has disposed himself towards everything which is embodied in them, and the position of the 5 elements is given not only in Su wen chapter 5 but also here in chapter 4.

That is the reason why he had to pay attention to the smell and to the connection of the smell with the taste, and with the note and the colour, and Jupiter and everything else.

The important thing about this presentation in chapter 4 is that it follows a particular order. It starts from the eastern quadrant, and it ends with the smell. You have to recollect in your mind all the processes, and see that since we are more concerned with man than anything else, the liver will have a more important place in the teaching. But it is necessary to be aware that they do not talk of the liver without talking of Jupiter or the odour.

Elisabeth Rochat: If you look at this translation you can see that there are two parts. The first part moves from the aspect of natural green to the cereal wheat. The second part begins with 'corresponding to the 4 seasons' and ends with the odour rancid.

In the first part the meaning is around the senses, the shapes, the aspect and appearance. It holds the sounds and shapes of the qi of earth. The senses are like a structure for all living beings in accordance with the qi of earth, qi which transforms and changes by the presence of earth. In the first sentence there is an evocation of the space, the eastern quarter, which is a portion of space expressing a quality of qi.

The second part has something to do with the qi of heaven. We have the season spring, and the governor of heaven in time in the form of the planet Jupiter.

I think this is the great division of space, the qi of earth and the qi of heaven. All this description of the qi is just to expand on what the liver is, what the muscular force is, what acid is, and what kind of qi is inside a human being.