

# THE WOOD ELEMENT: in Chinese Medicine Classics

An Instructive Discussion, part II (from Larre & Rochat, 1994, *The Liver*)

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## SU WEN CHAPTER 5

The eastern quarter gives rise to wind,  
Wind gives rise to wood,  
Wood gives rise to acid,  
Acid gives rise to the liver,  
The liver gives rise to muscular forces,  
Muscular forces give rise to the heart;  
The liver masters the eye.

In heaven it is the mystery,  
In man it is the dao,  
On earth it is transformations.  
Transformations give rise to the 5 tastes,  
The dao gives rise to ability,  
The deep mystery gives rise to the spirits.

The spirits, in heaven, are wind,  
On earth, are wood;  
Among the parts of the body, it is the muscular forces,  
Among the zang, it is the liver,  
Among colours, it is azure green,  
Among notes, it is the note jue,  
Among noises, it is the shout,  
Among movements that react to change, it is to grasp,  
Among orifices, it is the eye,  
Among tastes, it is acid,  
Among the expressions of willpower, it is anger.

Anger injures the liver, sadness prevails over anger.  
Wind injures the muscular forces, dryness prevails over wind.  
Acid injures the muscular forces, acrid prevails over acid.

## Su wen chapter 5

*Claude Larre:* Chapter 5 seems to have more or less the same content as chapter 4, but this is never the case in a Chinese text. Due to the fact that 4 comes before 5, 4 is more simple and 5 is more integrated, or integrating. Everything which has been said in chapter 4 is taken again here, but the perspective is not exactly the same, and we have to concentrate on the additional parts which make something new.

One may note here the place given to wind, and then we can understand that wind, which usually only has a pathological meaning, also has a normal meaning which is that it is the essence of movement in the universe. We also understand that it is a necessary link between east and wood. I will not make any further comment on this, but it just gives you the impression that chapter 5 is not simply a repetition of chapter 4.

Since 'muscular forces give rise to the heart' we find the connection between the liver and heart is made through the muscular forces. We understand that this force of life which expands so easily in any direction from the liver, now concentrates its power. Just as the winds concentrate their power in 8 directions but come to a standstill because there is never any wind in the centre, so the heart is the silent governor protected by the liver. It is the central role of the heart to be the place where, being at a standstill, everything else is able to move by itself through the control of this motionless heart. It is so important to understand what true government is, and to see that true government is just the image of authentic life within an actual human being.

With the liver mastering the eye it is no longer a question of an opening or orifice, it is the relationship between the liver and the eye through this notion of mastering. Mastering gives more the impression of concentration.

**In heaven it is the mystery,  
In man it is the dao,  
On earth it is transformations.**

To understand the relationship between heaven and earth in man we have to understand that which we call the dao. The dao is proper to man, and a man following the dao is a saintly man. But what about the origin of the dao itself? Its origin is in the inscrutable mystery, so there is nothing to search out from heaven. Heaven is heaven, and you have to just say 'amen'!

You have to stop, and if you do not, you are just a Westerner who wants to know the mystery of Chinese thinking, and there is no end to that process. Contemplation gets closer to the actual fact that life exists, and all descriptions of life lead you to that point where there is nothing to be seen, nothing

to be heard, nothing to be touched. But on the surface of the earth we see the mystery of heaven multiplying itself in the diversity of the 10,000 beings, and not only separate beings but connected beings, and not stable beings but beings under constant change, all of which is registered in the Yi jing, the Book of Change.

Here we understand that there is a three-fold nature to what we want to know: the mystery, the dao, and the transformations. If you know the transformation you know life as a current, if you understand the dao you know how to conduct yourself, and if you accept the mystery you have to be reverent of what exists, whatever you may call it. This is the Chinese viewpoint, and not only Daoist because Confucius said just the same thing in his commentary on the Book of History which was about the changes in the situation of his native place, the principality of Lu, and its relationships with other small kingdoms. The dao is not only proper to the Daoist. The dao is the rule you discover and practise, be you Daoist, Confucianist, Legalist, Mohist or Christian. They are all just ways of behaving between heaven and earth, and it is always the same heaven. Yet all this is inside a book of medicine. So if you just treat people in order to relieve their pains, if you are not able to put them back on the right track in accord with the person they are and the situation they have got, then you are only doing half your work, and maybe you are wasting their time not to speak of your own.

化  
生  
五  
味

### **Transformations give rise to the 5 tastes**

Transformations of earth give rise to the 5 tastes, so the tastes are more important than the colours or sounds or the other things which go by the 5 systematic approaches to perception of life. The tastes help build that which sustains life, and the stomach is the central part of posterior heaven. When that individual has been produced you have to take care to maintain life or to restore it from a pathological state of illness.

道  
生  
智

### **The dao gives rise to ability**

From there we come to what we call the mental sphere, but which is not so distinctly presented in the Chinese text. They know that even if the spirits are more important than the qi, or that the jing is more important than the qi, there is no spirit without a support for it, and there is no use for so much qi if it is not regulated by the jing.

So it is up to us to make a distinction in the text, just to see that it runs smoothly from one statement to the other and not to insist on the differences too much.

When Elisabeth was talking recently of these different levels she did so because it was clear that something was pertaining to heaven and something was pertaining to earth, and that something was taken again in order by comparison of both to make an actual living being.

The distinction of mind, body and spirit is a sound distinction, but it is of no use in practice since the person there is just that one person. So if it helps you to make those distinctions then do so, but if it hampers your way of treating just keep them in your mind but do not insist on them too much, and do not try to find references to mind or references to spirit or references to body since they are always present in good books of medicine.

What is ability? In Chinese it means a knowing. The ideogram zhi contains the image of an arrow going right to the centre of the target. If you add something to that reaching which is the ability to hit something centrally in any circumstance, whatever the target might be, and do it so deftly that nobody can see how you do it. That way of making a puncture, or assessing the condition of man, is the aim of the Chinese text, and is seen not only in the practice of acupuncture and medicine, but in every art and craft.

玄  
生  
神

### **The deep mystery gives rise to the spirits**

What has been said of the dao is proper to man, and what is now said of the mystery is proper to heaven. The spirits in heaven are wind, so the wind which was not mentioned in chapter 4 now appears in the second part of chapter 5. This is important. It obliges the reader of the text to think over what might be the implication of wind and spirits.

We know that the spirits come and go, and we know that the wind is coming and going. Therefore if the same motion is seen in wind and the spirits it is just because the wind and the spirits are more or less the same thing.

神  
在天為風  
在地為木

**The spirits, in heaven, are wind,  
On earth, are wood;**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Wind is only one of the expressions of the spirits in heaven, but it has a really special link with them because the wind is yang qi, like a messenger which brings us orders from heaven, and which can also take back something from earth. Wind is at the beginning of something because it is a first movement, the beginning of a movement, like an agitation or excitation. For this reason the wind is a special manifestation of the spirits, but only one manifestation of them. The spirits as a unity are an inscrutable mystery, but we can examine their effects.

*Claude Larre:* I just want to make a comment on what has been said from the so-called medical perspective, and what is seen in Chinese life, because we cannot separate Chinese structures from the study of medicine.

The spirits themselves on earth are also wood. This may seem strange, but there are many trees inhabited by spirits in the minds of Chinese folk. At the entrance to a village if there was an outstandingly beautiful tree it would be honoured because it was the residence of a spirit. Spirits were also in the earth, and the god of the soil in each village was honoured, and everything was thought to be more or less under his supervision.

So spirits are not only in heaven, they are everywhere, and in the case of the eastern quarter the spirits concerned are the spirits of wood, and wood is more visible than wind. Wind passes without you noticing, except if you see the leaves of the trees moving. In as much as there are spirits in heaven there must be spirits in wood, and you see them through the connection of heaven and earth.

在  
在藏為肝  
在體為筋  
在色為蒼

**Among the parts of the body, it is the  
muscular forces,  
Among the zang, it is the liver,  
Among colours, it is azure-green,**

*Claude Larre:* This is not the same colour as in chapter 4 where it was qing. The azure green, cang, is the colour of heaven, as the granary, cang, a reservoir and a source, a spring for life and living.

在聲為呼  
在音為角

**Among notes, it is the note jue,  
Among noises, it is the shout,**

We have to understand that noises are sounds produced by man. This is a noise produced by some commotion, shouting. There is so much energy, and potential energy or condensed energy in the shouting that it is the proper movement of the column of air which is in the lungs and which goes up through the mouth. Therefore shouting is the true motion of the eastern quarter in so far as noises are concerned.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The same ideogram has the meaning of shouting or expiring. It is the same because it is the same movement of breath as it goes out.

*Claude Larre:* Why do we have to choose between one meaning or another? Here it is because they are talking of noises, and a noise is more accurately described as shouting than expiring. But we also know that when a man is in a poor condition his expiring makes a truer noise, it is not then just the going out of the breath.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The quality or quantity of expiration or inspiration is part of diagnosis.

在動為握

**Among movements that react to change, it is to grasp**

*Claude Larre:* We can all understand that I think. In Lao zi chapter 53 it is said that a young baby has a firm grasp. So the internal movement, the noise, and the external motion correspond one to another, shouting grasps the sound, and grasping an object is the equivalent of a shout.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* It is the same movement. The qi is in motion just as during the springtime.

在志為怒  
在味為酸  
在竅為目

**Among orifices, it is the eye,  
Among tastes, it is acid,  
Among the expressions of willpower, it is anger.**

*Claude Larre:* The expression of the will, zhi, is connected with the power of life. If you want something with your will you are acting through the most essential part of your life power. So will and life power are identical at their root, and there is

nothing intellectual which gets in the way in the Chinese understanding. It is only in our own perception of will that we mix will and projection. The Chinese would say yi if they wanted to talk of a projection

because that is something coming from the power of representing a proposal and having the power to act in order to realise what you have in your mind. In springtime what is seen is that anger is the typical expression of the will. Anger is only one of the possible translations, and it is difficult because it sounds reproachful in our interpretation of language. It implies the same tension that you get when you draw a bow. In your mind, your willpower corresponds to anger. It is just tension.

酸傷筋辛勝酸  
風傷筋燥勝風  
怒傷肝悲勝怒

**Anger injures the liver, sadness prevails over anger.**

**Wind injures the muscular forces, dryness prevails over wind.**

**Acid injures the muscular forces, acrid prevails over acid.**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The injury to the muscular forces from wind and acid is the same, like a spasm or cramp. They tense up the muscular force because the action of wind is an action of drying, but also of setting in motion. If this movement is too strong the result is a spasm.

Acid normally has the effect of concentrating and contracting, so this is a good balancing for the liver. It is also helpful in view of the liver's responsibility for keeping the blood. But if there is too much acid this action of collecting and strengthening is too strong, the muscular forces go into spasm and there is a blockage in the circulation of qi.

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## SU WEN CHAPTER 9

**The liver is 'the trunk of extreme cessation'.**

**It is the residence of the hun;**

**Its flourishing aspect is in the nails,**

**Its full power is in the muscular forces,**

**Its function is to produce blood and qi;**

**Its taste is acid,**

**Its colour is azure blue.**

**It is the shao yang within the yang.**

**It has a free and easy communication with the qi of spring.**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In this chapter the first characteristic of the liver is to be the 'trunk of extreme cessation', ba ji zhi ben. This expression is very odd because the other zang have a more noble definition of their charges. For example, the heart is the trunk of life and for all the changes through the spirits, and the lung is the trunk of qi.

Extreme cessation is the point where you have reached an extremity. It is the main beam in a building that holds everything together, the point where everything converges. At this place the liver assumes its function. It comes to a meeting point where it finishes everything that makes the activities stop. We saw previously that the liver was in charge of the beginning of all activities, and this then seems contradictory. But a cessation will also be the cessation of hibernation, and we have some texts such as the Huainan zi where this ideogram, ba, has the meaning of the cessation of sleeping, the cessation of inactivity and hibernation. This is the first point.

The second point is that the ideogram ba is in two parts. The lower part is like a great brown bear, meaning that this implies the power and bravery of this kind of beast. This ideogram, neng, means to be able to do something, to have the power to do something, the talent, the valour and the courage. The upper part is a net, and when all this power and strength is in a net, then you stop and you cease to exercise this power. There is a blockage and obstruction. It is the image of something entangled in a net so that it cannot express itself freely. If you put the heart radical underneath the character neng, you create another ideogram which is the expression of courage and bravery, the expression of internal value. Every attitude which we show in our behaviour and gestures reveals the strength and power inside. This gives us to understand that when we talk of cessation in relation to the liver it is because one must economize and guard the force of life which is represented by the liver, to conserve, to manage and to regulate.

*Question:* I do not really follow why the liver is the trunk of extreme cessation. Do you mean it is because spring comes at the end of winter?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The end of winter is the end of hibernation, but if you spoil your qi and your power you are unable to use your strength, and you are like a bear in a net. For this reason your muscular forces are completely exhausted and your hun are too, because this kind of exhaustion is on all levels. Your will is too exhausted to do anything. There is a relationship between the qi and the liver and gallbladder meridians with the brain and superior orifices. Therefore the liver is the trunk where all cessation of activity can occur. Zhuang zi chapter 15 says, 'The hun of a sage are never in this state of inactivity and ceasing.'

*Question:* Is this concept of the liver as the trunk of extreme cessation linked with jue yin, extreme yin?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* It is not the same ideogram. This ideogram for extreme in chapter 9 is ji as in tai ji quan, it is the point where everything meets, the ridgepole, the key position.

*Claude Larre:* If you take the lower part of the character ba there are three possibilities. You can leave it on its own as neng, meaning power or ability, associated with the qi of a bear. You know that different animals are different expressions of living forces and qi in the universe. In the northern abyss where there are big fish, the qi just waits like winter. But in the southern abyss there is a flying bird. That is the reason why people cast your Chinese horoscope in order to understand where your natural expression of qi is. The point is that the bear has an exceptionally good position in all this since he is so powerful and strong when acting, yet so quiet when not moving. All this was observed by the Chinese.

If we put the net character on top of this, the net itself is an expression of capturing. Then we understand that the enormous qi which is represented by the bear is stopped.

The third possibility is to place the heart radical beneath the neng character so that it becomes the expression of the attitude which is the external manifestation of your inner self. This character is tai, and tai is attitude, meaning that the qi is no longer seen as a bear, or the capturing of his energy, but just as a variegated expression of the qi.

In Su wen chapter 1 at the beginning there is much agitation surrounding the birth of Huang di. The shen are deeply moved and Huang di appears, although they do not tell you whether it is through the motion of the spirits that he appears or if it is because of his appearance that they are moved! The classical Chinese text does not make a difference between the so-called cause and the so-called effect, it just states the thing as it appears. The second line comes to the second level where it is no longer a question of shen but a question of jing or qi. Here it refers to Huang di saying that he was able to express himself, and the characters used are neng yan. In ordinary language neng would mean to be able, but in an etymological context it means that you have enough qi to be able to do something. To be able is just a vacuum, it does not refer to life as such, it is the qualities of your qi which make you able to write, to walk and so on.

Two years ago this character ba caused Elisabeth and I a lot of trouble. We were unable to understand why this extraordinary strength giving life, expanding in all directions, was also the trunk of cessation. We would say that on the contrary the liver is just the way life is expanding itself visibly. But here we have to say that it is impossible to be an expanding force if you are not also the force which keeps things under the ground in hibernation.

One part of Su wen chapter 1 talks about the numbers and cycles which rule a woman's and a man's life. For a woman it is 7, and 7 periods of 7 years which rule her life as far as fertility is concerned. It is not the age which is stated, it is the ascending phases, and the declining times, not just fertility, but the ability through fertility to use the supply of the surplus of life which is in her. For man it is 8, and 8 periods of 8 years making 64 years for the ability to bring life to a woman in order that through that woman he can perpetuate his own life through a child. A quotation from Su wen chapter 1 says:

**In man at 7 times 8 years the qi of the liver declines, the muscular forces, jin, are no longer capable of moving.**

The text here is so clear that it is not necessary to make too much comment, but I can just remind you that the muscular forces are sometimes translated as muscles, sometimes as tendons. The muscle is not the flesh, the muscle is the flesh plus the ability to move. So tendons and muscles combine into one unit which is the basis for physical motion. When the qi originating from the liver declines, the external appearance of that decline is seen in the motion. It is no longer supple, full of strength and precise. Look at old people, they are hesitant, they fall easily, and so on. This is not just because the muscles and tendons are not strong enough, but because the liver is not giving enough qi to maintain the ability to move correctly in the muscle and tendons. The Chinese way is to observe external phenomena, whilst always keeping in mind that they are only the superficial appearance of a more profound state of life.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* We saw in Su wen chapter 1 the end of woman's fecundity and man's potency, and the implication of the liver qi in that, and this is precisely the beginning of the stopping of that movement.

We do not speak of the liver at the beginning of the power of man, but we know that the liver itself and its meridian has a function in the reproduction of life. It is just at the time when the qi is declining, in cessation, and is exhausting itself that we speak of it. So it is in the liver that the cessation of activity begins to be visible.

*Claude Larre:* We also need to think very carefully about the liver's assessment of circumstances and conception of plans, deciding when the armed forces have to move or stop and so on.

## **The Hun**

### **It is the residence of the hun.**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* What are the hun? According to Zhuang zi the hun in a sage are never in a state of cessation. For this reason I think that there is in the idea of the hun a notion of activity which is not present in the shen. The shen which are kept by the heart are related to non-action. They are inexpressible, they cannot be analysed. The shen cannot even be reduced to analysis within yin yang because, being beyond them, they are what allow the deep, profound unity of each being. The hun follow the inspiration of the shen. For example, in Ling shu chapter 8 the definition of the hun is that which comes and goes conforming to, and modelling itself upon, the shen. They are therefore an expression of the activity inspired by the shen. With the shen their number is indefinite, it could be one, it could be numerous. It is never defined, and they are beyond all enumeration. But for the hun, since the Han Dynasty there have always been three. So they represent the activity which is directly inspired by the shen at the level of 3, or on three levels, it is the same thing. 3 is the number of qi, and the hun are on the side of activity, of qi and of yang. There is a unity in the hun, but it is a unity which is expressed in the unity of heaven, earth and man. For example in texts of internal alchemy the 3 hun are placed in the three cinnabar fields, dan tian, in the head at the level of the brain, in the chest and just below the umbilicus, and the Liver has a special relationship with each of these three areas.

*Claude Larre:* When talking of the three hun we usually have a tendency to try and separate out their different functions. But life itself is a unity and this unity is made when all parts of the body and the emanations of the three hun are working together. If we speak of 'mind' we are speaking of the san hun, but if we want to talk of 'spirit' then it is no longer a question of the 3 hun but of the hun answering to a higher mystery, which is the shen. It is like being under the influence of some mysterious master who either does not speak or speaks only a few words, but who attracts your mind. They are so high above us that they express or they do not express, they are roaming free and we just try to adapt to them.

The distinction between the shen and the hun is that the hun are so connected with the body that each time you talk of them it is almost possible to differentiate the first from the second and the third from the first and second. This sort of movement and the description of it are on the level of life in the

median. They are not the bones as such, and they are not the spirit, they are life itself which is on the move but which has to be referred to the highest level. The shen are free, and the hun adapt their movement to what they feel are the indications given them by the shen.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The cataleptic state of the saintly man in meditation is when the hun have left the body for the mystic journey. He journeys with an aesthetic vision through the hun, whilst living a vegetative life. He has all the activities of life which ensure the maintenance of his body, but he is almost in suspended animation. He can no longer speak, he no longer sees, and he no longer has any means of expression. The function of the hun is thus explained by their absence. But through these journeys the hun puts the person capable of it in contact with the great and profound reality of life. This is possibly because of the close connection between the hun and the shen where the hun are ministers and auxiliaries for the shen. It is possible that through sleep and through dreams, where the liver and the hun play a fundamental role, that there is this same contact with the deep reality of your being. Death is when the hun are carried away by their natural movement of rising, expanding and diffusing. When there is no longer anything more to concentrate them, to bring them back and hold them, then there is the dissociation of the hun and the po, and that is death.

In China there is a traditional ceremony called zhao hun, the calling of the hun. When someone has just died they go to the roof of the house and call to their hun begging them to return to the body of the deceased. If they do not come back then the po, which have a movement of concentration and moving downwards, descend into the earth. The relatives and mourners try to make sure that the po stay in the body when it is in the tomb so that they don't come out and annoy the living. To do this they seal up all the exits of the body to trap the po inside. In funeral rites when you are sure the hun are not going to come back you plug all the orifices of the body with rice or jade, depending on how rich you are. Then you put the body inside a coffin, and put that coffin inside another coffin, and repeat that several times. You then put all the coffins inside a tomb and seal it up.

To come back to the hun, they have a movement of elevation and diffusion, and because of that there is a danger of dissipation and scattering. The hun need to be restrained, and they need the power of the po, being on the side of essence and structure, to fix them.

There is also another aspect to be considered which is that the hun express themselves or are expressed through the blood. In Ling shu chapter 8 it says that the blood is the residence of the hun. The liver stores the blood and therefore this red liquid which is so full of life, and which is linked to the heart and to the spirits of the heart, is also the vehicle for the activity of the hun. The hun need this mass of blood to fix them and give them something solid. Inversely, it is the lungs which store the qi and the qi is the residence of the po. The po are more on the side of essence and structure and of a movement which gathers and collects. This is the movement proper to yin. So the hun and the po are the yang and yin expression of the shen. The shen themselves are beyond what we can express through yin and yang, they are just for the radiance and illumination of life, as in shen ming. Yin and yang expressions of vitality are found at every level of life, and the hun and po are an archetype of yin and yang working in a human being. You must not lose sight of the fact that it is the penetration and crossing of the two which makes life.

*Claude Larre:* I would refer you to Lao zi chapter 10 where the first sentence is zai ying po boo yi. Zai means to maintain, ying is in place of hun and is all the activity of a superior type which has to rely on the po. You cannot be so angelic that you do not care for the servants who make life for you. You have to decide to maintain the ying, and if you are able to retain the unity of yourself, bao yi, then everything goes smoothly.

The interest of this chapter is that it is the beginning of the part of the Daode jing where it stresses the conditions of life, and from chapter 10 onwards you see a difference in vocabulary. It does not talk of hun. In medical texts you probably do find hun and po, and in books about rites and ceremonies you always find the san hun. The banner of Mawangdui is in itself a representation of what to do when the san hun go upwards and the seven po are left to care for the remains of the person. In other books different expressions are used, and if hun is not found then ying may be used. If is the activity of the hun which is alluded to. It means to nourish and infuse with life. The po do not make life come, they just serves life, and it is interesting to be able to make such a distinction between the more and the less noble activities in man, since the Chinese have always been taught to observe a social order.

*Question:* The shen are supposed to enter the foetus of the baby at the third month, when do the hun enter a human being? Is it only after birth?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* No, before birth. If the shen and the hun are really the powers which direct the movement necessary for life within the unity of the being which emerges from the void, then you have to have them at the beginning of that being. There are non-medical texts which say that the po come first and then the hun, but this is just to say that the jing has to be there in order to produce the structure of a being, to give a code for the structure and to bring together all the constituents for a being. It is the blue-print or pattern. So if the hun express this movement of diffusion or circulation of life, and if they are the active expression of and for the shen, then they must necessarily be there at the moment when this power takes form.

There is no real before of after in the sense of time, there is only the mystery of a being, the mystery of life which is individual to a being and which can only be expressed through this double action of the hun and po. The right hand side of the characters for both hun and po is gui, which is a spirit of the earth. Therefore there is a differentiated expression in this being which takes life on this earth under heaven. If we look at it from the point of view of the hun we would say that they are for the expansion of life on the side of yang, and we would say that the hun are primordial. But if we look at the other side of the deep structure for life, at the essences which continually reconstitute your being, not only in your body but also in your spirit, then we would have to say that the po are primordial and come first. Birth is only a stage in the process of life, albeit a very important stage. There are different rites at different levels, but before birth and after birth are just different stages with different rituals.

*Claude Larre:* Why are we now talking of rites and leaving the field of anatomy and physiology? The point is that rites are the way to maintain order in the social body. Without rites it is impossible to make Chinese society function. Without something very close to rites it is impossible to make a human body or an individual live. Rites are the social aspect of the movement of life in an individual. Therefore on the question of what time the hun become active in a baby, the distinction might be very clear. If a woman is pregnant there is no child as such. There is a development of part of the woman

which will, after birth, become another distinct individual. The child is part of the mother, and the hun and po of the mother are doing all the work, but they are slowly, indistinctly, forming what will become the hun and po of the child after birth. When you see that as a continuous process the question of what precise time does the hun knock on the door to enter the baby is nonsense. It is a koan. A koan is beyond sense in order to press the mind of the disciple to change his or her direction and try another approach to what is real. What appears as contradictory are just two sides of a question which will be solved on a higher level.

*Question:* You said that the hun gets its inspiration from the shen, so what gets out of order? Are the shen to blame?

*Claude Larre:* No, the shen are always perfect.

*Question:* So how are the shen affected if the hun are not in order?

*Claude Larre:* The shen are just going elsewhere and doing other work. They do not even wait for the hun they are so independent and autonomous.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* If the hun are in disorder it is because there is a lack of communication between the shen and the hun. The shen cannot radiate their light sufficiently.

*Question:* It has been said that the hun comes from the father and the po from the mother?

*Claude Larre:* No, that is just distribution on the left and right sides. The mother cares day and night so she is more on the side of the po, and the father is necessary for the insemination, which is like heaven. But this is distributing the roles too easily. We know that it is the crossing which makes life, and the unity of man and woman is sustained by the product of their union.

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## Questions

*Question:* Why is it said that marrow gives rise to the liver?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* This sentence actually appears in the section on the northern quadrant and the kidneys. In the same manner as the muscular forces give rise to the heart, the marrow gives rise to the liver. The text of chapter 5 here chooses marrow not bones because the basic substance of the liver is not found in yang qi or yang forces which are expressed in bones, but in yin matter and in the essences which are in the marrow. The marrow gives the power and strength to the bones. So this is an expression of the double nature of the kidneys. The essences of the kidneys give rise to the marrow and give rise to the blood, and the blood is stored by the liver as its fundamental function. All the other functions are effects.

*Question:* Could you enlarge on zhi, willpower, and its connection with emotion?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Zhi is not an emotion or a sentiment, it is a basic state from which all sentiment and emotion can take form. In the ideogram zhi you see the heart in the lower part, and above is probably the image of a phallus. Something is erected on the earth in order to express life, and this is will, but without any consideration of emotion or sentiment. It is the foundation of a will for life, and with this connection between the kidneys and the heart, all emotion and feeling can take place through the heart. If the heart is void then there is a free circulation and permutation of all these emotions, which are just the same movements as the seasons or organs. But in the ideogram zhi there is a good basis and firm foundation.

If you look at Ling shu chapter 8 you can see that this zhi came after the good co-ordination of spirit, hun and po, after the heart is established as the centre, and after the projecting of an idea which remains because it is good, yi. So in harmony with the whole of life in the individual you have zhi.

*Claude Larre:* You make a decision to become an acupuncturist, but to carry it on it has to be shaped and well thought out. You have to know if you have enough time, what school you will apply to, what additional finances you need to support yourself. That is part of the construction of the scheme. Your idea is to become an acupuncturist, but this idea has to be built, and it has to rest somewhere in your willpower.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* For the expression of life you need some expression of the movement of life and the emotions. You need both together in a good harmony to have balance in your mental life. If you have too much sadness you no longer have a spreading out, and this injures the liver. But if you have too much spreading out you need a little sadness to prevail over the anger.

*Question:* Can you talk about the significance of the placing of different parts of an ideogram?

*Claude Larre:* Usually the heart radical is seen on the left side or underneath. Sometimes, though rarely, it is in the middle of a character. On the left side it is more of an addition, it is to make the character more precise and to tell the reader that the character has something to do with the emotions and the heart. If the radical is underneath it gives the impression that everything rests on the heart. In this position the heart is understood as the basis for what is in the upper part. The position of the radical is important for meaning. If we talk of the earth radical, the earth is on the left or underneath, it is never on the right side. If it is the knife radical, it is always on the right side, and so on. So the combining is half convention, and half natural. For example, it is natural that a colour would be on the top. The difficulty with Chinese characters is not only the position of radicals but the stroke order as well. In order to really know that, you have to refer to Chinese lexicographers because they have taken years and years to establish how different parts combine.

*Question:* Could you say something about the ideogram nu?

*Claude Larre:* The lower part is the heart. The meaning is the impulse to begin something. For example, in Zhuang zi chapter 1 when the great fish in the ocean becomes a large bird-like creature and then leaves the water to move into the air, and after a great effort and impulse takes flight in the sky, the effort is described by this ideogram nu. This is the effort to make life take off.

For the upper part I refer you to the Ricci Dictionary no. 3692 . This is slaves. Slaves are not educated people, they are taken prisoner after a victorious war with the barbarians. They do not know Chinese mind or culture, and their behaviour is always violent and impolite. Like French people compared to English people! If you have this feeling it ends in unrepressed conduct. You just do what you want, you express yourself with harsh words, you have no self-control, you are violent, and this violence is present in the spring and in anger.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In the character for slave you have the characters for a woman on the left and a hand on the right. The woman was suppressed by the hand which created suppressed anger!