

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

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XUE , BLOOD

Elisabeth Rochat: The character xue is a vessel with something treasured inside, which is the blood. Blood circulates through vessels called the mai, the network of animation. The mai is a kind of force to carry and contain the current which is animating the blood. It is like the banks of a river. But the mai is quite inseparable from the blood, and for instance in Su wen chapter 17 it is called the fu, the palace or depot, for the blood.

Blood is under the mastery of the heart. There is in fact no blood inside the body which has not passed through the heart. This is the main difference between blood and all the other bodily liquids. The red colour is given from the depths of the heart to this liquid which then makes the blood and which is one expression of the mystery of life.

Ling shu chapter 18 says:

The middle heater is also associated with the middle of the stomach... The qi received by the middle heater filters the residues and waste, vapourizes the bodily liquids, transforms the jing wei, rises and spreads in the mai of the lungs, and finally there is transformation and it becomes blood bringing life to the body. Nothing is more precious.'

Another text in Ling shu chapter 81 says:

The middle heater makes the qi come out like a dew, and it rises up powerfully, to spread inside the great and small valleys. It pervades all the network of animation even the smallest. When all the bodily liquids are in total, perfect harmonious composition there is change and transformation; it becomes red and thus this is blood.'

This is one way of saying that there is a common origin for the blood and for all kinds of bodily liquids in the spleen. Normally some of these liquids which are very rich and dense with essences rise up through the diaphragm because essences are able to pass through very fine filters. These liquids enter the lungs and absorb oxygen, or the qi coming from respiration, but it is only because they pass through the heart that they become red. Red is the colour of life, the colour of fire, the colour of the heart, and the mark or sign of the heart on these special liquids. We will see that it is more important than a simple change of colour because this mark of the heart is also the mark of the spirits.

So what is the difference between the blood and the nutritive power, the ying qi? It is that in the blood there is not only this nutritive power, but also a kind of offering of life. This offering of life, as is said in chapter 18 of Ling shu, is the regularity of animation because the beating of the heart is regular and the pulsation in the network of animation must also be regular. The presence of the blood throughout the body has the same regularity day and night, winter and summer. This kind of regularity in the circulation of blood depends on the heart.

In addition to this, through the presence of the heart and the spirit of the heart in the blood there is also an ability to perceive. This perception is located in the blood because we are able to perceive by virtue of the presence of the spirits and through the depths of one's consciousness. The heart is the dwelling place of the spirits, and if the blood is more loaded than other liquids with the presence of the spirits or by the attraction and effect of the spirits, it is through the blood and the good circulation of blood that all kinds of sensation and perception can occur.

Of course through defence and nutrition we also have the effect of mixing with the blood and the presence of spirits because spirits are also absolutely everywhere. But the blood is always a very specific vector of information, and in a way part of the function of our nervous system is controlled by blood which is animated by the qi and circulates through the network of animation in this correspondence with the heart. This is why it is said that the blood is under the mastery of the heart. Through all this we know the importance of the blood in the movements of the psyche. We know, for instance, that emptiness of blood or heat in the blood causes a weakness or a disorder in the relationship with the spirits, which can easily lead to mental disturbance or madness. This is because the spirits have to rely on the blood to express themselves everywhere. It is not exactly the same thing as with the jingshen. It is more precise here, with the specific materialization of the blood and the regular circulation.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LIVER

The liver is in charge of storing the blood. But to be able to store is also to be able to free at the right time. The liver is the keeper of the blood because it is in charge of liberating and spreading blood

when it is needed, for instance when the regular circulation given by the heart is not enough for the circumstances, or in a specific location. For example, in an intense muscular effort you need an increased amount of blood. This is not coming from the heart but from the liver. It is mixed with the function of the liver to master the muscular forces.

There is also another irregularity which is that between day and night. For instance, in the night, as is said in Su wen chapter 10, blood returns to the liver because we do not need to expend blood or essences with all the effort for communication or movement and so on. But we need this blood returned to the liver to nourish the hun, and to be impregnated by them and to allow real dreams. At the same time the defensive qi is also returning to the inside during the night. All the stabilization is done during the night, during this time of rest. So the liver is very important too for all kinds of irregular utilization of the blood, and with this alternation of being turned to the exterior during the day and turned to the nourishment of the interior during the night. This acts in synergy with the defensive qi which works in the interior during the night.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SPLEEN

The spleen commands or manages the blood. This is not in the same way as the heart does, but with the notion of gathering. The Chinese for this function is pi tong xue. To manage is to hold. To hold is to hold together and gather. How can the spleen do that with blood? The spleen gives its form to the blood by the production of the bodily liquids and the juices which are the raw material for the making of the blood. Therefore the liquid form of the blood is given by the work of the spleen. Another thing is that the quality and the density and the richness of the juices determine the density and quality of the blood, which is then more or less able to be animated by the qi and to remain inside the mai. If the essences are lacking and the liquids do not have so many essences, then the real quality of the blood is not so good and it can easily leave the conduits of circulation. That would depend on the qi but also it depends on the special density of the blood. Because of all that we can say that the spleen manages the blood.

The character for tong is made with the thread of silk on the left side, which represents all kinds of networks and links. On the right the character means powerful, or a strong power. It is the fullness of power. So tong is to be able to hold and to maintain in a network what makes the power. Tong is also used to mean chairman too. But with the spleen it is linked to the ability to offer juices of rich quality which will make the blood. Once it is blood it is under the control of the spleen to remain a rich liquid. There is a solidarity between the blood and the bodily fluids. There is a very good passage in chapter 71 of Ling shu:

'The ying qi makes the bodily liquids by secretion. They spread into the mai and make blood through transformation.'

Here part of the nutritive qi is taken to be impregnated by the qi of the lungs and through the activity of the heart becomes red, and that is the blood. So what is the difference between the nutritive qi and the jinye and so on? It is in the function. The ying qi is the origin of all kinds of distribution and reconstruction of the liquids, and whether the bodily liquids and blood are rich and renewed depends

on the quality of the transformation of the spleen. The spleen is in charge of giving the blood shape and form. It is the movement of the earth element.

It is strange to find a kind of bonding of the heart and the liver in the case of the blood. The heart masters blood and the liver stores it, and these two zang correspond to the most yang movements of the five elements which are in charge of the blood. Of course we saw that the spleen is at the origin of all kinds of renewal of the blood as well as of the qi. And how can the blood circulate if it is not through the qi, especially at the level of the upper heater which partly depends on the power of the lung? This is also the second link between the blood and the lungs. The first link was the penetration or impregnation by the qi of respiration. With the distribution, even if it is through the beating and the movement of the heart, this movement is relying on the qi of the sea of qi, and all that is an aspect of functioning.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE KIDNEYS

As far as the kidneys are concerned I think their relationship with blood is another kind of relationship with the essences. There is a kind of power in the essences, given by the kidneys, which is also present in the blood. In some texts and classical commentaries we have the idea of the essential power of the blood linked with the power of the kidneys. Do not forget that the yin of the kidneys is just said to generate the liver, and the liver is the keeper and storer of the blood. If the kidneys are giving their yin side to the liver, and if the yin of the liver is nothing other than the blood of the liver, then we have a very strong link here between the blood and the essences of the kidneys. This is very well described in some classical commentaries, for example some texts of the 6th and 7th centuries AD. You can find this in modern books too, and sometimes I wonder if they are not influenced by occidental medicine and the role of the marrow in haematopoiesis (the making of the blood).

XUE QI, BLOOD AND QI

Elisabeth Rochat: Now we will look at the special relationship between blood and qi, and after that we will look in the Nei jing itself in order to see how the couple xueqi, is something different and more powerful than the simple relationship between one liquid called blood and one force called qi. This relationship between blood and qi is one of the most total intimacy. In a way they have the same origin because the renewal of both of them comes from the transformation of liquids and grains through the stomach and spleen, and they both rely on the power of the origin to remain faithful to their own natures. But nevertheless although they have the same origin they express this power of life in two different ways. Qi does not have any kind of form. It is dependent on the yang, and it is for giving animation and setting in motion. On the other hand blood always has a kind of shape, even if it is a shape in the likeness of water and is dependent on the yin. It is mostly in charge of nourishing and the maintenance of life by humidification, irrigation and so on. For this reason blood and qi can mix together to make an inseparable composition. In this composition one helps the other. For example, qi is very useful in the production of the blood because without the transformation due to the qi there is no possibility of transforming food in order to make the rich juice giving the form of the basic substance for the production of blood. We can see that in pathology an emptiness of qi can

lead little by little to an emptiness of blood due to this lack of transformation and production of the basic substance of blood.

The other relationship is that qi is able to make the blood circulate efficiently. There are a lot of sentences in medical texts such as 'When the qi is circulating well, blood is also circulating well.' The impulse upon which the circulation of blood depends comes from this power of the upper heater expressed by the lung and heart and gathered in the sea of qi in the middle of the chest. Through that we see this circulation of blood not only in the meridians but in any kind of circulation in any mai, from the greatest meridians and vessels to the most subtle and smallest capillaries. We also see that the qi holds the blood in this circulation and guides the blood.

On the other hand, it is also said in Chinese classical commentaries that the blood is the mother of the qi. There is no yang if it does not come from the effect of releasing some kind of essences from a yin substance. Blood is the special shape taken by essences in order to allow the releasing of some kind of energy and yang effect. If there is not enough to stabilize the qi, this power just exhausts and dissipates itself uselessly outside. This is what is called in other circumstances the yang without root. There are signs of this such as a superficial pulse without a root. It is very dangerous because it is a sign of a deep dissociation between yin and yang. This is one of the main functions of the yin essences and liquids, to attract and fix the extent of the qi and by that to make it useful and working. Qi without blood is unable to do anything. There would be no circulation and no transformation and no real impulse or warming were it not for the action of the qi within the yin support. This is expressed in the couple xueqi

Of course we know that it is not only the blood, it is the same with the jinye. When you have night sweats when you are sleeping they may be due to an emptiness of yin. This is due to the emptiness of the kidneys. The yang is without effect if it is not in an harmonious composition with a good quality and quantity of yin. This is also one of the reasons why blood is called the mother of the qi. Through this we can see that the couple xueqi also has several levels of interpretation. The first is just what you could call the circulation of blood. But in fact very often in classical texts what is called xueqi is much more than that, it is behind this blood in circulation and is the representation of the total composition of yinyang in the body. The blood is linked with all the other liquids in the body and the qi which animates the blood is also just an expression of the qi of the body. This is the why the couple also has the very general meaning of the complete balance, interplay and interpenetration of the yin and yang of all kinds of liquids coming from the essences, and of the qi. They join their qualities to make something efficient for life. This is certainly the reason why xueqi as a couple is so important in the presentation of Chinese physiology and pathology. Of course the pathology has symptoms of qi and symptoms of blood, but generally they are seen together.

BLOOD AND QI IN THE NEI JING COSMIC CORRESPONDENCE

Elisabeth Rochat: Firstly we will look at cosmic correspondence, By this we mean the way to describe xueqi in a human being made with blood and flesh if we are looking at nature or heaven and earth. This is very interesting. After that we will consider xueqi in relationship with the origin and the

renewal of anterior and posterior heaven. Also we will point out the difference of level between what we call blood and what we call essences. In a way the blood is these essences, but it is not exactly the same thing.

Then we will see this couple xueqi not only in the rebuilding of the body but also in the expression of the spirit. We will see the difference between the couples jingshen and xueqi. Then we will consider xueqi as the best example of the harmony between yin and yang in the body, which is the reason why it is also through the perception of xueqi that diagnosis is possible. Finally we have to consider that the normality of xueqi is in its variation and fluctuation. Somewhere we also have the idea that in this variation is the fundamental and structural difference of the composition in the blood and qi for each of the twelve meridians.

SU WEN CHAPTER 20

First let us see what I call the cosmic correspondence. In Su wen chapter 20 the Emperor asks the question:

'I wish to know completely the natural laws (the supreme numbers, zhi shu) of heaven and earth which are a unity (he) with the blood and qi of the human body, and through which one has the understanding to give the correct diagnosis of death or life.'

This passage shows the normal use of xueqi as a couple and how it is very often linked with the earth. For instance, here we have the original and deep structure of life which is heavenly, and which is the 'supreme number' of the universe and the organization of cosmic life, made by the movement and interplay of yin and yang. In the human body it is called blood and qi because blood and qi are just the expression of the harmony of all this organization of life. It is also the way by which one may know if this person is in a good state, and if not, if the disease is serious. By observing the changing relationship of the two members of this couple we can see the general state of the living being, and see whether he is living his life according to the supreme numbers, which are just the principles of life.

Claude Larre: I wonder if people understand why the Chinese text looks at numbers? A number is an easy way to make a distinction, and an easy way to make a composition. Numbers are not just a quantity, or a sequenced order, they can be used for combining and for distinguishing. When something is to do with heaven, its earthly counterpart is two. The union of one and two is perfect and necessary because if there is heaven it is just because there is earth, and likewise reciprocally. So numbers give this distinction and specification, this ability to join one with the other in order that their sum would be a sort of transfiguration of the nature of one and the other, or the accomplishment of one through the other. Heaven as just heaven is not very much, and earth restricted to its own nature would be nothing.

What is delicate, refined, subtle and nearly beyond expression in Chinese thinking is very much seen in the way they play with numbers. The supreme numbers, zhi shu, are no more or no less supreme than other numbers, but heaven and earth are supreme above all the 10,000 beings. So it is not only small numbers and big numbers which are used for heaven and earth. It is simply because you are

talking of heaven and earth, which is the first distinction from the chaos, that you have to give the number a qualification at the level of heaven and earth. For this reason they call it a supreme number, zhi shu.

When they say 'the natural laws are a unity', they are insisting on the interaction of heaven and earth, and also on the necessity of heaven because of earth and earth because of heaven. So saying 'a single breath' is to go further than a simple addition. Heaven and earth are never added one to the other.

They are united. The chaotic state from which heaven and earth are isolated is still there. It is important to understand that the function is at the level of life, but the analysis destroys the function in order to enable us to see the elements. It all has to be reunited one way or another to get back to the functioning. It is like a car. When your engine is running you cannot take it apart in order to see what piece is not working because when you do that the car stops. It is necessary to have the combination of the parts. And the more we are able to make sophisticated engines, the more very subtle little things there are, and if you touch one thing then everything stops. When there is some magic about the way things operate it means that the interconnection of things is so subtle that the functioning requires that everything is in the right place and goes at the right pace. Our trouble is that we want to understand how things work, but in so doing we destroy the movement itself. So many explanations are just in order to rebuild what has been destroyed by this single act of an analysis of life.

LING SHU CHAPTER 55

Ling shu chapter 55 says:

'The ebb and flow of the qi correspond with the yinyang of heaven and earth, with its four seasons and five elements. The increase in power and the decline of the mai are for the observation of emptiness and fullness, excess and insufficiency, in the blood and qi.'

Elisabeth Rochat: What is clear is that there are three levels. One is this kind of ebb and flow of qi in the universe for the interplay of yin and yang in the median space between heaven and earth, made by crossing and changing the four seasons and the five elements. This is all the internal structure of life. At the second level we have the earthly expression of that in the human body. This is all the variations of the couple blood and qi. That is perceptible and happening in and through and by the rnaï. After that we have the third level which is the level of human knowledge. This is to write books, to teach, to express in human language all the condition of life and health and disease. That is very interesting for me because in other texts, especially from around the 3rd century BC, the ability to know is strongly linked to the quality and composition of blood and qi. For instance, if a being is not made of blood and qi he is unable to have what is called knowledge. In 'The Book of Rites' and in Xun zi, a great philosopher of the 3rd century BC, it is said that animals have knowledge and they have blood and qi. If you have a couple of birds, male and female, and one is killed, the other remains for a while just looking for his or her former companion. That is due to a certain knowledge which is not like human knowledge but which is a kind of memory and perception. This is due to the composition of the bird's blood and qi. This is the first step in the

direction of the special quality of blood and qi which is used not only for nutrition and defence, but for much more than that.

Claude Larre: We understand that there is life in common between human beings and animals, and what is common is surely the blood and qi system. But there are different qualities of blood and qi particularly at subtle levels. The communication and the common feeling between animal and man is enhanced by the familiarity of living in the same house, and being dependent upon one another. A gentleman's agreement is passed between animal and people for their survival, but the limit is the incompatibility of blood and qi. But if you give your blood to your cat, or if you take your cat's blood for the enriching of your own blood, they do not match. We know that immunity is the barrier and each would reject the other. So this is a question of blood, where blood is not blood because it is blood with qi. What is in common is the expression of life which is possible because there is blood and qi but what is not in common is the fact that this blood and qi cannot mingle and give a positive result. Further analysis from a physical point of view is useless. Why certain animals are closer to us in their blood we can only know from experimentation, but from a philosophical point of view how that is possible I really have no answer.

SU WEN CHAPTER 54

Elisabeth Rochat: Su wen chapter 54 says:

By the purpose (yi) which is natural to the human heart, man corresponds to the eight winds, and by his qi corresponds to heaven... By the blood and qi circulating in the yin and yang mai, he corresponds to the earth.'

The meaning of this is that the circulation of yin and yang (through the yin and yang meridians or luo) and the circulation of blood and qi, is in the likeness of earth, with all kinds of currents, rivers and valleys. This is better explained in Ling shu chapter 40 when the Yellow Emperor says:

'I learnt the correspondence between the 12 meridians (jing mai) and the 12 rivers (jing shui).'

We can see that in both cases we have a regulation of animation by this character jing which is meridian, but which is also all the norms or rules. The organization of this movement is expressed both in the network of animation and in the river. The chapter continues:

'So I know how each of them presents differences according to the five colours so that the clarity or turbidity are not the same. The blood and qi inside the man must be exactly the same thing. May I ask what exactly are the correspondences?'

The beginning of Qi Bo's answer is:

'The blood and qi in man are really analogous (to the earthly rivers). All that is under heaven forms a great unity. If that were not so, how would you explain all the diversity?'

If there is a real rule of life that we share, and if what we call the meridians are just the rule of life in our animation through blood and qi, we call this mai and on earth we call it rivers. We observe the rivers on earth, and if we are right, what we have observed in the 12 rivers must also be true for our

12 meridians. For instance, these 12 rivers are not the same. Some are yellow, some have pure water. This is because what is forming these rivers is not the same. But if it is like that, and if all these 12 rivers have a different composition then the 12 meridians in man must also have fundamental differences. This would not be because of the composition of water and mud and so on, because here the variation is due to the composition of xueqi.

The Emperor understands that it is because of the differences that we can have the harmony, the unity. If all rivers were the same there would be no possibility of making the movement of life which is always present in exchanges and in separation, and in the diversity needed in order to reunite. The variety is able to make the composition, and the harmony of the composition is able to make a real living unity.

Guan zi chapter 39 says:

'What is water? It is the root of all things and the ancestral hall of all life. It is that from which beauty and ugliness, Worthiness and unworthiness, stupidity and giftedness are produced.

'How do we know this to be so? Now the water of Qi is forceful, swift, and twisting. Therefore its people are greedy, uncouth, and warlike. The water of Chu is gentle, yielding, and pure. Therefore its people are lighthearted, resolute, and sure of themselves. The water of Yue is turbid, sluggish, and soaks the land. Therefore its people are stupid, disease ridden, and filthy. The water of Qin is thick like gruel and stagnant. It is obstructed, choked with silt, and wanders in confusion free of its banks. Therefore its people are greedy, violent, and deceptive, and they like to meddle in affairs. The water of Jin is bitter, harsh, and polluted. It is choked with silt and wanders in confusion free of its banks. Therefore its people are flattering and deceitful, cunning and profit seeking. The water of Yan collects in low places and is weak. It sinks into the ground, is clogged, and wanders in confusion free of its banks. Therefore its people are stupid, idiotic, and given to divination. They treat disease lightly and die readily. The water of Song is light, strong, and pure. Therefore its people are simple and at ease with themselves, and they like things to be done in the correct way. For this reason, the sages' transformation of the world lay in understanding water.'
Guan zi chapter 39, translated by W.A. Rickett.

This animation is very concrete, for instance in the irrigation of fields. But it is also reflected in the psychology of the people living in the country around this particular river. Guan zi here explains the psychology of people from different regions in China according to the differences in the composition of the rivers. We can see that if a man has strong xueqi where he lives on earth the rivers will have the same strength. Both the psychology and the rivers have the same ability to express what is beyond, because you do not know if it is because the water is very muddy and the weather of the countryside is very wet that the people living there have a particular temper, or if it is because all the elements making life there create this kind of psychology in man and this kind of composition in the rivers. This comparison is not only in medical texts but is found in all classical literature.

By understanding a river we can have a better understanding of what xueqi is, and also what a meridian is in the human body. Perhaps a meridian is something which determines the composition of the xueqi of a territory, and this determines the quality of blood and the quality of irrigation and qi and so on of this whole territory of the body, from the depths to the superficial layers. The meridian is the acting ruler and maintainer of this composition which makes the quality of qi of this meridian by the particular composition of xueqi. That is enough to maintain the specific nature of an area of the

body. It is the meridians which determine the life and composition of the texture of the flesh and the appearance of the skin, and of each territory of the body even if it is always just blood and qi which are circulating there. Just as on earth there is always water circulating.

SU WEN CHAPTER 27

The Su Wen, particularly in chapters 26 and 27, goes further. Chapter 27 emphasizes another kind of relationship in which the yin of the earth is the jingshui and the yin of man is the jingmai. It says that the effect of all the influences coming from the environment are analogous with the rivers on earth and the jingmai in man, and with all the circulation of xueqi in the body of man. So for instance, in winter when the weather is very cold the water freezes in the rivers, and this is a good example of what happens in man under an attack from cold. Of course the blood does not freeze exactly, but it is the same movement as in nature and we can easily see the effect of cold and warmth. It is the same mechanism which is at work in the human body when you are speaking of perverse cold or dryness and so on. The rivers and all the effects of the rivers throughout the surrounding territories are a good image of what can happen in the body. It is also the reason why they are often described with the same vocabulary, and sometimes it is very strange the way it translates into Chinese medical texts, for example to say the blood is frozen. The blood is not really freezing, but it is just a symbolic expression of this analogous process.

Going further in chapter 26 of Su wen we have other consequences of this classical analogy. If the meridian and the xueqi which is at work through the meridians, are sensitive in the same way that rivers are, they also have to follow all the circumstances of the environment, and not only cold or warmth but all natural cycles.

SU WEN CHAPTER 26

'In all acupuncture techniques one must first observe the qi of the sun and moon, of the planets and constellations, of the four seasons and eight regulators of time. Once this qi has been calculated one punctures. Thus when the weather is warm and the sun shines, man's blood is a rich liquid and the defensive qi is superficial. Then the blood disperses easily and the qi circulates easily. If the weather is cold and overcast, man's blood condenses and coagulates and the defensive qi is in the depths. When the moon begins to wax, blood and qi begin their vital development (jing) and the defensive qi begins to circulate. When the moon is full, blood and qi are in fullness, and the bulk of the flesh is solid. When the moon is empty (new moon), the bulk of the flesh weakens, the meridians and luo become empty, the defensive qi recedes and the bodily form alone remains'.

'It is therefore according to the seasons of heaven (tian shi) that one regulates (tiao) blood and qi...This is why to maintain the life of the spirits (yang shen) it is necessary to know the state of repletion or emaciation of the body, the rising in power or the decline of the blood and qi, and of the nutrition and defence. The xueqi are the spirits of man, one cannot but pay great attention to their maintenance.'

Of course, you can needle even if you do not take exact account of all the circumstances of the sun and moon and so on. You are not obliged to know absolutely everything about universal science

before you needle! But xueqi is constant through all the variations, and you can never reach the end of the variations because they are involved in all the cycles of the universe. When you take pulses for instance, you can feel and understand what is really happening in this living person. The variation in the xueqi in each meridian is like a theoretical expression of that. The assessment of this variation in the natural structure of man is made in order to understand the composition of this living being with all these aspects and differences. Thus we can see what the precise nature of xueqi is in one precise place at one precise moment of your development. This is also why we needle a particular point of a particular meridian rather than another one.

We also have to pay attention to the general variation of xueqi through the 12 meridians, according with the natural cycles. These natural cycles are cycles of the calendar and the unfolding of time. With the 12 rivers and 12 meridians we are in space, but you know that meridians are for time as well as space. They correspond to the 12 rivers and to the 12 months as far as the number 12 is concerned. But if we look at the solar calendar and all the planetary constellations, what does it all mean? It means that according to the position of the planets there is a special configuration revealing the particular quality of the influences coming from heaven. There would be the specific influence of the year or the month, and all the patterns in heaven made by the planets would give an indication of the general disposition of heaven during that time. Of course it is also always in perpetual movement, like heaven, and having an effect on the life of earth, as well as on the life of man. If there is an effect of this movement on life on earth it is distinct and normally perceptible in the movement within your vessels, your xueqi, and all the network of your animation. This is completely without pathology, it is just normal, even if it is so fine and subtle that it is very difficult to perceive. But if the patient has a real pathology this disturbance generally overrides all these very subtle cycles.

The 'eight regulators of time' are the eight great points of passage from one quality of time to another, and they are the beginning of the four seasons plus the two equinoxes and the two solstices, which are the points anchoring time during the year. They have several names but here they are called the ba zheng. We saw the character zheng in the discussion of qi, where it meant correct or regular. *Claude Larre*: 'Regulator' is a way to express that there are eight special times where we have to be in correspondence with the seasons. So in the Chinese year where there are four seasons, which occurs nearly everywhere in China, the year is correct when the change of the season is marked or the apogee of the season is marked. They are called regulators of time because if these regular days are changed it means that the year is irregular, and what might be said for the year might also be said for an individual, because the year is a mass of qi which is regulated by the sun and moon, in the same way as man is a mass of qi which is regulated according to the cosmic year.

Elisabeth Rochat: Because of that we can have different pulses according to the seasons. In all the cycles of change and transformation which are difficult to see, we know by experience that the normal pulse is not the same in winter as it is in summer. After that we have the variations, the adaptations in the xueqi according to the weather:

'When the weather is warm and the sun shines, man's blood is a rich humour and the defensive qi is superficial.'

Everything follows the yang movement which is stimulated inside the body and inside the mai and the spirits, because it is the same as in nature and the whole environment. For that reason everything rises up and diffuses a little bit more than usual. But if you needle with dispersion it is very easy because everything is at the edge and eager to go out, and you have to pay attention to that. On the contrary when the weather is cold and overcast as in winter you have the opposite effect. The same stimulation which is felt in nature is felt in the spirit of man giving order to your life. Man's blood condenses and coagulates like a river. It is not a stagnation in this case, it is only a stagnation if there is some disorder. This is why the pulse shows the difference between summer and winter. It is the obedience of the xueqi to the natural movement.

The passage goes on to discuss all the waxing and waning of the moon. If the sun has a special effect on the qi, the moon has a special effect on the liquids and water and blood. If the sea and the great mass of water obey the moon in a kind of regular movement, there is also a kind of reaction by the liquid mass in the human body in response to the moon according to its phase. This is just an expression of the power of the moon on us. If the moon is new and not visible, there is nearly no power of attraction, but if the moon is full it is manifesting its power of attraction. It is this kind of imperceptible but real tide within the human body which is perceptible in and through the xueqi.

'When the moon begins to wax, blood and qi begin their vital development (jing) and the defensive qi begins to circulate. When the moon is full, blood and qi are in fullness, the bulk of the flesh is solid.'

This is considered high tide, which is the fullness of the power.

'When it is new moon the bulk of the flesh weakens, the meridians and luo become empty, the defensive qi leaves, the bodily form alone remains.'

The power of the influence on the xueqi is not so strong at the new moon. This is the reason why some schools of acupuncture forbid needling at the new moon or the full moon.

Claude Larre: You cannot benefit someone if you are hesitating in what you are doing. So it is better to do something which is unorthodox only if you have a good reason. But if you hesitate just because of what is said by other people, you will never get anywhere because experience, feeling, obtaining de qi are of the essence, and knowing the book is secondary to getting the qi.

Elisabeth Rochat: All this is just to show how the great movement of the universe has a natural reflection in the xueqi, because the xueqi of man is the reflection of the harmonious composition, and what we call the harmonious composition is not only the mixing of liquids and currents of qi, but is far more than that. It is the way to follow the yinyang of nature which is in perpetual adaptation to the situation or to space and time.

SU WEN CHAPTER 17

At the beginning of chapter 17 of Su wen it says:

'The best method for palpation (of the pulse) is to do it at dawn: the yin qi is not yet in motion, the yang qi is not yet dispersed, food and drink have not yet penetrated, the meridians have not yet risen in power, the luomai are also steady,

qi and blood are not yet in disorder. This is why one can then observe through palpation the faults of the pulse.'

Dawn is the only time when your xueqi is submitted to the circumstances of the surrounding environment and not disturbed by your own activity. We saw that there is already a lot to be obeyed in all the cycles of the universe. Now we have to add something else, which is our own normal activity during the day. Dawn is the moment when the defensive qi is returning to the surface, it is no longer completely in the depths, but it is not yet too active at the exterior. Dawn is also the period between day and night when the spirits are at peace, perhaps after the reconstitution of the night when the blood is stored in the liver giving the richness to the five zang. All that allows us to return to ourselves.

There are a lot of allusions in Chinese literature, for instance in Mencius, to this period of the dawn when we are able to see clearly what we are and what our life and our destiny is.

'In the calm air of the morning, just between night and day, the mind feels in a degree those desires and aversions which are proper to humanity, but the feeling is not strong, and it is fettered and destroyed by what takes place during the day.'
Mencius chapter 6, section 1, part 8, translated by J. Legge.

It is the same thing with some of our great French poets. It is too true experientially not to have been noticed by a lot of clever people. This is also an effect of the xueqi.

Claude Larre: They say 'calm dawn' on purpose. They characterize dawn as a moment when everything stands still, in yourself and outside. Of course at that time there was not so much noise in the form of planes, cars, and so on!

Elisabeth Rochat: The characters for dawn are ping dan in this text. Dan is the dawn, with the image of the rising sun above the horizon. Ping means well regulated, well balanced, at peace and calm, because everything is evenly distributed. The dawn therefore has the idea of calmness because all is equal, yet with an idea of richness. A calm abundance. You know that in the 19th century a great uprising occurred in China, the name of which was Taiping. This was a manifestation for the 'great peace'.

It is very difficult after dawn to see exactly how I am in my inner balance according to all the subtle influences and cycles of my position in the universe. If I eat, the simple fact of my digestion changes something in my pulse. If I do not eat it will also show. We can see that the most simple and normal things are able to obscure part of the perception of the very subtle harmony.

What is also interesting here is that we have absolutely and completely the relationships between qi and blood and the mai. The mai are not only the vessels because they are also the absolute conjunction of xueqi.

'Qi and blood are not yet in 'disorder'.'

The disorder here is not pathological, the meaning is simply to manifest all its different aspects. This is the normal variation of the xueqi.

One of the greatest commentators, Zhang Jiebin, emphasized the fact that in addition to all this we also have to pay attention to the constitution of the individual. If the person is strong and tall, or

small and weak, then the normal pulse and the normal balance of the xueqi, and the perception which we have of it will not be the same. A 'normal' pulse just does not exist. It is only how this particular person with his own particular nature is constituted now in this place. A normal pulse for a thin man could be a very seriously ill pulse for another person. According to Su wen chapters 54 and 18 you also have to take the person's age into account. That is said in Confucius's 'Analects' with application to the moral life. If you want to be a sage, you have to pay attention to the appropriate things in your young years and in your old age.

'A man who desires to be a sage has to take care of three things. In the young years when the xueqi is always in motion without any great stability, he has to be on his guard against the pleasures of the senses because he is more vulnerable to the attractions of external things and desires. When he is an adult the xueqi is in all its vigour, thus he has to avoid quarrels because of his strength. In old age when the xueqi is in decline he has to pay attention to the passion to acquire and keep.' Analects, chapter 16, section 7, translated by J. Legge.

If the xueqi is in decline he cannot absorb too much, either in the mind or in the body, in food or in ideas or in the possession of things. Classical medical texts say exactly the same thing but with more physiological effects.

LING SHU CHAPTER 18

For instance in Ling shu chapter 18:

'Huangdi says: If old men do not sleep at night which qi is responsible? If strong young men do not sleep in the day which qi is responsible?'

'Qi Bo answers: With regard to strong men, their qi and blood are in full power, their flesh is smooth, the qi flows freely, the circulations of nutrition and defence occur normally. This is why they are full of life and vitality in the day and they sleep well at night. As for old men, their qi and blood are in decline, their flesh dries out, their qi flows with difficulty. The qi of the five zang fight with each other because they are not sufficient. Their nutritive qi declines and the defensive qi fights with itself on the inside. This is why they are lifeless during the day because there are not enough essences, and they do not sleep at night.'

This is one example of the consequences of this great exchange of the movement of vitality between youth and old age. It is also a question of xueqi because the diminishing strength of the zang just makes the essences less rich. If there is difficulty transforming and assimilating, the blood is not so rich and so powerful, and the qi is not so strong or abundant. As a result the xueqi is not the same, and you cannot do the same things in the same way. The correct rhythm of life, for instance sleeping during the night and being awake during the day, is expressed in the xueqi and the xueqi is like a reflection of all the perversions of that rhythm.

THE BALANCE OF BLOOD AND QI

SU WEN CHAPTER 24

Elisabeth Rochat: The different balance of blood and qi in the meridians is found in several chapters in the Nei jing: particularly in Su wen chapter 24 and in Ling shu chapters 65 and 78. You can see that it is always the same for the yang. Su wen chapter 24 says:

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'Tai yang normally has much blood and little qi. Shao yang normally has little blood and much qi. Yang ming normally has much qi and much blood. Shao yin normally has little blood and much qi. Jue yin normally has much blood and little qi. Tai yin normally has much qi and little blood.'

The normal theoretical explanation of **'tai yang normally has much blood and little qi'** is that tai yang is the bladder and small intestines meridians. The blood depends on the yin and the qi on the yang. Tai yang is normally called the first yang, and tai has the meaning of powerful. The meaning of the expression tai yang is that the yang qi just reaches the supreme point, but when the yang reaches the ridge pole, at noon for instance, at that very moment the yin appears. The sunset at night begins at noon, and winter begins in the middle of summer at the solstice. If in appearance the yang is powerful and high, what is increasing in power is the yin. This is the reason why this text says that the tai yang has much blood and little qi because although the yang qi is really powerful it is at the supreme point of its power. It cannot grow in power. But the yin power is able to increase more and more. This is one classical explanation.

'Shao yang normally has little blood and much qi.'

Shao yang is the gallbladder and triple heater, but in shao yang what is yang is full of forces to come. This is exactly the contrary. You contain within you the power of something which has not yet manifest. This is the reason why the power and the qi of shao yang are without limit because it is just beginning.

'Yang ming normally has much qi and much blood.'

This is because yang ming is the stomach and large intestine, and the stomach and yang ming are the source for blood as well as for qi, the sea of liquids and grains and so on. It is the total expression of the power of renewal, and the sea for the five zang and the six fu. Therefore the stomach meridian must have much blood and much qi at the same time. The abundance and richness of the effect are in the ming. This yang ming meridian is all the brilliance and the effect of the yang, but it is also on the chest and the abdomen - on the front yin part of the body, next to the yin meridians. It is also for the nourishment of the inner-most part, for the blood and qi and the zangfu. In yang ming we have the richness of all the effects of all sorts of harvests.

With the yin it is more difficult and I think less interesting than for the yang. If it was really useful and if it had a real practical effect the texts would have to agree. With shao yin what is interesting is that we have another example of the fecundity of the yin.

'Shao yin normally has little blood and much qi.'

This is the contrary of tai yang. If shao yin represents the winter and tai yang the summer, then shao yin is the beginning of the increasing of the power of the qi. But in Ling shu chapter 65 it says 'shao yin normally has much blood and little qi.' In this case the shao yin is the opposite of the shao yang. Both situations are possible because we know that the development of life is quite visible in the yang movement. It is normal to begin with the yang, with the thing which is full of the growing power,

and all the effects of that. As far as the yin is concerned it is not the same. Is what we call tai yin the maximum of the yin or the tai, the greatest extension of the substantial manifestation within the yin? They are not the same thing. Tai yin could be autumn or winter. Autumn because this power is visible even if it is in the yin. It is just like the harvest in the fields. Up to late summer there is the effect of the growing and ripening of the crop, but after late summer that is finished. You have something which is full and you just have to cut it. If we are thinking of this aspect of richness we can call tai yin the autumn because there is a kind of power visible in the form of grains and fruits and so on. But if I am sensitive to the beginning of the yin movement which is a withdrawal, I can call autumn the shao yin, the young yin.

'Jue yin normally has much qi and little blood.'

This is because jue yin is the turning back. It is exactly like the new moon. In French we have two expressions for the same thing, the 'new moon' or the 'black night'. With the expression 'new moon' there is no moon, but we know that it is the beginning of something. The characters for jue and new moon (shuo) have an element in common. It means a repeated attack against something because there is a resistance (cf Wieger Lesson 102D). On the right side of jue the character qian has a first meaning of a breath or lack of breath, and if you combine it with the element on the left side you have the meaning of hiccup, or a kind of suffocation, because this is the image of a breath having a kind of resistance. The part on the left of jue means a steep slope or a cliff, like a piece of rock. Wieger says of jue that you are out of breath because ascending this cliff is very hard. In classical Chinese this character is usually used as a pronoun. But what is more interesting is the relationship with other characters such as ni, which is a countercurrent. Very often this is used with a negative meaning because it is to not respect the natural rhythm. But it can also be the normal ebb and flow.

LING SHU CHAPTER 65

Ling shu chapter 65:

'Huangdi asks: Women do not have beards. Could they not have blood and qi?'

'Qi Bo answers: Chong mai and ren mai both arise in the middle of the intimate envelope, bao zhong. They rise up the back on the inside and make the sea of jingluo. Their pathways emerge and run along the abdomen on the right side and rise up. They meet together at the pharynx. A detachment (jie) takes a connecting relationship with the lips and the mouth. When blood and qi rise in power the skin is humidified and the flesh is warmed. When only the blood rises in power, drop by drop in the area of the skin it gives what is necessary for the growth of hair. Women in their natural physiology have an excess of qi and an insufficiency of blood following the frequent loss of blood. Chong mai and ren mai do not make her mouth and lips flourish, and because of this they do not have a beard growing there.'

There is a difference in the way blood and qi make life in the physiology of men and women. This difference is quite original because it is under the authority of the extraordinary meridians, and the extraordinary meridians are generally the first model for the structure of the human body. Ren and chong mai are both very important in gynaecology, in defining the special way the xue and qi work in

the body of a woman. It is not the same as in a man. Another aspect of this difference is perceptible in the beard because the xueqi gives life and for a man it is visible at the top of the body in a kind of richness arising and making the vegetation flourish! But for a woman there is another way to make life powerful, and they have menstruation and the ability to nourish a child through this xueqi and its particular use in the woman's intimate envelope, bao, which takes the form of the uterus. The meaning of bao in the case of a woman can be uterus, just as the jing is a general reality but for a man can have the specific meaning of sperm. It is all according to context.

What is interesting to know is that there is a definite difference in the sexes. The qiao mai are involved in the process, but the difference is visible in the different functioning of the blood and qi. Later on in the text Huangdi is a little bit forward in asking about the particular case of natural and accidental eunuchs. There something is changed or is not normal in the primitive regulation of vitality expressing itself inside and by the xueqi.

'In eunuchs, by accident or operation, their ancestral muscle has gone, their chong mai has been attacked, the blood has been dispersed without return. The skin is knotted on the inside. There is no flourishing at the lips and mouth and this is why the beard does not grow.'

Of course it is not a simple loss of blood, it is something definitely changed, altered in the way of ruling the xueqi. The result is visible on the skin and the beard and so on. There is no flourishing at the lips and mouth, and this is why the beard does not grow.

'With natural eunuchs there is an insufficiency in their nature, tian. With them chong mai and ren mai have not risen in power, the ancestral muscle is not achieved (bu cheng). They have qi but no blood.'

This is another way of saying that something is wrong in the natural composition of the xueqi. Something very original and primitive in the constitution of the embryo and in the differentiation of the sex, and all the ways by which these influences and this composition is working, is not the same. Knowing that, all the renewal of the xueqi comes from posterior heaven.

THE: ORIGINS OF BLOOD AND QI

LING SHU CHAPTER 10

Elisabeth Rochat: In the beginning of Ling shu chapter 10 says:

'When a human being begins life, first the essences are perfectly composed (cheng). When the essences are thus perfectly composed, brain and marrow are produced (sheng), the bones form the framework, the mai nourish, the muscular forces give the hardness, the flesh gives the compartments, the layers of the skin are firm and body hair and head hair grow in length. The grains enter the stomach, the ways of animation (mai dao) establish free circulation and blood and qi then circulate.'

There is a kind of growth and movement of life making the body, making the embryo up to the point of birth. After that, what is important is the way in which you are able to manage your own life by receiving all that comes from outside, and assimilating it into the structure of your body which is already complete. This is the difference between blood and qi and jing. Jing is more on the side of life

and the process of the development of life itself, and blood and qi are rather this composition which is able to receive and to reflect all the conditions of life and all its variations. This is a theoretical difference because everything which comes from the stomach is also jing. But there is in the essences a part which is original and from anterior heaven. There is no original xueqi, even if its regulation is inscribed in the individual nature of each person. This circulation is your animation, and your animation is also how you adapt to and reflect all the surrounding environment and everything which happens inside you.

LING SHU CHAPTER 60

Ling shu chapter 60 says:

'The stomach is the sea of qi and blood coming from liquids and grains. The clouds and qi which come from this sea circulate everywhere under heaven. The qi and blood that come from the stomach form the trenches of the meridians (jing sui).'

We saw previously what it means to be a sea, and here we have another good explanation of it. The stomach is a sea of qi and blood coming from the liquids and grains because from the stomach we have the releasing which allows the renewal of essences and qi leading to the composition and recomposition of xueqi. At the same time the stomach also receives all kinds of essences and forces needed to continue its work. For instance the liquids of the stomach and the yang of the stomach enable it to transform and to distribute throughout the body with the help of the spleen.

What is also interesting is this idea of trenches or tunnels, the jing sui. You know that it is said that the blood circulates inside the meridians and the qi, or the defensive qi in particular, circulates outside of them. This is one view which is better applied to the defensive and nutritive forces, even if in this case they are not completely separate. I think everything relies on the understanding of this character for meridian, jing.

With this image of the 'trenches of meridians' we have a bit of an explanation. If the meridian is what lies behind all that is passing through these valleys, we have the direction, the regulation and the commanding point for all the effects, but we do not have one particular vessel or one particular location. The meridian is in the depths because it is commanding from the inside and is related to the zang of the interior. But what is it, and what is the materialization of the meridian, and what is the materialization of blood and qi? This is the question.

In a valley we have a river and the river is real. We can touch the water. But the effect of the valley and the river is not only the water but a certain quality of water, and also a certain quality of vegetation and fertility due to the irrigation by the water and the regularity of the flow or lack of flow of this water from the source. Life inside this valley is dependent on the general relief, and that is influenced by what is behind the river. In the body we can have one blood vessel, or two or none. This is not the problem. This is not the meridian. The meridian is behind the blood vessel, it is behind all the perceptible effects on this precise territory of the body.

All kinds of things pass through the river. There is not only water flowing but also boats and roads and trains and so on. That all makes up life, nutrition and defence. The image of a trench is quite

good for that. It contains the idea of all these kinds of receptacles with a lot of passages and a lot of effects. Never forget that the effects of the passage manifest themselves in other ways, and a meridian is just able to control that, perhaps because of having created it. What is the strength which makes this river flow for the first time through this mountain? We do not know exactly, but there is something which is just there, and which is more the meridian than anything else. Even if sometimes we can see that there is a blood vessel or a nerve.

Claude Larre: A big company has a so-called organic nature, involving the organization of power and services from the president down to the door keeper. This has been thought up by a person knowing that direction, efficiency and control have to be organized in order to produce whatever is wanted. It is done in a way that can be controlled and added to, and benefits your financial investment because it is invested in the organism.

Usually in our Western view of medicine we call the organism the flesh, the bones, the organs and everything which we can see and touch. But if we take this organism at the level of what is necessary for having an effect, we know that there are real lines of power, because if we change one director for another one it may not make any difference to the running of the company. But if you suppress anything in the organism then everything will collapse.

So we know the difference between an organism which is directing things and the person in charge of that directing. We are not looking here for any particular tangible sign, it is the blood and the qi itself which are organized and the meridian is just this string of power. So when this passage talks about trenches, it is just that there is a place where things are organized for effect. We can reduce the area of a meridian to that. If we were only speaking materially, this would be enough to explain it, but it has to account for the energy of life. We go quite a long way in the direction of materialization with the jing, which is the same character as is used for the five classics (wu jing). Of course they are books, but it is not just their content which is interesting, it is the direction which they take for organizing life from the Chinese point of view. Without a place for organizing there is no enterprise and no people. But the organization is never the people who are organized.

Elisabeth Rochat: This image of the five classics is interesting because there were a lot of people who worked carefully on these texts. The five classics were simply the expression of life in a certain part of the world. After that they became books which could be touched and read. But their effects were not visible because effects are not only in the classroom. Children learnt these classics by heart. There was also the individual work in the mind of each person involved with them, and all of that is like a releasing. Just as blood is not only the materialization of the blood, but whatever is released from it.

In the valley we have a river, and the water in the river by virtue of its density and richness lies on the bottom of the valley and flows there and not on the top of the mountain. The materialization of water, which is this kind of essential element of life, is really more visible in the valley.

SU WEN CHAPTER 21

Su Wen chapter 21 says:

'The qi of the solid food penetrates the stomach; there is diffusion of essences to the liver and impregnation of qi to the musculature. The qi of the solid food penetrates the stomach. The unclear qi (zhuo qi - clear qi coming from food) is transferred to the heart, there is impregnation of essences to the network of animation (mai). The mai flow to the meridians. The qi of the meridians is transferred to the lung. The lung receives the 100 mai in audience. They transport the essences to the skin and body hair. Body hair and mai join their essences and there is circulation of the qi to the residence (fu). The essences that are in the residence are the radiant spirits (shen ming). They dwell in the four other zang. Their qi is referred to the arbiter judge (quan heng). The arbiter judge must be equitable and the mouth of qi (qi kou) perfectly formed at the pulse (cun). Thus there is estimation (of the diagnosis) of death or life.'

This is the first part of the quotation. After that there is a presentation of the liquid foods organizing and renewing the bodily fluids. What is interesting here is that you can see an alternation of essences and qi in the text. This couple make the movement of the text, even in an English translation. It shows how qi and essences just arise one from the other.

In the first part of the passage the emphasis is on animation and the pulse, and the strength of all circulation. In the third sentence the 'unclear qi' is nothing other than the pure juice, rich in essences, which is able to pass through the diaphragm and make the substance of the blood. It is unclear not because it is unclear, but because it is coming from food and not from respiration.

'The unclear qi is transferred to the heart, there is impregnation of essences to the network of animation.'

What is the meaning of that? After the passage through the heart there is blood, and this blood is nothing other than essences in the special form of essences making the network of animation. This is all the xuemai, all the circulation of blood through the network of animation under the authority of the heart. Through these essences and through this blood we have at the same time the precious impulse given by the heart to this circulation through the mai. 'The qi of the mai flows to the meridians' is just a way of saying that it is submitted to the great rule of life of circulation and animation. It is not just pushed, it is obeying the route which is the meridians.

'The qi of the meridians is transferred to the lung. The lung receives the 100 mai in audience.'

This is also the sea of qi in the middle of the chest, with all kinds of qi in the body obeying the ancestral qi. Blood is able to master the qi of the body. Blood is able to order the regulation of this circulation, and here it is said that the function of the lung is to receive the 100 mai in the dawn audience. This is the only moment when it is possible to regulate absolutely.

'It transports the essences to the skin and body hair.'

From the lung all this xueqi, yin and yang increase and force their way through all the meridians, and are distributed and propagated up to the skin and body hair under the authority of the lung.

'Body hair and mai join their essences.'

This is a way to express that the power of the qi and the blood, and the lungs and the heart are all joined together. The mai are under the special authority of the heart, and the skin and body hair are under the special authority of the lungs. This is a mixing of xueqi and everything under the authority of lungs and heart.

'And there is circulation of the qi to the residence (fu).'

The fu here is not one of the six fu, it is the middle of the chest. This is the special centre of vitality linked with the influences coming from the heart.

'The essences that are in the residence are the radiant spirits. They dwell in the four other zang.'

If the xueqi, the heart and the lungs are functioning well, and all the meridians and the zangfu are in harmony with this functioning, there is a kind of concentration of perfect xueqi at this place, and there is a good impregnation of the layers of the skin. The eyes and vision are good, and the brain is alert. The bones are solid. All that is called shen ming. At the same time the blood and the essences of the blood, carried on by good qi, are also able to make the life of the spirits, and to make the vital spirits which are the jingshen. 'They dwell in the four other zang' because if what is coming from the depths of the heart, this real deep and true vitality, is strong enough, there is an effect in what is animated from inside the other zang. In each zang there is this same vitality, jingshen, which rules the functioning, and through that creates not only good vision in the eyes but also this kind of real perception and knowledge of things.

'Their qi is referred to the arbiter judge.'

The 'arbiter judge' (quan heng) here is a way to refer to the taking of the pulses which are at the end of the mai. We know that this xueqi is not only coming from food through the stomach and from the lungs and the heart, but is also a mirror of the inner animation by each zang. The meaning is that with the pulse we have not only the perception of what is wrong perhaps in the fire of the liver or this countercurrent here, but we can reach down to the spirit of this person. Because sometimes, although I do not know how because I am also a being made from xueqi and spirit and jingshen, we can touch something else and can feel or know things which we are unable to explain by other means.

Quan heng is also linked with the four seasons traditionally speaking, for instance at the end of Huainan zi chapter 5:

'For the government of spring, adopt the compass. For the government of autumn, adopt the square. For the government of winter, adopt the weight (quan). For the government of summer, adopt the balance-beam (heng).'

Etymologically speaking heng represents part of a balance, and a beam in a scale. The use of this character is sometimes linked to the four seasons which are also the beam in the scale or the balance for the year.

Quan had a special meaning in the Legalist School, and was one of the main terms they used. It is the power, the authority, especially of a prince. I think that it is that the pulse is seen here as a manifestation of what is really happening in the body. It is the function of the constant rule of life, and the perpetual adaptation to make this rule efficient. In the pulse there is something which is constant but which is never the same, and this is perhaps the reason why they chose these two characters, quan heng, to manifest this double aspect or two-fold quality of each pulse at each moment. But it is also a very general expression, and common even in classical Chinese with the simple meaning of a judge or to be able to give a judgment. Here you are able to view like a practitioner, to make judgments.

Claude Larre: It seems to me that there may have been a derivation of meaning from more simple tools like the water level and the plumb line. If you know how to make an horizontal and a vertical perfectly, then you know how to place things exactly. But those are ordinary things. If you can combine them with in this case the scale and balance, then it is more representative of the quality. If you use both principles there is some sort of integration of one system with another to make the right decision. Because how a thing which is used at one level is transferred to another level and what the transformation for that transferral is, is something which is possible only if you look across many texts in order to know the evolution of the meaning.

Question: The lungs are sometimes described as a judge, is this the same term or a different one?

Elisabeth Rochat: The arbiter judge must be the same thing. I think it is also the idea that it has to be unbiased. The judge and the pulses have to be pure and equal. But within the equality there is always variation. It is the same as the situation at dawn.

'The arbiter judge must be equitable and the mouth of qi perfectly formed at the pulse, thus there is estimation of death or life.'

The real orientation is life, and through the xueqi you have the realisation and the orientation of the mai.

BLOOD AND QI, SPIRIT AND QI LING SHU CHAPTER 3

Elisabeth Rochat: Next we have a series of texts which emphasize the life of the spirits and the expression of that life through the shenming. For example in Ling shu chapter 3 we see:

“The crude (practitioner) observes the body.” This means that he observes the techniques of puncturing. “The superior (practitioner) observes the spirits.” This means that he observes the blood and qi of man, tonifying or dispersing, following excess or deficiency.’

What is interesting here is the near equality of identity between the spirits and blood and qi. Blood and qi are one of the best ways through which the spirits express themselves in a perceptible way. It is perceptible because it is always through the balance of xueqi that we have the indication for treatment. You know if there is excess or deficiency, so you tonify or disperse.

SU WEN CHAPTER 26

At the end of Su wen chapter 26 we have the following:

'This is why in order to maintain the life of the spirits, yang shen, it is necessary to know the state of repletion or emaciation of the body, the rising in power or the decline of the blood and qi of nutrition and defence. The blood and qi are the spirits of man, one cannot but pay great attention to their maintenance.'

Here we can clearly see the equivalence between blood and qi and the spirits of man, xue qi zhe ren zhi shen. But they are not exactly the same thing. If you want to perceive something of the state of the spirits or their expression, because the spirits themselves are beyond any analysis by logical means, you have to observe the state of the xueqi, and this is perceptible in the general state of the body. Is this person in a state of good balance, is there is a good current of rich liquids circulating in the bulk of the flesh? If there is, then the flesh is firm and the skin is supple and solid. If not, then there is something wrong in the xueqi in the circulation or the richness of the circulation and so on. That is a sign that there is something wrong with what finally determines the condition of that circulation or the xueqi, which is the spirits.

On the other hand, if the xueqi for one reason or another is too weak, there is something wrong in the means offered to the spirits to express themselves. It can begin with something wrong in the spirits, or emotions, and as a result, little by little, something goes wrong in the harmonious composition of the xueqi. If something is wrong in the composition of the xueqi there is a countercurrent, because if the mass of the blood is too heavy there may be stagnation, or if the liquids are not enough, or if the qi has too much impulse, there can be a countercurrent or hesitation with all kinds of disorder.

If for any external reason, perhaps because the defence or the nutrition is not strong enough, an attack comes from the exterior and leads to a disease in which there is an imbalance in the xueqi that will also lead to a lack of expression of the spirits, according to Su wen chapter 21. The xueqi nourish the spirits in order to inspire their life expressed through the five zang.

LING SHU CHAPTER 18

Ling shu chapter 18 has another formulation of the same idea:

'Huangdi: Blood and qi under different names are of the same type. How is this?'

'Qi Bo: Nutrition and defence are jingqi, as for the blood it is shenqi. This is for the reason that blood and qi have different denominations while being of the same type.'

Here the difference between nutrition and defence and xueqi is clearly stated. With nutrition and defence we have all the interplay of essences and qi making the strength in the muscles and the circulation. But with xueqi we have something else. We have the expression of the depths of the heart through the blood and the animation of the network and also the best way to store essences, nourish the spirit and have a real spiritual life. The level of xueqi is where there is perpetual adaptation and the presence of the spirits, and you know that the spirits are the real inspiration for exchanges and transformation for life. That is said in chapter 9 of Su wen, when the heart is described as the trunk

of life and the dwelling place for all transformations made under the influence of the spirits. This is definitely the difference between blood and other liquids.

Because of xueqi having the power and the presence of the spirits, there is this communication with the outside which is linked to knowledge, not only through the orifices, but also through all the sensations that we can have such as pain, cold, itching and so on. These are due to the circulation and presence of xueqi everywhere, but also because there is this special movement to and from the heart by the spirits, whose presence is the necessary condition for the perception which is really knowledge, and which is not just an instinctive reaction without consideration. For instance, a disturbance of the couple xueqi would lead to jing, starting with fright or surprise. This would then lead to a lack of the presence of the spirits, and if something then happened at the level of the skin or one of the orifices, there would not be a good reaction because of this lack of spirits due to the disorder in the animation.

In 'The Book of Rites' it says that man is composed of xueqi and has knowledge coming from the heart. This is the double nature of man. Afterwards the text continues by describing the possibility of emotional expression, because we are sensitive to exterior influences on all this xueqi as reflected in the spirit of the heart. This is the reason why we have to know how to conduct our life following the art of the heart, xin shu. Further on it is written that if blood and qi are in harmonious and well balanced composition, he ping, then the example of good people becomes stronger and conduct is rectified.

Another quotation from Xun zi says:

'All living creatures between heaven and earth, which have blood and qi must possess consciousness, and nothing that possesses consciousness fails to love its own kind.' Xun zi, chapter 19, translated by Burton Watson

If you take all the living beings between heaven and earth, those of them which have blood and qi also necessarily have consciousness. This is the kind of quotation which you can find in other books too. It is just to emphasize this intimate relationship between these things, and why it is not only the nutrition and defence that you judge.

Question: Could you talk about the relationship of the blood with the hun?

Elisabeth Rochat: The hun are the most specific aspect of the spiritual animation of the imagination and knowledge and all kinds of intelligence and cleverness. These kind of spirits, shen or hun, need rich, clear and pure essences to best express themselves. Through the hun we are able to have imagination and to see what the right way to understand something is. This is seen during the day through the spirit of the heart, but during the night when the blood is specifically filling the liver, the hun, which depend and dwell in the liver, are full of this power of the essences made by the blood. At that time they express their ability to know and to discern, to be clear and to form images, in the interior, and we have dreams for instance. If we are in good health these dreams are just the result of this discernment and production of images natural to the hun. This is a special nightly activity of the hun. During the day the hun follow the shen. All that is due to the essences of blood and qi. If I want to see something well, I have to make an effort and to expend a certain amount of blood, not only for the optic nerve and the system of the eyes, but also in order to understand what I am reading

or whatever. We know that when we look at a patient it can be an effort not only to see what the problem really is but also to see what the meaning of it is. Very often this is an unconscious process, but it is effective. Normally there is no difference between shen and hun in a healthy man.

Question: I have a question related to what you were saying before about the yuan (sources). The idea of the yellow sources, huang quan, has been mentioned, is there more information about them?

Claude Larre: Mythologically speaking they are physical, but mythology is just a way to talk of life and to initiate an approach to its meaning. If the sources are connected with earth then their colour is yellow. The yellow of the sources means that whatever the influence of heaven might be there can be no actual real man standing on earth unless he is made with material from the earth. Everywhere everybody has a connection with the earth, and the source of life is found in the depths of the earth where water is present.

You may take this physically, mythologically or psychologically. It is not from mythology itself that you can understand mythology, it is from your own life. You come from earth, and on earth the influence from heaven circulates in a form more materialized by water than by air. It is not wrong to see air circulating inside the pulse, but it might be more correct to see the circulation of the power of heaven as liquid.

Yin and yang are the limit of the understanding of life because at the highest level of abstraction they are the container of life. You may take yinyang as an idea, a symbol, or a representation in a boundless world. You cannot speak of man and his destiny unless you speak of yin and yang in the process of crossing. This is so essential that we understand all books and all treatises could not start with anything other than yinyang. The yellow sources are the beginning of yin and yang. Yin and yang are understood by what happens there, although there is no localization as such.

There are nine sources because everything which is big and large and without very much specification is represented by nine. There are nine territories for us and nine ways to be liberated in heaven, and there are nine ways for water. Maybe in certain texts there are 27 abysses because three times nine is 27. The flexibility of the text is such that you may understand what they say but you cannot deduce anything from what you understand! You understand something, and then you understand something else, and if you want to put that all together it is your decision, but it is not the Chinese conclusion. They give you the pieces of the riddle and you build what you want from them. But the pieces which are given are given in a certain definite form, so it is not vague. The yellow sources are just there, and there is some organizational power which is of a very low level. And the place where life insists on taking its form is in water.

The origin of man may be heaven and earth but if we want to contact that we have to go to a more specific level. We go through rites of death and extend ourselves to our ancestors, and see how the 10,000 beings are just the crossing of yin and yang which incorporates the meeting of life. We see in Ling shu chapter 8 that what has been built is ying qi and this is just qi naturally coming to its place. Without ying qi we could not really understand what life is. If it was not a natural building, then it would not be necessary to nourish it again and again, because life is in the building.

The act of life is to be building. People who do not take care of themselves are not really living. But at the same time life in the open has to be protected and the marvellous thing is that when we are

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nourishing we are also protecting, and when we are protecting we are saving what will be necessary to rebuild our life.