

# **Instructive Discussions & Reflections on the Nature, Characteristics & Inter-relationships of Jing, Shen, Xue and Qi.**

## **Deriving from:**

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## **FOREWORD**

'Fulfilling one's destiny is just guiding one's life with essences and spirits and qi according to the great rule of cosmic animation as expressed in oneself.'

Essences, spirits, blood and qi are the fundamental and indispensable elements comprising life in a human being. Their individual qualities and their interactions one with another determine the pattern for all movements of life, mirroring those of the cosmos. By virtue of these constituents within us we are completely integrated with the universal life of heaven and earth. We cannot be disconnected from the natural phenomena which surround us. Nor is our spiritual life separate from the physicality of our environment.

This book explores these ideas, considers each of the substances and presents the authors' insights and observations rooted in scholarship and philosophical reflection. What unfolds is the perception of an individual life in which essences, spirits, qi and blood constantly enfold and entwine each other, creating in that process the intricate mechanisms with which we can maintain our vitality, and composing the shape, colour and texture of our destiny.

'The movement of life is nothing other than the perpetual desire to remain alive and produce life'.

Caroline Root, Rhodes 1999

## **COUPLES IN CHINESE MEDICINE**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Before the study of essence, spirit, blood and qi (jingshen xueqi) as such, we will look at the presentation of couples in Chinese medicine in general. Reality itself is indivisible, but through the presentation of a couple or a dual expression the Chinese have tried to describe precisely where movement exists, where pathology exists, and how to treat it. The movement of life which is reflected in the animation and physiology of mankind mirrors that of cosmic life. This means that the

same patterns and laws which make life in the universe also make life in an individual living being. That is the reason why there is a kind of community of life, a kind of resonance from one being to another, and it is also the reason why when analogies are made in the medical texts to such things as heaven and earth or rain and clouds, they are not exactly images, they are more than that, they are descriptions of the fundamental movements of life. We can find these same movements within the human organism, even if they are with certain particularities and specificities for the human species. It is the same for plants and animals, and even for the life of the earth itself, with its rivers and streams. Some texts make comparisons between the rivers on earth and the movement of blood and qi (xueqi). But it is not merely a comparison, it is the same thing, the same movement that is seen in the cosmos and in the individual.

It is quite difficult to speak of such generalities as yinyang, heaven and earth, and jingshen, and of what their meaning as couples is in Chinese medicine. So before giving an analysis of some of the characters used in medical texts, I prefer just to read and discuss some quotations from the first chapters of the Nei jing.

**'From ancient times, communication with heaven, the trunk of life, has been rooted in yinyang.' Su wen chapter 3**

The meaning of this quotation is that as a living being, what is essential in my life and what maintains me in my life is a relationship with heaven. This relationship with heaven is not only external, for example through respiration, it is also my ability to create and restore in myself those heavenly qualities which I have in my heart through the presence of the spirits. This is the real trunk of life which is behind the differentiation of yinyang. Reading the beginning of Huainan zi chapter 7 there is the same idea, but just expressed in other terms.

**'In antiquity, before heaven and earth even existed,  
There were only images without forms,  
Profound, opaque, vast, immobile, impalable and still.  
There was a haziness, infinite, unfathomable, abysmal,  
A vast deep to which no one knew the door.**

**'Then two spirits born together,  
Rule heaven and regulate earth.  
Deep-like indeed!  
No one could see where they ended.  
Great-like indeed!  
No one knew where they ceased.**

**'Thereupon they distinguished into yin and yang,  
And quartered the eight poles.  
Hard and soft mutually completing each other  
The 10,000 beings acquired form.'**

Communication with heaven is the real trunk of life which is behind the differentiation into yin and yang, and this expression yinyang as a couple is the first requirement of all sorts of exchanges and compositions which make living beings. But all the conditions of the harmonious composition of a couple always rely on something deeper and more important, here expressed as the relationship and communication with heaven. In other texts it is expressed as free communication with the shen. The

shen should be the ultimate regulators of all the movements of life, of everything which is yin and yang and all their interplay inside the body.

**'In the space between heaven and earth, inside the six junctions, the qi of living beings, in nine territories and through nine orifices, in five zang and through 12 relays of animation, all communicate with the qi of heaven.'** Su wen chapter 3

Between heaven and earth there is an exchange because heaven is made with a rising and expanding movement, and the earth is composed from that which gradually descends and condenses because of the removal of the light and subtle elements for heaven. Therefore there is always a relationship between heaven and earth and they are never separate. There is always communication and exchange, and in this place of exchange which is also the median void, or the space between heaven and earth, we have the mixing of yin and yang. Here the 10,000 beings and all living beings appear. They are always subject to dual relationships because they have something from earth and something from heaven, and because everything appears by the effect of duality. What belongs to earth, as far as man is concerned, is the bodily structure, and what belongs to heaven is the jingshen, the spirits depending on the subtle essences for their expression. But a human being is always the mixing of these two fundamental parents, heaven and earth. In classical texts they are also named as father and mother. This is not just an image, because we really are in the likeness of the exchange between heaven and earth, and we are formed through all the exchanges between particular aspects of heaven and earth. Each living being is at a precise crossing point and dependent upon a lot of agencies determining its exact nature and composition. It is, in other words, his destiny, because he has to follow his nature.

In this space between heaven and earth, all this animation is lived through a human being with a physical organization in the likeness of this great exchange of qi. What is important for man is that he has an important quality of belonging to heaven depending on the jingshen. His life is really completed in his relationship with heaven or with what he is able to do with the heaven within him. This is why we find in treatment, and it is also said in a lot of classical texts, that if you do not go to the spirits you cannot really treat and you cannot radically cure. All life is ruled by this centre and it is also the very specific efficiency of needles that they can give a signal to the spirits of man, and perhaps first clear the way in order to make this communication and this signal perceptible and possible. So the nine territories, nine orifices and five zang just summarize this total similarity between the organization of life in a human being and of life between heaven and earth where this human being exists.

**'The yang qi is like the sun in heaven. When it loses its place, life is broken and the being no longer shines. Whether the heavenly influx is regularly distributed depends on the solar radiance; thus the yang soars upwards and ensures the defence of the exterior.'** Su wen chapter 3

Because of the preceding explanation we can understand that to say the defence or the defensive qi within the human body is like the sun in heaven is not just a poetic image but is really the best explanation of the movement and the quality of that defensive qi inside the body. It is just this

likeness which is acting, and it is something in my life which is acting like the movement of the sun in heaven.

What is the sun? The sun is light, warmth, and the rhythm of life because of day and night. In man there is something which is surging from the original and invisible depths like the sun at dawn. Ling shu chapter 18 says it surges from the lower heater. The movement, vitality, warmth and animation expand up to the limits of my body, to the layers of the skin, but they also make clouds and rain. These are due to the warmth of the sun vapourizing the humidity of earth. The clouds can also impregnate the earth by rain. So what is the defensive qi within the human being other than that, because it also creates circulation and humidity inside the human body up to the extremities? This is possible because there is vapourization and transportation of these liquids incorporated with a gentle warmth, so that there is an effect of defence at the level of the flesh and at the layers of the skin. It is because of this that a pore can open and close regularly. And it is certainly because of this fire in the lower heater and the impregnation of the vapour and liquids at the level of the lower heater that the defensive qi is linked with the lower heater in order to create all the circulation and transportation, thus making the efficiency of the defence.

This is also the way by which the defensive qi, during the day, expands the animation inside the bone articulations and gives strength to the muscles, causing the opening of the eyes and the impregnation of the sense organs in order for them to be in relationship with the exterior. During the night there is a kind of coming back, exactly mirroring the sun; a withdrawal to the interior in order to restore the quietness and purity of the essences within the zang as well as to renew the proper forces of the defensive qi. And you know that this quietness and purity of essences offering support for the spirits are also the best defence a man can have. If the spirits are really determining all the movement of liquids and qi, of defence and nutrition and of blood and so on, the best way to have a good defence is to be at peace in the interior. We know that not to be at peace is a good way to get a disease. Of course, this is also the way by which this defence acts during the night in the interior. It cleans and gives strength to the zang, and these are very precise functions because defence is not a concept, it is a series of very definite mechanisms, circulations and activities.

**'That which gives life to the yin is rooted in the five tastes (wu wei) and the five residences (wu gong) of the yin are attacked by these five tastes.' Su wen chapter 3**

This is a way to say that what is yin is just the reconstruction or the maintaining of the fabric of life, the food and nourishment, the five tastes. What are called the essences of posterior heaven are the way essences are renewed in me. By these essences we rebuild all kinds of liquids, blood, qi, and animation, and we transform bodily structure by inner penetration, mixing and so on. If something is really very wrong in these five tastes, in the way we are renewing essences within the body, eventually something will be wrong in the interior at the level of the zang, and that will ultimately be an attack on the jingshen, at the supreme and highest level of life.

**'Yin is that which stores the essences (cang zang) and then there is a springing up and development (qi qi). Yang is that which defends on the exterior (wei wai) and then solidity (gu) is the result.' Su wen chapter 3**

What is interesting is that in this quotation we have the dual relationships. If we have to give a definition of yin and yang it is more exact to make a presentation with the effect of one upon the other. There is always enough yin, enough humidity and descending movement, in heaven to make a movement towards the earth, and to give to the earth by means of rain and so on. And there is always enough clarity and purity inside the earth to be able to vapourize and rise up to heaven and make clouds. If it is like that in a living being too, then it is the same as heaven and earth. The essences that are the basis and foundation of life are kept carefully and actively by means of and within the zang, they are not kept for themselves, but for the realizing of something. They are to be the support of the springing up, and the yang movement. There is no yang, no qi and no defence if there is nothing to support this movement and to make a firm basis for its springing up. This presentation of the yin is important for the storing of the essences, and as the condition necessary for the release and the support of the yang movement.

The yang movement is of course very important for making the defence of the exterior, but what is also important is to preserve the vitality in the interior of the body, and we can see that in the couple xueqi. Everywhere the yang qi acts not only like the effusion of something but also as the limits of this diffusion. It is like a current of water which causes the circulation of the water, but also pushes it in a particular direction. This is the most important point, the harmonious composition. If there is not enough essence or yin there is no real power in the yang. In the first instance you can have a kind of bursting out, but it does not last. After that you just see the end. If there is not enough strength in the yang or the qi or the animation, it is not only a weakness of qi but also a diminution of the presence and power of the essences. For instance, if they are not able to make the transformation needed for the assimilation of new essences, the power of the essences diminishes. It is always like that when you have the expression of animation and vitality in a dual expression, yin and yang, blood and qi, essences and qi and so on. The most important thing is how they are able to interplay one with the other in a constant interpenetration. If one is weak we have a series of symptoms, and that always leads to the end of the couple. There is no yin without yang and there is no defence without nutrition. There is no blood without qi and so on. Of course Su wen chapter 3 just emphasizes this by giving very symbolic, sharp examples of this association inside these couples.

**'When yin cannot dominate yang the mai flow violently and precipitately, a disharmony that leads to madness. When yang cannot dominate yin the qi struggles inside the five zang and there is no longer communication through the nine orifices.'** Su wen chapter 3

In this quotation 'dominate' is sheng, and the meaning is to be strong and to take advantage and overpower. So there is something which is unable to ensure all the circulation of vitality and exchange through to the exterior coming from the five zang.

*Claude Larre:* My feeling is that it is not that the yin is really dominating, but that it is strong enough not to be overpowered by the yang. The yang has to be contained in a way, like a river. If the yin in a river was too dominating it would no longer be a river, it would be a pond. But if the yin, the embankment which is that solid part which channels the water, was not there then the yang would be so out of control that it would no longer be of use for any work. So when they say 'dominate' it

means to dominate to the point of being able to retain the good value. It is not exactly to dominate, it is to be able to influence to the point where the yang is controlled. It is not easy for the yin to dominate the yang without suppressing the yang.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* This domination is like the controlling cycle of the five elements, it is exactly the same, and the same character, sheng. The domination is just to be able to maintain the balance. If to dominate is to restrain, if there is not enough yin, not enough liquids in the stomach for example, this would lead to inflammation and dryness, and madness is even one of the possible eventual symptoms of that. The same thing is true for the contrary, because if there are not enough essences to satisfy and fulfil the yang there is a kind of agitation which is not circulation, because without power and foundation the qi does not follow its normal course. There is just a kind of bursting or an agitation. But this is not because the yang is too strong, or the yin is weak. The qi is just following the same way. There is a disorder, and the disorder is that it is unable to know what the correct way is. This is a kind of blockage due to the qi. For instance, you can have this kind of blockage due to obsessive thoughts having an effect on the qi of the liver. Other examples of this are from a lack of or poor quality blood of the liver, or a lack of the essences and liquids coming from the spleen.

At the innermost place there is the heart or the five yang. This is the centre, the home of the spirits, because that is the real origin of life. All our life is ruled from this centre, and it is the beginning of the building of a structure to be made with bones, liquids and flesh. The first structure is like the form given by earth, but there is always communication from this centre to outside and from outside into the centre. This allows all kinds of entrances and exits. It could be in the form of respiration or alimentation, but it also includes all kinds of knowledge and communication which have an effect on the good balance of the centre. All of this passes through the orifices, and it is one of their main functions to ensure all this communication from the essences and even from the jingshen. Something coming from my spirits needs to use essences to be expressed. While I am speaking here I am using my essences to make the qi of my voice, to make myself stand using the marrow in the bones of my legs and all kinds of blood for the movement of my muscles. The regulation of activity is made by means of the spirits and essences inside the yang, if not, we lose the richness of the interior. If there is breakdown in communication or a weakness in communication between the interior and the orifices, we lose control, and we are unable to use all our organism. We are able to see things or hear things but the objective interpretation might be lost. We cannot transform all these things because of the lack of jingshen. There are also, of course, a lot of more physical disorders. It is the great danger of life, not just that there might be something a little bit wrong with my eyes, but that it is a sign, and if I want to treat it I have to start with the richness and quality of the centre.

**'This being so, the saints behave in accordance with yinyang. The muscular forces and the network of animation (jin mai) are composed of a single qi, bone and marrow are consolidated and strengthened, qi and blood flow one with another in a concerted movement. This being so, The result is the harmonious balance of the interior with the exterior (nei wai); the perverse influences cannot cause any harm; the hearing and sight are acute. The qi is established in its perfection.'** Su wen chapter 3

The muscular forces and the network of animation, the bone and marrow and the qi and blood are all examples of this inter-dependent relationship of couples. I think it is clear that in this situation perverse influences cannot cause any harm. The defence and its strength need not only to have a lot of yang but also to rely on quiet, pure and rich yin. Now all the relationships between what are called the three treasures, jing, shen and qi are possible.

*Claude Larre:* When you go and visit an official in China you go for specific business. You want to be authorized to go somewhere or you want to establish relationships and so on. That takes place on the exterior. But when you enter the office you see the man behind his desk is trying to impress you by his calmness, harmony and composure. There is the balance between the official life and the exterior. You are the exterior. You come and you slightly disturb the man who was guarding himself and all the essences in his zang.

When writers insisted on this inner peace they were talking of what they knew, because many of them were educated men but of lowly origins. In our minds, the exterior is usually the physical, and the inner is something very spiritual. It is not exactly like that. I am sure that the refinement of Chinese civilization is so certain and subtle that in their calligraphy or the small bird singing in the corner of the house, this quietness for them is something emanating from their spiritual life. If we just have the inner and the outer, that would be too geometrical. There is a centre, there is a periphery, and there are exchanges between the two, but where are the actual applications of that? The applications might be found anywhere.

**'What is essential for yinyang comes down to this: solidity (gu) depends on whether the yang are well tightened (mi).' Su wen chapter 3**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The meaning of this is that if the periphery of the body is not well regulated by a good rhythm coming from the defence and the yang, there is no solidity, and there is no solidity of life if there is no firmness in the behaviour. The vitality can be dissipated easily by things such as perspiration, excitement or emotions.

**'A lack of harmonious composition between the two would be like spring without autumn, winter without summer. Such is the rule of the saints.' Su wen chapter 3**

Here you see the great rule of all couples, this is the highest level of composition. If we have these three couples, these three interchanges, jingshen, shenqi and jingqi they are all in dual relationships. They are all in relationships which are to express particulars of the maintenance of life and animation. All of these dual expressions have a particular level of explanation.

Jingshen are something like vital spirits. They are certainly the highest level of human life. Are the jingshen visible or not? In a way they are visible, but in what way are they perceptible? By the xueqi, for example. There is no colour for the jingshen, but there is a right colour for the blood when it is animated by the jingshen, giving a good colour to the complexion for instance. This is one of the possible visual aspects of good jingshen.

Jingqi operate at the level of the zang, with the releasing of the qi from stored essences. The essences support this releasing of qi and enable the general qi of the body to transform and work, to capture new essences and to assimilate them. There is no qi without essences to be its foundation, and there

are no essences without qi to transform and assimilate them. We can also see that there is always a presence behind these essences and qi, and it is the power of transformation which is the main characteristic of a living human being. A living being is that which transforms everywhere and at every moment.

Shenqi are the force, the strength, which is also needed for the expression and animation coming from the spirits. This is at the highest level. We can see that in these expressions essences, jing, are always in the first position, qi is always in the second position, and shen is here the first member of the couple and in jingshen the second. I do not want to make too much analysis, but we know that it is very obvious to say that jing is on the yin side and qi is on the yang side. Or if the jing is the best expression of the yin and the qi is the best expression of the yang, shen is really behind this yinyang differentiation, and able to explain them. Specifically, they are only able to express themselves and make life through the harmonious composition of yin and yang, through essences and qi, and qi and blood. This is all an explanation of the last paragraph of Su wen chapter 3.

**'But in the case of a too powerful yang that cannot be kept tightened, the yin qi is interrupted. If the yin is steady and the yang is well tightened, jingshen are controlled (zhi) as they should be.' Su wen chapter 3**

We do not know if they are controlled or if they control. We are forced to choose in English. In fact in reality the jingshen are in control of the perfect tension, and in this sense jingshen are controlling life too. There is always this kind of feedback effect.

**'But if separation and rupture (li jue) between yin and yang occur, jingqi are interrupted (jue).' Su wen chapter 3**

This is the interplay between essences and qi making up all kinds of the elements of life. Mentally, spiritually and physically speaking, if there is the beginning of a lack of jing and qi for the shen, then the result is the departure of the shen or the loss of the sense of expression of the shen, both of which lead to the end of life.

The following quotations from chapter 4 of Su wen are just to remind you that all things, and all operations in a human being may be described through yin and yang. Behind these names all kinds of balance and relationships are possible.

**'When one speaks of yinyang in man, the exterior is yang and the interior is yin. When one speaks of the body of man, the back is yang and the abdomen is yin. When one speaks of yinyang in the zangfu of the human body, the zang are yin and the fu are yang. The back is yang: the yang within the yang is the heart. The back is yang: the yin within the yang is the lung. The front is yin: the yin within the yin is the kidneys. The front is yin: the yang within the yin is the liver. The front is yin: the maximum yin (zhi yin) within the yin is the spleen. Such are the corresponding relationships of yinyang, inward/outward (biaoli), internal/external (neiwai), hen/cock (cixiong). Su wen chapter 4**

The supreme yin is sometimes the kidneys and sometimes the spleen, it depends on the context. Here we have the communication between heaven and earth which is compared with the sun which is in heaven but which comes from the depths of the earth just before dawn. The five zang are just the expression of the ascending and descending movement of the sun and all the displays between the

clouds and the rain. For instance, the yang within the yang is the heart, and the heart is here because this is the yang movement of diffusion. The heart is called the tai yang which is the name of the sun. The lung is the yin within the yang because it is the upper part of the body, and it has this kind of descending movement making liquids descend down to the bladder and kidneys. If the kidneys are the yin within the yin, it is because they are the power within the depths. Here we know they are the foundation of any strength. The level which is the yang inside the yin, which is the rising of the sun or the movement coming from the depths with great power, corresponds to the liver.

In this presentation the turning place in the centre is the spleen, and this is the supreme yin because the spleen is here seen in the likeness of the earth which is able to receive everything, and to give birth to anything. This is one of the best qualities of the yin. It can receive and transform in order to give back other things. An example is with seeds and grains. The seed is received by the earth and transformed in the depths of the earth, and then all sorts of grains are produced there. This centre is able to make a turning place, with all the movement between rising and descending, between the elevation natural to the spleen and the descending natural to the stomach. So it is in this context, in this place, that the spleen is called the supreme yin.

There are also some other couples at the end of this passage: yinyang, inside/outside, internal/external and hen/cock. All these are different aspects of yinyang. Inside/outside (biaoli) is for all of the movements towards the interior or the exterior. Internal/external (neiwai) makes the difference between two areas, not only inside and outside the body, but the inner part of the body and the outer part of the body. The difference between internal/external and inside/outside is that internal/external is rather a question of zone, this area compared to that area. Whereas with inside/outside it is about all the movement towards the interior or the movement towards the exterior. Finally, hen/cock is an image of male and female, and the image of production by new composition and mixing. All these are just examples of the precision of the great yinyang couple. You have yinyang meridians, and zang and fu, but these meridians are in biaoli relationships, and the zang could be internal and the fu external. But the zang and the fu could be internal and the meridians could be the external. Or what is outside the body could be external and the internal could be what is inside the body.

## JING, ESSENCE

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The character jing is made with two parts. On the left is the image of a grain of cereal or rice which is bursting or exploding. This is a decomposition of the grain. It could be the bursting of the grain within the earth or inside the stomach for assimilation. The right hand part of the character is the colour of life. This is green, or any colour giving the impression that life is circulating well. If you look at vegetation during the spring when the sap is rising, you have this impression, not only of green but of a vivid green. If you look at a man in perfect health with a good complexion, you not only have the vision of the colour on the face, but also behind that very harmonious composition there is the impression of a strong and good vitality. This is also jing. It is important to know that colours are not lifeless, but are also what is behind the composition making up the colour. The impression given by the appearance to a practised eye is very important for diagnosis.

*Claude Larre:* You see photographs, and they are either on matt or glossy paper. When it is glossy you see not only the colour but also the effect of the colour. But that is totally external. You know that the quality of the paper means that the effect was artificially made by the printer. Here, on the contrary, when you see the radiance of the colour, because you are a human being and you are concerned with health, you think that the inner condition of health is so powerful that it shines outside. What is understood is that everybody has a direct feeling of good health which is so powerful that it is possible to see it on the face, especially for those trained in Chinese medicine. The good point about this explanation of jing is that the Chinese in their classical books used words which tell of the joy and the life and the shining of things. It is natural in Chinese civilization not to dim the effects. On the contrary, they let them be felt by people and that is the reason why Chinese faces are always full of life. This noisy aspect of Chinese life, especially these days, is just additional testimony of their feeling of life.

This feeling of life is transferred to everything. If it is a plant it will be in this green colour which is no longer just green but the colour of life in nature where plants are concerned. If it was an animal, you would just press your foot onto the body of a pig or any other cattle, to see how much fat was there. This is the sign that they have been nourished with care. For man, all the places on the body where the flesh is round are the places where the blood has been active and is there shining through the skin. Seeing all the range of the Chinese perception of health on the face you see that. They would also insist on the blue-black quality of the hair for men and women.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* So etymologically speaking, essences are these materials which are able to rebuild life, for instance food and grains, in order to give real animation and sustaining support for animation, and to restore all the aspects of life which can then be seen on the exterior of the body. But more specifically, what are essences, and what is the meaning of this character jing in Chinese texts? We have seen elsewhere that jing, even in the couple jingshen, can also be translated as light and subtle. This is because if it is an element of my life that I am able to take from another source, then it must be reduced to a very subtle state in order to be able to pass from one pattern of life to another. There is a name for that in Chinese medicine, jingwei. The meaning of wei is subtle, microscopic, very tiny, very fine. In modern Chinese this character is often used like our 'micro'. Jingwei is therefore the intermediate state between the essences composing food, for instance, and those essences which are then attracted into my body by my five zang in order to impregnate them. There must be these kinds of very subtle stages, for example in transformation in the breaking down of the proper structure of the food. It is no longer food, it is the vitality of the rice, or all the essences which formerly made up the rice, but no longer with any form. It is through the stomach, which has all the ability to make a new form, that these free essences are now able to compose and to be seized by the power and nature of your own structure, and to make flesh, liquids, cells, hair, thoughts and even the support, basis and manifestation of your emotions.

This is quite important because through that we can have an idea of what essences are. They are elements or components of life, and life is inside these components, and the composition of these essences is the special model for a living being. They are the inseparable elements of life, and if you do separate them then there is no more life. Within these essences the power of life is different

depending on the natural structure of the food itself. There is not the same exterior aspect or power of life in rice as there is in meat or fruit. This is all a consideration for how to eat in order to restore the various aspects of life.

There is also another point which is that essences seize one another, embrace and join. This is the distinctive movement of essences, but they need patterns in order to do that. Patterns with rules and norms for life are given at the moment of the conception of a being, because when the being first appears it is by the conjunction of two kinds of essences. The essences of the mother and the father mix and offer each other what is essential. But through them there is also all the lineage and all the circumstance of life, and all the exchanges between heaven and earth. This is clearly said in ancient texts, that I am the child of my parents, and through them I am the child of water and fire, heaven and earth.

When the two essences which constitute the life of two different people, a complementary male and female, seize one another, they make a new composition, and this new composition determines a kind of rule by heavenly effect. This is a rule of development which belongs to the human species and is always the rule for development of the human being as described in the essences of the mother and father. All kinds of details and precision are given by the unique qualities of the essences of this specific man and woman. This is the Chinese understanding. There is a mixing in the original composition of these 'essences of anterior heaven', and this composition must then obey the great law of organization, like heaven and earth, yinyang and so on.

Because these essences are inseparable from the rule of organization there is a development of the structure of life. There is development of the body, through the embryo and the fetus making the flesh and blood vessels and organs and so forth. All this is due to the organization coming from the essences. This is the way to use what comes first from the mother and father and afterwards from the exterior world. The latter are the 'essences of posterior heaven', resulting from your own particular transformation of essences from the exterior.

The image of the loom was always present in the mind of an ancient Chinese person. The meaning of the character for meridians, jing, is the norm or the celestial rule of life. It is also the warp of a loom. When you have a loom, before starting weaving you have fixed vertical threads, and this is the first meaning of this character. It is exactly the same thing in the image of the human being. There is something which is inside us at the very beginning of life, and after that we have a lot of threads, but you also have a pattern to follow. Threads are like essences and we always need more threads to weave the fabric. We also have some kind of motif on the tapestry. This is a life making its destiny with a drawing of this motif. The shining of the colours and their beauty should be an effect of the jingshen and the shenming which are mysteriously behind the warp and which give the meaning of the weaving with the threads of each of the five colours or five tastes.

In this image there is always movement too. The essences, qi and blood are always in a process of transformation, like any kind of expression of these essences in the body. Transformation is the condition of the cooperation of the elements. If there is no transformation there is stagnation and separation within the living body. This is very obvious in the example of the pathology of body fluids. If there is a lack or a weakness in the transformation of the body fluids, little by little there is a

condensation of the liquids which are no longer impregnating the tissues and the flesh, but which are separated not only from the flesh and the tissue but also from all the currents of animation and circulation. This leads to pain or to an accumulation of liquids, or to a tumour or to any other kind of disease according to the circumstances. For instance, where there is phlegm the great intention of treatment is to restore the transformative process which is able to eliminate or deal correctly with those liquids which are no longer part of your living body, and that may be the cause of disease. There is the same process in the mind. The void of the heart is really the ability to take responsibility for all things, and to do that indefinitely. It is also the way to adapt all one's vitality to the rhythm of the universe, to the four seasons and to the exchanges in the environment and surroundings. It is not enough to have efficient transformation, you also have to be able to adapt all that according to the circumstances. You do not have the same defensive qi during the winter as during the summer. This is true not only for the defensive qi but also for thinking and the will and so on. This is just what is said in chapter 2 of Su wen, 'How to Harmonize according to the Four Seasons'. The four seasons are the four qi following the inspiration of the spirit, or allowing the spirits to guide life.

## ESSENCES TASTES AND BODYFORM

**'The tastes (wei) support (gui) the body (xing); the body supports the qi, the qi supports the essences; the essences support transformation (hua). The essences are nourished (shi) by qi and the body is nourished by the tastes. The transformations produce (sheng) the essences and the qi produces the body. The tastes injure (shang) the body and the qi injures the essences. The essences, through transformation, make the qi and the qi is injured by the tastes.'** Su wen chapter 5

*Elisabeth Rochat:* There is more in this dense text than first appears, but what is important is to see all the interplay of essences, qi, bodyform and tastes. All that is under the control and animation of the special activity of the qi which is transformative, and which is always the necessary condition of a good maintenance of any member of a couple or of vitality. We always need to restore to a couple the exchanges and the transformations and processes of life needed to maintain the essences. This is the reason why the anatomy and physiopathology of Chinese medicine are rather different from occidental medicine, because everything is always in process.

Here with the essences there is a kind of earthly aspect, a density even if it is very subtle. Essences are very dense because they are full of life and full of the desire for living.

The desire is just this movement towards each other. If essences are realized they are lead by this movement to bind together and to perpetuate and produce life. The movement of life is nothing other than the perpetual desire to remain alive and create life. This is the bonding of the essences and it is always present at each level, with a particular inner penetration present in the creation of a living being. Each person is a new composition of essences.

Now we can see that essences and qi are absolutely inseparable. There is no use for essences without transformation, and transformation is one of the effects of qi. There is no qi if there are no essences to give birth to and to fix and to sustain it. We can also see that there is no separation possible between the essences of anterior heaven and posterior heaven. The essences of anterior heaven are

just the model for the other and for the continuation of the life of my own nature which is a condition of what is called my destiny.

So where are the spirits? They are just here, and nobody knows exactly why they are here or not. If I build something like a welcoming structure then it is just to welcome the spirits. The spirits, like birds, come to this tree or structure, or they do not. If they come a human being develops, with a particularity of essences to be the jingshen. It is this which gives the very precise quality of the human being who is able to appeal to heaven and have a way of coming back to heaven. If not there is just a natural abortion. If the spirits are just here, they have to remain and not only remain but remain giving the orientation of life. They give the movement of all circulation and transformation. Thus the spirits are right in the very centre of the person's vitality. The jingshen are like the highest level of the expression of human destiny. All the other things, such as all the couples like defence and nutrition or xueqi, are the expression of this first condition of life where essences are inseparable from qi and act together to build this welcoming structure for the spirits and have to continue to maintain the welcoming aspect of the structure. The welcoming is done by all the circulation and communication, going to and coming from the inspiration of the spirits. And we will see that the xueqi is one of the best ways for the spirits to be present everywhere in a man.

*Question:* Is jingwei later called gu qi?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* It is not exactly the same thing. What is called gu qi is the qi coming from water and grains (shui gu), or the liquids and solid food. The meaning of gu is cereal, but it is the equivalent of food. In the jingwei it is more precise. There is no longer any cereal, there is no name and no form. This is such a subtle state that it can pass into and make another life. Maybe in other books that is called gu qi, but it is really a weakening of the classical texts because there are three or four different expressions describing the different stages of assimilation, and in those modern texts there is only one because they prefer to refer to occidental terminology.

We can now understand many of the quotations about essences such as 'essences are the foundation of the being' or 'when two essences come together there is the appearance of what is called spirits'. These two are from Ling shu chapter 8. We can also understand the different levels of the meaning of jing. Jing is the living fabric of the universe, the element of life which has to be transformed and put in motion to make all the living beings between heaven and earth. This is the fabric of life, like qi. Qi is also everywhere and everything. As an illustration we can take knitting. The wool is the jing. The wool makes threads of various colour and thickness. These threads of wool make cloth or a scarf by the alternating and unceasing work of the two needles - these two needles are yin and yang, and the result is the cloth or the being.

We can call everything essences or qi, or the mixing of essences and qi. Everything which exists exists by and with essences. This is also seen in chapter 8 of Ling shu. All that exists can only exist because there is qi, movement, animation and transformation. In the human being essences are the faithful reproduction of one's own proper nature. This is the original gift of anterior heaven, and the essences are particularly linked to the kidneys. The kidneys represent the origin of life and the ability of life to reproduce exactly from the original model of life. They are the guarantee and the keeper of the pattern of life, in the same way that there must be a pattern for the knitting. At the level of the

kidneys, essences are most faithful to themselves and to oneself. They are used to make another life with their richness and power. These are the essences for the reproduction of life, essences of sexuality, and in a man more precisely sperm. We can see that in the form of a liquid it is nothing other than a very rich and dense possibility of making life. This understanding is also the origin of all the different kinds of exercises which use this richness to invigorate an individual life, for instance in certain Daoist practices. But there are also Daoist exercises with saliva, which is another a very rich liquid.

The essences of the kidneys are also the model for the essences of the five zang. This allows the five zang to produce their own quality of qi in order to invigorate the specific movement of life which they represent inside the body. For instance, the essences of the liver release qi which is able to give the springing up of life and to invigorate the circulation towards the exterior. The acid taste is nothing other than essences, incorporated into my body by the jingwei with the specific quality of life and animation inside them which is able to invigorate the movement of life represented in the universe by the wood and in a human body by the liver.

Of course essences are not only the beginning of the process of releasing all the qi inside the body, they are also, through transformation and the activity of qi, an element of the rebuilding of all the form of my life. They rebuild all the shape that I have. This is done particularly through the liquids and the blood which are transported everywhere to support elements of this rebuilding of the form. The cohesion, the strength to remain together, is given not only by this ability of the essences to join one with another, but also to join with the qi and the free circulation which is able to guard and restore these forces. There is a kind of strength in the ability to do that. The strength from the free circulation allows the cohesion. This is the reason why there are always spaces and passages in the muscles and the flesh, as well as in the smallest mass that you can imagine. For example, a cell is a mass, and to remain a cell it must remain open to free circulation. If not there is no more transformation, no more incorporation, and there will be disequilibrium.

*Question:* Can there be a pathology of essences?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* It depends what you call essences. If you take essences at the highest level of their character's meaning there is just this kind of element of life ready to be seized by the movement of life itself, and there is no possible pathology. This is the reason why there is no pattern of super-abundance as far as this aspect of the kidneys is concerned. There is no pathology of the brain, as the sea of marrow, in chapter 33 of Ling shu, just a pattern of insufficiency. But a super-abundance is just long life with good strength of the bones and accuracy of ears and eyes.

I think we can have pathology of essences if something is wrong in a particular form or shape which is produced inside the body. For instance if there are not enough elements given by posterior heaven, for example during childhood, then there would be an insufficiency in growth and development. You can also have weakness in the spirits as well as in the body. But it is not an insufficiency of essences as such, it is just an insufficiency in the ability to renew the essences. You can have pathology linked with essences when they are in the special form of liquids, for instance in the pathology of jin ye, or the pathology linked to rebuilding by the essences. But it is not a pathology of essences as such.

What is the difference? It is that essences have no form and no shape. They are the condition of any shape, they are able to make any and every form or part of our body or mind. It is perhaps because they are so subtle that they have no definite form and that they are able to fully impregnate the zang. They are able to match the ability of the spirits and express all the forms taken by the body, but also by knowledge, perception and passion, under the movement and animation given by the qi. Pathology can appear only when a shape is delineated or a form is taken. Of course, this depends on the rebuilding and the firmness and strength of the defence. The qi which is responsible for defence is also responsible for the condition of nutrition. It is always their breakdown which is the beginning of some kind of trouble or pathology.

## ESSENCES AND SPIRIT, JING SHEN

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Essences are everywhere because they rebuild bone marrow and the brain in the skull. We understand that this quality of essences and the force with which they are assimilated, incorporated and maintained is the condition of the fullness of the bones or the marrow, or the accuracy of the mind in the brain and so on. When the essences are good they are more able to welcome the presence of the spirits and to support the enlightenment coming from the spirits. This is also called jingshen. One effect of the jingshen is very obviously on the sense organs in the head. To have good eyes is not only to see colours but also to know the impression given by the colour which is a resonance of the real inner structure and life. This is diagnosis as well as psychology. To have this kind of accuracy in the eyes, you need to have good irrigation by liquids or blood, and a good mechanism and optic nerve in the eyes from the qi, but you also need this precise quality of essences able to support the vitality of the spirits giving good assessments and judgments. This is the reason why Su wen chapter 17 has an explanation of jingming. Ming is the same as in shenming, the radiance of the spirits. Jingming is the radiance of the essences, which is nothing other than the ability of the essences to welcome the radiance coming from the spirits. Jingming is in the head, in the skull, and allows a good functioning of the upper orifices which are the more subtle activities of consciousness and knowledge. Also, it determines the quality of relationships with the outside, with other beings and with all that is exterior. So essences are the support for the strength of the bones, as well as the accuracy of knowledge and perception. If your spirits are present when you make perceptions your perception is just and you know the reality. This is the reason why there is nearly no difference in ancient Chinese between to know and to perceive.

*Claude Larre:* The difference between man and animals is that animals are presented as having xueqi and having fan qi, coarse qi. Man is said to have jing qi, refined qi. Afterwards he has jingshen. When they are talking of xueqi they are talking of animated life, nothing more. This is natural for those kinds of living beings in which you never find the clarity, the subtlety or lightness that you find in man's activities of thinking, doing or eating. Man controls his eating, usually, an animal does not. When a man eats his food he knows the food, maybe not as clearly as cats and dogs are able to, but from another angle the spirits of man detect in the food the qualities which are more than the satisfaction of a common appetite. There is even some nourishment for the spirits in what is nourishment for the body. The shen is not seen in animals as such, and the presentation of shen in

animals is that the animals are too coarse to sustain the shen. It is not possible to have shen which are not related to heaven and man, because the constitution of shen is to have this heavenly origin. But since animals have animation it is normal that the shen would use animals too, but more as their mounts than as their selves. It is the same thing in man. You have people who appear to be more animal than man, but still they are men. So pondering over the text of Huianan zi chapter 7 and other texts of Zhuang zi and the way the Chinese are associating animals with spirits, we reach the conclusion that we reserve shen for human life. The connection between shen and animals is not at the level of the self, it just adds some sort of demonstration to the ability of the shen to present themselves specifically.

**'Yinyang is the way of heaven and earth (tian di), mastercord and mesh (gang ji) of the 10,000 beings, father and mother (fu mu) of change and transformation (bian hua), rooting and beginning (ben shi) of life and death (sheng sha), residence of the radiant spirits (shen ming)'. Su wen chapter 5**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* We have here five statements, four expressing yinyang. They are inseparable because there is no father without a mother and no mother without a father, and there is no mastercord without mesh, and no mesh without mastercord. This is one aspect of yinyang. There is no yin without yang, and no yang without yin. Nothing is absolute, because on earth in the human condition it is this mixing, this interplay, which is the condition of life. All is achieved through change and transformation, and even appearance and disappearance, life and death, are just expressions of this great movement of life in which we are caught up.

The fifth proposition is 'yinyang ... is the residence of the radiant spirits'. After the four presentations using dual expressions and couples, this is the way to reach or to show the unity of all of that. Of course there are the essences, the qi, the blood, and the nutritive and defensive qi and there are bones and flesh and the lung and spleen and so on. But all of that is for the unity, because life as well as needing diversity and division to express and multiply and reproduce itself, also needs a kind of fundamental unity in order not to err. For instance, the shenming visible when your complexion is good allows you to show that unity. The radiance of the spirits is an effect of essences or qi or essences and qi or blood, or blood and qi, or of nutrition or defence or of what is an expression of the zang. You can make a choice. When any kind of separation has occurred and you have a disease, you can make a diagnosis by all these signs and see what is not functioning very well. It is the unity of all that which is manifested in the harmonious composition, and the unity of all that which is behind it which is also due to the active presence of the spirits. Behind all of these couples there is the great unity. I cannot express anything if it is not with a dual expression because as a living being I am definitely in this kind of contradiction and two-fold movement of life, and I am also subject to that in my expression and language. The fact of being alive and moving and so on always depends upon a lot of relationships, and also expresses vitally the unity of all that.

*Claude Larre:* We do not usually pay any attention to the movements we are making. It takes more effort to do things with attention, even if they are small. Zhuang zi chapter 2 says 'when we are born everything goes by itself,. So this question of how what has been explained as a twofold thing is able to compose is not a question, the question is how is it possible that those two things will not make a

unique gesture. The pathology is there. What is to be done automatically is digestion, respiration, blood circulation, walking and so on. But if the junction is not made, it may have an effect even as high up as the spirits. The spirits are no longer in control, because the coordination of all this qi through the jing has to be made at the highest level by the jingshen. The jingshen is the leader. If the leader is not active or is stopped from exerting his leadership, then everything stops.

*Question:* Is there a relationship between the essences and the eight extraordinary meridians?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* No, there is nothing specific. Essences are the basis for existence and the reinforcing of all kinds of meridians and networks of animation, being the substance for the qi as well as the blood or liquids. This is the kind of mysterious mixing of jing and qi which expresses itself in a different form in all the different components of life. The zang are fundamentally for work between essences and qi, but what are behind that in each zang and in the mastery of the zang which is made by the heart, are the spirits. An extraordinary meridian is a good renewal of vitality, of forces and currents of animation and of blood and all kinds of elements for nutrition and rebuilding. A meridian is the route for this circulation and for the use of this specific quality inside the territories under its authority. We will see this later when we discuss the xueqi. We know that the difference in the quality between meridians is expressed in several chapters in the Nei jing in terms of variation of the composition of xue and qi. At the level of xueqi we have variations and fluctuations, but that does not occur as such at the level of jingshen or jingqi.

## QI

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The first thing that we see in the character for qi is that there is the same bursting grain of cereal or rice as in jing. But what is added is not the colour of the inner vitality in action, but just the image of an exhalation. It is this movement of animation which is the result of transformation. It is not a substance or a visible sign of activity, but just an exhalation and a releasing of something. That is qi. But of course there is no emanation if it is not coming from something. This character qi is very difficult to understand and translate because it has several degrees of meaning, always according to context.

At the first level it is all that exists, because all things exist by virtue of a movement, and by the continuation of this movement. Also, all the effects of the transformation are due to qi and in a way this qi is all the relationships, influences, ways of receiving and adapting those influences, and all things, and living beings. For instance, there is a very famous statement in Ling shu chapter 30:

**'Huangdi: I know that a human possesses jing, qi, jin, ye, xue and mai. At the deepest understanding they are all one qi but they are differentiated by six names. I want to know what the meaning of each of them is.'**

Then there comes the definition of each of the six. At the end of the chapter this is repeated and it is said that qi can be one of the six qi. This is not surprising in classical Chinese texts. The meaning is that this is all one qi or one unique qi and it is the unity of life. But within this unity of life we have to differentiate how the couples organize themselves. We also have to consider the movement of life and all the substance through which this animation can express and develop itself, such as blood or essences. We can see that in this example the liquids are two of the six qi composing the unique qi. If

you call qi all that exists, when you are in a context where you have qi in a dual expression with one of these things, for example in the couple jingqi the qi is not all that exists. This qi is the complement to the essences in order to make life in the innermost part.

With numerology you can just add one number and the meaning of qi changes. For instance with one, yi qi, generally speaking this is the great qi which fills the void between heaven and earth. It is a void only because it has free circulation of all this qi. This is also the great unity of life because all living beings, all these particular notes of life, are in a way related and supported by this great source of life which is also the model of all life. This is the great movement between heaven and earth. This is nothing other than the original qi, and it is called the original qi not only in medical books but in a lot of other texts. This original qi is the specification of the source of life in a particular form. It is particularly inscribed in a special structure in the composition of the essences with a special nature and a kind of destiny, and it is something which we share with all other beings because it is just a particularization of this great movement of life. It is an emergence, a temporary or casual emergence of that original qi. All that is an expression of the one qi. If I am just looking at this great mass of the 10,000 beings, I see it like that. I consider myself as this particular expression of original qi, and want to use it in a good way in the manner of this great model of life, which is the best way to preserve it or prevent decline. This is the same thing as good health. You do not use your essences or forces, you just let the spirits ride life.

If you have two qi (er qi), or qi at the level of two, the meaning is yinyang.

Three qi (san qi) are generally the three constitutive components of the universe, with clear heaven, unclear earth and the mixing in the median as man. But it is also all the threefold expression of animation. For instance it is the triple heater, which in the Nan jing is called the agent for the differentiation and distribution of the original qi. It is also the organization of the unity of life in three great functions, the ancestral qi, the nutritive qi and the defensive qi. Always this expression of three has the same origin because these three qi have the same origin. They draw their deep quality from the original qi and from the original forces of man and they have a specificity due to their use and the place in which they are located for their distribution.

For instance the zong qi, the ancestral qi, being above the diaphragm is the conjunction of the purest essences which make the beating of the correct and pure qi and are able to order and follow the good rhythm of all the distribution of the qi throughout the body. Zong is like an ancestor, a chief who gathers under his roof all which belongs to his family of qi inside the body. The nutritive qi (ying qi) attaches to the middle heater and to the essences coming from the spleen and stomach. It has the ability to distribute and to put in the right place all the elements for rebuilding and maintenance inside the body. In a medical book three qi usually refers to these three qualities of qi but here it is the more general meaning of three, which is the three great components of life in the universe. In specialist books you can have three qi with particular meanings dependent on the category of science the book is dealing with.

Si qi, qi at the level of four or four qi, are the four seasons, or the specific influences coming from the four seasons. Here we have the very important element of the unfolding of time, because if we have qi as the components of form in the body, qi is also a component of time. There is a reality of time.

Time is not an abstract concept, time is the succession of moments, each of which has a particular quality and a particular influence on the great movement of the universe and all the movement inside an organism. All the push or restraint to the circulation and all the variation inside the transformation are due to the particular quality of the moment. It is a moment of the day but a moment of the year as well, and the four seasons are the model for this variation of the influence coming from the environment. We find this particularly with xueqi because it is very important in the maintenance of the balance of the xueqi to be able to adapt instantly.

The wu qi, the five qi, are the five elements or the five zang or the specific qi of the five zang. Or they are the five atmospheric influences coming from heaven to earth, or a mixture of all these influences resulting in all kinds of variation such as tornadoes or violent rains. All that is in exactly the same image of the model of the movement in the five zang or the five emotions or the five wills. Of course we can have fear or anger but not for too long, and it is always best to come back to a balance because this is what happens between heaven and earth for the maintenance of life.

The liu qi, the six qi, are the six atmospheric influences. These are not the same as the five but are like principles coming from heaven to nourish or attack man. They are also the six principles of the vital maintenance in a human body. Six is for maintenance. Five was for the emanation of life from the innermost place.

The periods of the solar calendar in Chinese are called the 24 qi (qi jie). You can see that qi is everything which gives the continuity and the passage of movement in time or in space, covering all aspects of life. The names of these periods such as Little Snow or Big White Cold, are given because they express the reality of the influence seen in life on earth. It is the visibility of time.

At the level of two, one qi is no longer all that exists; it is already yinyang. Even if we are talking of yang qi, or yin qi there is always a composition. There is no pure yang qi inside the body although we talk of yang qi. It is the surging of life, the animation and all the force of life. We can see this in Ling shu chapter 8:

**'Heaven in me is virtue. Earth in me is qi. Virtue flows, qi spreads out and there is life.'**

After that we have all the particular names for the varieties of animation, for instance the qi of the liver or the defensive qi (wei qi), or the qi of a particular meridian. This is just to be able to analyse and speak of a specific aspect of life.

What we can say is that the qi which is at the level of indivisible qi, is useful because from that we have the unity in the origin, the community of all living beings, and also the unity of myself and the unfolding of my life. There is something which is seen in different ways, different expressions and different variations, for instance defensive qi or ancestral qi, but there is always something in common which is enough to support them in the same activity.

Pathology is always found at the level of different names and functions, and we have to detect the dysfunction and rebalance each couple at each level. In the human body where does the qi come from? For example with essences there is original qi and the qi coming from posterior heaven or the assimilation of elements from the surroundings and the environment. The original qi is linked to the kidneys and sometimes to ming men, with the qi expressing a movement for the regulation of life in

the rhythmic beating between the two kidneys. This is mentioned in the Nan jing, particularly in difficulties 8 and 66, where there is quite a good description. There is a kind of secret beating between the two kidneys, like the pull of this primitive animation, which allows the water and the yin to express the fire of life which is working deeply inside the yin. This normal manifestation of life could not happen without a structure, inside a body, with something to balance the qi in order to maintain the regularity and to keep the movement going on. Another thing is that the secret aspect of this corresponds to the beating of the heart, which is the manifestation of the same movement of life. The beating of the heart also depends on the ancestral qi. The ancestral qi is nothing other than the conjunction of all the qi of the body, filtered by the diaphragm, and animated by the connection with this root of all the movement inside the body which is the original qi, yuan qi.

Yuan is the image of a source, with a rock on the left, and water flowing from a source in this rock. The water is white, clear and pure. This is pure water flowing from a source in a rocky mountain. The image of this original qi is like the undying, constant source of what gives the first spring to a current of water. After that we have rain and water coming from other rivulets and so on, but at the very beginning the strength of the river starts at the source. It continues to become a stream and a river but if the source dries up something is clearly wrong.

Another way to write yuan is like this -. It is the same pronunciation, but this character's meaning is the principle of the origin, it is more mysterious in a way. In the first character we had something which appears and is flowing silently and quite impulsively, but continuously. Here we have the mysterious side of this source. This is the original qi which makes the real continuity of life.

There are all the other kinds of qi which come from the transformation of food in particular. But original qi is always present. It supports the effort and the quality of the qi everywhere within the body. For instance, as far as the zang are concerned they are supported in their activity by the fire of ming men and of the kidneys or original qi, and their activity supports the essences in the continual renewal of their releasing. It is always a kind of cycle and its effects are clearly visible. The kidneys govern the original qi, the spleen and stomach govern the renewal of qi from alimentation, and the lungs govern the absorption of qi from respiration. This is the way to fill oneself with the quality of the surrounding environment as it is at that precise moment. This is the reason why the lungs are so important in the mastery of the qi, but are also very fragile. They are called the fragile zang because they are exposed to the direct penetration of influences coming from the exterior. The lungs master the qi and the sea of qi in the middle of the chest, tan zhong. All these expressions have nearly the same function, to order a good distribution of qi throughout the body.

What is interesting is that the three female zang, the kidneys, spleen and lungs are very important for the production of qi, and we will see the contrary with blood. The female zang are also in charge, in another way, of all the transformation of water and liquids in the body. I do not say that the liver and heart are of no importance for the qi, but they are not directly implied in the renewal and original emanation of it, even if they are active in creating its movement inside the body. The liver gives strength to all the circulation, and the heart gives the impulse to all the circulation throughout the network of animation, particularly the circulation of blood.

## FUNCTIONS OF QI

### ANIMATING

*Elisabeth Rochat:* This function is the role of animating and setting in motion. This is not only for the various kinds of circulation in an adult, but also the strength leading to the development of the embryo into the child, and from the child to the adult. This process is also due to the vitality of the qi not just the original qi (yuan qi), but all the expressions of qi and the real continuity of life through the yuan qi with the cooperation of all the other kinds of qi and essences. For instance, insufficiency of qi could lead to a slowing down in the growth process, a general weakness in the functioning of the zangfu or the circulation through the meridians and the network of animation, or a weakness in the circulation and distribution of blood and bodily liquids, and all kinds of other elements including nutrition.

### WARMING

The second function of the qi is warming. This is the regulation of the bodily temperature. We call this the warming action of the qi, but it is always the continuity of this process which we can see. For instance, if there is a blockage there is no circulation and circulation is part of the movement to maintain the temperature. Transportation at a subtle level is warmth. For instance liquids are transported not as a mass but as a vapour, and the transportation of liquids from place to place and the activity of this transformation includes the maintenance of the right temperature. This is described very well in Ling shu chapter 30. It is a description of what is called qi, as one of the six qi.

**'The upper heater spreads and propagates the taste of the five grains. It invades the skin like smoke.'**

This is exactly the image of this vapour at the right temperature.

**'It gives power and strength to the body and moisture to the body hair. It is like mist (mu) and dew (lu).'**

This is the double aspect.

**'That is called qi.'**

In definitions of qi we always have these double sides. It is not just the power of animation or circulation, it is also the ability to maintain what is circulating at a good level of warmth. This is the reality of defence for instance. Because if all that is going well, we have the third function of qi as a result.

### PROTECTING

There is protection or defence if the layers of the skin are well irrigated with vapours, the right temperature is maintained, there is no problem in the good rhythm of opening and closing of the pores, and no problem in following the natural rhythm of life, day and night, winter and summer. If this is the case there will always be the means to resist invasion by perverse influences. If the circulation is good then if there is some cold which comes treacherously near, you can feel it because

there is a free circulation between this place and the depths of your heart and spirits. There is a kind of signal and you are able to react and make a defence, or increase the temperature and increase the functions of vapourization and liquids with warmth at that place to push away the perverse force. This is very well described in Ling shu chapter 27. This is what is called protection against the perverse, and the defensive role of the qi. If the signal is not perceived and the reaction started at that very superficial level then it must be felt at a deeper level. If this is so or if I am really unable to perceive and to react to this signal at all, then I have to go and see my acupuncturist!

### **FIRMNESS IN HOLDING**

A stream is a stream because there is a current as well as the water itself. The water of a stream does not flow everywhere, it is the strength of the current in the stream which makes the stream. The character for water (shui) shows that something is flowing very carefully within the three strokes. The trigram kan, which is related to the virtue of water, shows the same thing, with the strong yang line within the two weak yin lines. We have this same kind of yang movement maintaining the flow of liquids.

I think this is something very deep and very ancient in Chinese thought, and there are several applications of it. One is the circulation of blood. For instance, what is the definition of the mai? Ling shu chapter 30 gives a description of it as the network for animation, but sometimes it is translated as vessel. It is also the pulse. We will look at the meaning of the pulse when we study xueqi. What is a Vessel? It is just the pipe or the conduit for this blood. But it is only the perceptible form or shape, the manifestation of what is maintaining the blood in good circulation. It is the current inside the blood which is primarily giving the direction of the circulation and maintaining the circulation. We know this because if there is some kind of weakness of the qi or overheating of the blood we can have a haemorrhage. So it is not only the vessels which are able to maintain the circulation of blood, and the vessels are not only veins or arteries but also the smallest capillaries.

The description of the mai in the Ling shu compares it to dykes and banks maintaining the nutritive qi in a good circulation, preventing it from escaping or being led astray in a wrong direction. This is one of the aspects of the efficiency of the qi, to be able to maintain the blood or to maintain all kinds of liquids in a good distribution, in the form of vapour, dew and smoke and so on. But also according to this ability of the qi to give a good rhythm of opening and closing, it is able to maintain liquids inside the body or to make evacuations outside at the right time, in the form of urine or sweat for example. The functioning of the qi is always involved in the regulation of the centre, and in all the opening and closing of the doors of the body. It is also in charge of the good maintenance and the holding or guarding of the special essences, for instance of the sperm. You can have spermatorrhea due to weakness of the qi, or for a woman there can be vaginal discharge.

### **TRANSFORMING**

Hua is transformation. The activity of transformation achieved by the qi of the lower heater allows the reabsorption of certain parts of the liquids and the elimination of others. It is exactly like the great movement between heaven and earth. When the liquids arrive at the lower heater, the qi by its

animation and warmth causes a rising up of vapours. What is rising up is obviously the most subtle and purest element which is full of essential vitality. What remains is just more dense, heavier, and it becomes urine and is evacuated in order to allow the continuation of the transformation. If there is no evacuation there is no longer good transformation or the right level of temperature and activity because the qi cannot cope with the situation. You can have inflammation and swelling, or weakness of the qi because the liquids overwhelm the strength of the qi. As a result you have weakness of the defence as well as a swelling in the belly or in the tissues.

Transformation due to the qi is always very important in the middle heater because transformation is nothing other than digestion and assimilation. It is essential for the renewal of life. Throughout the body and the general activity of what is called the triple heater we also have the effect of this transformation of qi maintaining a good balance between elements such as liquids or nutrition, and the power which is able to make them circulate as incorporated elements. All that is the effect of transformation, and transformation is due to the quality of the qi. All the regulation of the zang through the meridians and the luo and so on are dependent on the qi and its quality.

The five zang are continuously transforming the essences in order to maintain life. This transformation occurs thanks to the qi which is already in the body, and the result of the transformation is the releasing of qi, in both physiological and psychological aspects. We need qi to transform and we need transformation to produce qi. This interplay and transformation of essences is the vital operation of life.

When the qi is functioning well, there is good rhythm in all the circulation, in all the functions of opening and closing (for example the opening and closing of the pores of the skin) and all regulation of the rhythm of life, according to night and day, activity and rest.

## TYPES OF QI

### ZONG QI

*Elisabeth Rochat:* References to this are found in Ling shu chapters 71 and 75, and Su wen 18. In Ling shu 71 it says:

**The five grains enter the stomach. They are divided in three ways: the waste, the jinye and the ancestral qi. The zong qi, the ancestral qi, accumulates in the middle of the chest and goes out at the larynx through the mai of the heart to activate exhalation and inhalation.'**

This means that all the purest essences making the best of the qi are just collected up here in this very special and high powered area above the diaphragm in the chest. Because of their purity and their high power they are able to give a good rhythm to the whole circulation of qi. One example of this is respiration. The rhythm of respiration is part of natural life and is part of the way by which the lungs are able to give a good rhythm to the whole circulation in the meridians and to 'receive the 100 mai at the morning audience'.

In Su wen chapter 18 it says that zong qi is formed by the conjunction of what is coming from the middle heater and the air from the lungs. It gives a rhythm to the beating of the heart, which is another way to give a general rhythm or circulation throughout the body. The relationship between respiration

and the beating of the heart must be good, and this is also very significant when you are taking pulses because they give an indication of the state of the balance between what must be the unique rhythm of life. This is the reason why zong qi is really nothing other than this kind of commanding pulse for all the distribution inside the body, the distribution of all kinds of elements due to the strength and animation given by the qi. Zong qi does not circulate itself but just gives the rhythm, like a sea. The sea in itself is an inexhaustible reservoir. We have had the image of a source, but on the other hand we have the image of the sea which is able to receive the 100 rivers without overflowing. The sea is also able to endure seasons of dryness without experiencing a diminution of its level. The sea attracts all the rivers and gives to all the clouds. In the zong qi we have the sea of qi in the middle of the chest. It attracts all kinds of qi coming from the organism without ever overflowing. In fact the lungs, as the master of the qi are the unity of the qi of the organism. In another way the sea has the role of ensuring distribution, as in making clouds. This is like the image of the fog and dew coming to irrigate all the body from the upper heater, as given in Ling shu chapter 30. Because this is a sea it is not affected by the flow of one particular river or by an excess or insufficiency of another one. It is able to regulate the qi totally and consistently. This is also true for all the seas within the body according to which systems they affect.

The character for zong is a temple for sacrifice to the ancestors, an ancestral hall (cf Wieger Lesson 36). The upper part is the building and below there is an emanation, perhaps from the sacrifice. It is an influx coming from heaven. Perhaps it comes in answer to the sacrifice? You then have to interpret this answer as auspicious or not. It is through the worship of ancestors that you nourish and maintain life after their death, and you cannot do this with very solid things because the ancestors are in a very subtle kind of life. They cannot be nourished by something having a form like a grain. But they can be comforted and given strength by emanations coming from alcohol or the burning of meat or from music played on these special occasions, or from the emanations coming from the feelings excited in all the people belonging to the same lineage. All that brings to the ancestor some kind of essence which make his life in the higher state longer in a mysterious way. That is the reason why it is very important to have children to continue the worship, because it is your own life after your death which is at stake.

In ancient times, certainly, it was also believed that because ancestors were in heaven they had very real power over the living decedents, and these rituals were also a way of protecting themselves against the bad feelings of the dead ancestors. If you fulfilled all the rites correctly then you could gain the benefits. Little by little through the centuries this fear of ancestors slowly became the need of the ancestors. By the Han dynasty there was not such fear but there was the idea that the ancestors really needed the living for their survival. All kinds of superstitions remained through the centuries, but things slowly changed between the Shang dynasty of the 12th century BC or as far back as we can know, and the Han dynasty of around 200 BC-200 AD.

The lower part of this character zong is the same as on the left side of shen. It is linked with the idea that the shen come from above, and that they are behind all dual expressions of vitality. Normally zong qi is an expression of posterior heaven. We can contrast it with the character zu which also means ancestor but which is not the same. The translation of zu is 'founder'.

On the left of the character is the same element as is found underneath in the character zong, and on the right is the part representing the power of the founder, for instance the first ancestor. Zu appears very often in the posthumous name of the founder of an imperial dynasty. But it never appears in the names of other emperors of the same dynasty. There is only one founder, and only the originator of the lineage has this kind of power which is able to extend and continue itself throughout the dynasty. When you have zong you do not have the image of the origin, it is never used in Chinese literature in this way, that is always zu. Normally, according to 'The Book of Rites' at the time of the Han dynasty, if you were a prince or a high class person when you worshipped an ancestor you worshipped him in a special temple, and in the temple you had tablets representing the power of the ancestors set out in special positions. The tablet of the founder, the tai zu, always remained in one commanding position at the western end of the formation. When someone died the other tablets moved up one place, father to grandfather, grandfather to great grandfather, with the most recent death becoming the father.

The meaning of ancestral, zong, is very close to all this, because an ancestor is not only the great honoured father, but the father who gathers under his authority all the members of the family. This type of zong is not only an ancestor but also the chief of the cult of the worship of ancestors. He is the man who gathers together the worshipers, and makes a unity of all the members of the same family who come to worship the ancestor. We have here the idea of giving homage to those who were here before and from whom we are descended.

At the same time in posterior heaven we have the need to follow the continuance of life, and to maintain the family in good rule and attract favourable effects through this worship. All these things are involved in worship of ancestors. And this is the meaning of zong. It is the faithfulness to the founder. It is the continuity of life through its various elements and successions of time progressively revealing the power which was in the first ancestor. The first ancestor is analogous to original qi.

## YING QI

Normally ying is translated as nutritive. We have the double image of fire on top of the character. It is for the expansion of the movement, and some kind of warmth; a gentle warmth of life. In the lower part there is the image of a primitive settlement with a ground plan of two tents or huts inside a fence. So first of all the character has the meaning of an established plan and the building of something in accordance with that. For example, it might mean to establish a military camp. 'Nutritive' is a good expression but it is not exactly the full meaning of the character which is really to rebuild or reconstruct. If you establish a camp for soldiers to rest and to be nourished in before sleep, you also have to defend them. There is no defence without building, and no building without defence. It is the same as the image in the Bible where you have a sword in one hand and a ploughshare in the other. If you are not able to defend territory you cannot build or maintain anything, but if you are not able to maintain something you have no real defence. This is a reality which we have known for hundreds and hundreds of years.

## WEI QI

There are two parts to the character wei. On the outside is xing, which is circulation, conduct, a kind of well balanced marching. It means to walk and to act regularly and correctly, and is all kinds of regulated conduct of life, activity or morality. It is also the character for element as in five elements, because they are the five agents of regulation and five powers of giving and maintaining life, the way to conduct life regularly.

Inside this character xing you have the image of leather. There are two kinds of leather: with or without preparation. This one is leather which has been prepared. The traditional etymology shows two men pulling the same object in opposite directions. It is probably referring to tanning leather in some way (cf Wieger Lesson 31G). The raw leather was used to make shields. But this is also the image of a guard on the high wall of a palace or castle, ensuring its defence. Part of defence is to see what is coming and not to have too many distractions. Defence is made with a kind of circulation and a regulation of movement.

## ZHEN QI

This is authentic qi. The character has the number ten at the top immediately above an eye. So you have ten eyes looking at something and not finding anything wrong. Everything is perfect. This is the etymology. The meaning is that what is authentic is such that there is no diversion from the current or direction given at the origin. All is following the natural pattern of life in the special expression which is myself. I am just fulfilling my destiny.

Fulfilling your destiny is just guiding your life with essences, spirits and qi according to the great rule of cosmic animation as expressed in yourself. You can react precisely because the firmness and stability of the interior is perfectly in tune with all the stimulation and influences coming from the exterior, constantly adapting oneself to circumstances, small and large. If all is like that nothing is wrong, and everything is circulating well. Liquids are always and everywhere transformed in order to be incorporated and useful, blood circulates well and regularly, and you are saving and sparing your essences for the benefit of your inner vision.

And because your inner vision and life are strong you are not expending your essences in too much movement in relation to the exterior. The axis of life is firm and well oriented, and all the distribution of qi is well made. All kinds of excitation and passion soon recover their balance. This is called authentic, and it is also called authentic qi. Authentic qi is the qi of my life when it is expressing my original pattern, my true nature.

## ZHENG QI

Zheng qi is not exactly authentic, it is regular. Regular, normal, without diversion, following the right way. Normally a meridian is zheng, because it is the norm for circulation. What is called zheng qi is all kinds of qi and animation following the norms of life regularly without diversion and perversion - making everything correct, following the norm.

This is exactly the contrary of perverse qi, xie qi. Perverse is what is not straight, what is oblique.

With zheng qi you are correct because you are straight. Zheng qi is all qi which is not perverse, and if

the qi is not zheng it is perverse. It must be one or the other. Yuan qi is never perverse, because it is just the continuity of the springing up of my life. Ying qi and wei qi are never perverse either. They can be in bad relationships or weak, thus allowing the perverse to invade the person, but in themselves they are just defending or building. If the defence is not defending it is no longer the defence.

It is the same thing with bodily liquids, when they leave the body they are no longer bodily liquids, and their name changes from jinye to saliva or urine or sweat. Perversion is just a change in the nature of something.

## ZHONG QI

Zhong qi is an expression in Chinese medical and classical texts meaning central qi or qi of the middle heater. This is one of the most frequent uses of this expression. In modern books it is only used as the qi of the middle heater, or spleen and stomach. Sometimes it was used to mean qi of the centre, but we do not know what the centre is. If the centre is the middle it could be all five zang or it could be something else. But that is a very particular use, and not very common. Zhong can be the centre or the median, something like the median void. I prefer this to the translation of 'middle', because zhong is a centre in the manner of an intermediary. A centre is always a place of exchange.

## DA QI

Da qi, great qi, is the name of the qi of the environment, or the qi of respiration. This is the same thing as the qi of nature which we can assimilate by respiration. For instance in the Ling shu it says that da qi is given by heaven. It is celestial influences touching the earth and penetrating man by the way of the lungs. Sometimes by assimilation it can be the name of the qi of the sea of qi in the middle of the chest. Da can also mean powerful.

*Question:* Is this the qi that you can absorb through the pores of the skin?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Normally if this da qi is all the surrounding qi you can be in contact with the da qi via your skin, but generally texts do not emphasize this aspect.