

CHAPTER ONE

INDISPENSABLE PRELIMINARIES

THese are concepts which, although further developed below, need to be stated at the beginning, as they underpin our approach to the subject.¹ There are two fundamental differences in the approaches of the West and China to understanding life and the universe that are necessary to understand in order for us to properly utilize Chinese medicine.

- There are two ways of looking at what makes light and matter. As the famous Nobel-winning French scientist Louis de Broglie described it in the 1920s, one is based on particles and the other on waves or vibrations. From this perspective we can see that modern biomedicine focuses more on the particle aspect of reality, while Chinese medicine emphasizes the vibrational aspect.
- As the sinologist François Jullien has noted, “classical Chinese has no verb ‘to be.’”² Unlike the West, where the Judeo-Christian tradition has focused above all else on being and the relationship between the human and the divine, in China there was much less concern with the details of individualized being and much more on the relationships that make up the life of a being. The focus is on the relations of humans with the other beings around them, the cosmos, and the laws that govern these associations. A recently published book by Michel Bitbol, a researcher into the philosophy of science, posits that this approach is on the cutting edge of modern science. He writes, “Contemporary physics is less and less about things and more and more about relationships. ... How to understand relationships that pre-exist between objects or the properties that unite them?”³

Given this approach to Chinese medicine from a primarily symbolic perspective, when I refer to a traditional Chinese understanding of the body, I will generally choose translations that are as far as possible from precise anatomical terms.

Yin and Yang

*“All the world knows beauty
but if that becomes beautiful
this become ugly.
All the world knows good
but if that becomes good
this becomes bad.”*

This is the warning in Chapter 2 of the *Daodejing*.⁴ This principle of duality tells us that everything in the universe is *both yin and yang*, and not *yin or yang*. Each thing *and* its opposite (not *or* its opposite) inevitably coexist. It is Heraclitus’ “To be *and* not to be”, which is both the same *and* not the same, rather than Hamlet’s “To be *or* not to be.” Thus all of these pairs (beautiful and ugly, big and small, pure and impure, etc.) are in us to be explored, known and recognized both in ourselves and in others. From this we understand that it is necessary to simultaneously utilize both the yin and the yang of everything, including seeing the world as made up of both particles and vibrations and also utilizing both Western and Chinese approaches to medicine. Yin-yang is a principle of duality in its very definition as it involves duality and exchange, distinction and collaboration.

We can see this in the coexistence and the succession of inhalations and exhalations, day and night, contractions and expansions, movement and rest, heat and cold, inside and outside, masculine and feminine, fullness and emptiness, noise and silence, and so on. It reflects the inescapable duality of life. Whatever the function, structure, relationship or parameter considered, always and everywhere, two opposite and complementary aspects coexist. It inevitably gives two sides to the same reality, as the original concept of yin-yang related to two sides of the same hill.

Yin-yang is also a principle of alternation (inhaling and exhaling), of exchange (masculine and feminine), of transformation of the one into the other (day and night). It stresses the concerted action between these two elements: it is an exchange in which, in turn, one gives in to the other. As a principle of dialogue, union, marriage, it shows that the only purpose of distinction is to act in concert, unite and marry. Any opposition is necessarily relative and reversible; its goal is reunion. This is fundamental in our daily lives: it is permissible to separate only to reunite.

Yin-yang is a life lesson, a lesson of relativity, tolerance and prudence. It is a tool for

learning about oneself and others. It induces the absence of judgment because we are all, without exception, built on the same contradictions. Life makes one aspect more visible at times while the less visible aspects are still present. We understand—and this is something that we take as fundamental in our everyday life—that the concept of yin-yang makes it impossible to truly judge the intrinsic value of a human being based on what one observes at any particular time, as we are made up of all the dualities inherent in life: the large and the small, the transient and the immutable, light and shade, the beautiful and the ugly, the pure and the impure ... which is everyone's lot, without exception, regardless of appearances. Especially because there is no hierarchy between yin and yang, since one is not superior or inferior to the other, their relationship is what matters.

Qi is the Difference in Chinese Medicine

Before discussing physiology and therapy any further, it is important to study the concept of qi. One of the merits of Chinese tradition is that it emphasizes and bases its theories on universal concepts like yin and yang, emptiness, etc., as well as defining an original reality known as qi. "All is qi." The word qi cannot be translated without betraying its basic essence. We will try here to examine what qi is from its various aspects.

Qi (氣) is the "vapor, air, breath, that which animates the human body, the most subtle of elements entering into the composition of all things, attitudes, anger, scents, or feelings."⁵ Etymologically, qi consists of the "vapors that rise and form the layers of clouds above"; here, they are "rising from a hot, cooked grain."⁶

Qi, which animates and gives substance, is the mechanism by which a being emerges, takes form, and acquires a palpable, visible and perceptible appearance. Qi is linked to incarnation, to the process of taking form. Could it perhaps be *in-form-ation*? In any case, it is certainly *trans-form-ation*. When it examines living forms, Chinese medicine says that everything is qi, because it is with qi that a living being manifests, becomes perceptible: "The life of humans is the assembling of qi. When qi assembles there is life. When it disperses, there is death." (*Zhuangzi*, Chapter 22)

Qi is also the qi of the atmosphere, the air, odors, the breath of respiration that we inhale and exhale and that circulates, animates, constitutes and transforms life; that is, all that enables a visible, incarnate, and manifest being to continue to live. It is because this unique, original qi differentiates into the required infinite forms that it can manifest and maintain life, breath, blood and bodily fluids, yin and yang organs—in short, all of the structures and functions required for life.

Qi is important because everything that we have experienced since the time of conception, our pain, suffering, conflicts and joys, is written in our body, in different places for each one, depending on the type of aggression or emotion involved, the time it occurred and our hereditary weaknesses. Each of these effects, through excess or repetition, results in an obstruction of the circulation of qi and causes physical or emotional pain: this is the origin of disease.

Acupuncture addresses those locations of the body where the qi is blocked or obstructed and where its attendant suffering is located. After a successful acupuncture treatment that causes the qi to circulate more normally, the suffering is no longer attached to the area, and while the scars remain, they are far less painful. Moreover, when the suffering is released this way, and thereby detached from the body, it becomes more accessible to the psyche, possibly to psychotherapeutic processes.

Introduction to Symbolic Language

Chinese medicine, like any other traditional medicine, is based on a symbolic language. It is only through its study that we will grasp the original vision of man this tradition offers. Moreover, to go deeper in the understanding of Chinese medicine, including its clinical practice, it is necessary to delve deeper and deeper into the understanding of its symbolic foundations. In Chinese, the main word for a symbol is *xiang* (象), which means “symbol, to symbolize, image, looking like, to represent, appearance, elephant.” The commentary adds: “It is the footprint of the elephant.”⁷ The elephant is no longer here; it is invisible. But its footprint tells us that he once existed and went this way. A very long time ago, before the sky or earth existed, there were only symbols (*xiang*) and no form (*xing* 形).⁸ The symbol, the archetype, the image is previous to the form, because *xiang*, the symbol, and *xing*, the form, are an indissoluble couple. Thus the symbols are the foundation of the life of the many, manifesting themselves under the forms.

Chinese medicine posits that there is an order to life, that some laws, some rules govern us. Symbols are intermediaries between these rules and laws and the infinite manifestations, forms, mechanisms and structures of life. Thus, the symbol, the mediation, links the visible and the invisible, the perceptible and the imperceptible: it links the mechanisms and the structures of the living to the archetypes and the laws that founded them.

On a symbolic level, Chinese medicine tells us that the human body is “the footprint of the archetypes.” The clinical interest of symbolic language is both diagnostic and therapeutic, for it allows us to link mechanisms and structures that, *a priori*, have nothing to do with one another. Here is a clinical example of how these concepts can be utilized.

❖ Case History

A tall, slender, elegant 40-year-old woman who, at times, suffered from diarrhea with an intense burning intestinal and urinary pain came to my practice. She also had a very intense heat sensation in the gums, the tongue, the palate, and the feet. The symptoms were therefore located in the lower part of the face, the abdomen and the legs. The only common medical references were the three earth areas, located at the lower part of the head and trunk, and of the lower limbs. The attacks of diarrhea, recurring twice a month, had started at puberty;

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at that time, she could not but face the reality of her own body and femininity. “What are your roots?” I asked. “I do not have any. I have no flat. I live in a hotel. I am a foreigner; I have no country of my own. I’m only passing through. There is no place where I feel at home,” she explained. Without a body, without a home, without roots, I can understand the suffering of the earth areas. ST-27, in the lower abdomen, each side of CV-5, which is a foundation landmark, reduced the intensity of the attacks and their frequency.

with its power over the comings and goings of spirit and the free, unobstructed circulation of qi, which should flow flexibly and with ease, and which suffers when they are blocked. One of the points of the Liver, BL-47, which manages these comings and goings, brought about a cure in three sessions.

POINTS FOR DEFICIENCIES OF QI AND ESSENCE

Qi is the circulating breath of an organ and is immediately available to it. The essence of the qi of this organ constitutes a sort of reserve. For various reasons, such as physical or psychological trauma, disease, or overwork, the qi of an organ may become deficient. If this effect is brief, superficial and recent, as in the case of an acute, benign illness, only the immediately available qi will be deficient. This will usually result in signs of cold. We restore it by the corresponding associated points on the back, located on the inside branch of the leg *tai yang* Bladder channel. If the impairment is chronic, profound or severe, the reserve qi will be affected: this is the essence of the organ qi. This impairment usually manifests with signs of heat. We treat these *essence* deficiencies by the points located on the outer branch of the same *tai yang* Bladder channel at the same level as the associated points of the corresponding organs. These are the deficiencies that we encounter most frequently in the West.

The diagnosis of organ impairment is made from the association of visceral, somatic and psychological signs that may affect the corresponding organs (e.g., muscles and Liver) or problems along the lines of the corresponding channel. Furthermore, it is not always easy to tell whether the origin is in the organ or the channel. The choice can often be guided by small pathognomonic signs. I will mention the most typical organ symptoms (they are not exclusive and not always present). We should always take into account their respective positions on the radial pulse as well as the examination of the tongue.

- Heart: functional cardiac signs, precordial pains, emotional lability, melancholy, depression, insomnia, memory impairment, heat and pain in the palms. We will have to choose according to the signs of the associated channels between the Heart—arm *shao yin*—and Heart Master (Pericardium)—arm *jue yin* (BL-15 and BL-44 or BL-14 and BL-43).
- Lung: respiratory signs, sorrow, melancholy, insomnia, heat in the palms.
- Spleen: anorexia, indigestion, diarrhea, flatulence, intolerance of raw (“cold”) foods, fats and alcohol, intense physical fatigue with sensation of heaviness, edema, pain at the root of the tongue.
- Liver: dyspepsia, nausea, vomiting, intestinal and urinary disturbances, testicular pains, feeling of oppression, insomnia, cramps or muscle spasms, visual disturbances, anger, anxiety, or fear.

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- Kidneys: physical or mental fatigue, general decrease in libido, urinary disturbances, frequent sexual dysfunction, low back pain, pharyngitis, heat in the soles of feet, difficulty in concentration, insomnia.
- Stomach: gastric signs, drooling, precordial pains and palpitations, runny nose.
- Gallbladder: digestive disturbances, bitter taste in mouth, frequent sighing, headaches, vertigo, visual disturbances.
- Small Intestine: diarrhea, intolerance of raw (“cold”) foods, periumbilical pains sometimes extending to the lumbar region or testicles, urinary disturbances, swelling of the jaws or submaxillary region.
- Large Intestine: thirst, runny nose, epistaxis, pharyngitis, painful intestinal disturbances that may extend to the lower back, milk intolerance.
- Bladder: urinary disturbances (incontinence or retention), runny nose.

Qi problems

The related points on the medial branch of the Bladder channel are BL-13 for the Lung, BL-15 for the Heart, BL-18 for the Liver, BL-20 for the Spleen, and BL-23 for the Kidney.

❖ **Case History**

A young woman, age 28, with a severe neurological disease that was momentarily stabilized, arrived in tears and highly agitated, saying, “I am terribly worried; my psychotherapy this week has brought back the fears of death that plagued me throughout my childhood and that I had managed to hide.” In the face of this emergency, with the recent resurgence of symptoms, BL-15 seemed to be indicated, in order to restore the Heart qi. Half an hour later, she was relaxed and peaceful.

Essence deficiencies

The related points are level with the associated points corresponding to each organ, on the outer line of leg *tai yang* Bladder channel: BL-42 for Lung, BL-44 for the Heart, BL-47 for the Liver, BL-49 for the Spleen and BL-52 for the Kidneys.

❖ **Case History**

A 51-year-old woman consulted me for repeated pneumothorax over the last three years. Surgery was planned. She had no pulmonary history, but had previously undergone an operation for sciatica caused by a herniated disc. She was now complaining of slight low back pain and constipation. She had not experienced any grief or major emotional blows: she was not sad. Her pneumothorax occurred after a case of bronchitis that lasted two months, during a period of extreme

overwork. The pulse, empty in the right distal position, confirmed my supposition of an essence deficiency in the Lung. I decided to puncture BL-42, hoping there would not be an immediate recurrence, so there would be time to restore her essence that had been depleted by intense overwork. The first two sessions were followed by forty-eight hours of thoracic pain, although without relapse, which was a good sign. After the third treatment, the pneumothorax healed spontaneously in one week. A slight relapse, the last one, healed in two days after the sixth session. After the eighth treatment, there were a few persistent costal pains but these gradually faded.

Note the potential for acupuncture intervention in organic diseases: it can reinforce the defenses and the body's capacities for restoration.

❖ Case History

A 58-year-old man, measuring 170cm (a little under 5'7"), with a sturdy, squat build, and a serious, quiet demeanor, was a financial officer in a large company. He consulted me for uncharacteristic anxiety, which had been troubling him for a few months. His sleep was relatively good. He admitted to a decrease in drive and endurance, with moments of fatigue around 3 p.m. He had considerable professional worries (his business was about to be taken over) and his wife had just undergone surgery for a craniopharyngioma.

Physically, there was not much to report: low back pain, particularly in the morning. Prior history included a herniated intervertebral disk that caused sciatica on the right, healed by osteopathy. There was also intellectual and sexual fatigue. His tongue appeared normal. The pulse indicated essence impairment in the Heart and Kidneys.

It should be noted that there was a deficiency in both the Kidneys and the Heart, so this was not a case of dissociation between the Kidneys and Heart in which there is a deficiency in the Kidneys and excess in the Heart. With this simultaneous deficiency, what could it be? Exhaustion of the essence of the Kidneys and Heart is associated with worry and stress and the wear and tear they can bring. Wear is an important term; it is often the cause behind essence deficiencies. The physical, psychological, intellectual and sexual nature of the exhaustion corresponds to impairment of the Heart and Kidneys.

When I asked him, "Have you recently experienced a situation that wears you out?" he answered, "Yes; two kinds." First, there was a professional "war of nerves" because he had to present the company balance sheet to each potential buyer, knowing that he would be losing his job; moreover, the atmosphere at the company was very tense. And also the "sword of Damocles" hanging over his wife's head increased his anxiety.

Which points should be punctured? BL-44 and BL-52. These points restored the essence of these two organs. The results were very good after three sessions. The patient was to return whenever he felt the need, depending on the circumstances, usually about every eight weeks.

❖ **Case History**

Mr. D., 46-years-old, consulted me for sensations of epigastric blockage, accompanied by intense fatigue and occurring after meals or at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. These sensations produced a great deal of anguish. They began nine months earlier and had not been alleviated by any treatment. This man, who had not presented any other symptoms before, was physically exhausted by an overload of work. Psychologically, he still had plenty of drive and will to work, but he no longer had the physical strength. Intellectually, he had difficulty concentrating. His fatigue had little influence on his sexuality. He did not describe any other symptoms. His pulses were weak. An examination of his tongue confirmed the deficiency of Spleen essence, as it was pale with clear indentations from the teeth. We should note that essence deficiency in the Kidneys leads to mental and sexual impairment, which was not the case here, and does not produce hypoglycemia. We punctured BL-49. There was a distinct improvement from the very first treatment. After the third session, this patient was essentially cured.

POINTS FOR DRAINING ORGANS

In order to function well, the qi, blood and fluids of the organs need to be drained and purged properly. Otherwise, toxins accumulate, resulting in symptoms of damp-heat that are variable depending on the organ concerned.² These mechanisms are involved in a number of immune, allergic, and autoimmune disorders, but also in all toxic overload syndromes.

The draining points are KI-26 for the Lung, KI-23 for the Heart, KI-18 for the Spleen, KI-20 for the Liver, and KI-15 for the Kidneys. Because these points drain toxins, they are also known as points of purification.

❖ **Case History**

Mr. N., 40-years-old, consulted me for respiratory allergies (nasal, pharyngeal and bronchial), foul-smelling diarrhea, burning during urination and tinea of the groin and feet. The foul-smelling stools and tinea immediately brought to mind a toxic overload of damp-heat. He experienced anxiety, sleep disturbances, heat sensations and excessive perspiration. He was overly sensitive and took everything to heart. He mentioned respiratory problems in his childhood. His right distal pulse was rapid and deep; his tongue was red, with a yellow coating, which confirmed

divisions, the eight extraordinary vessels (*qi jing ba mai*) and the sixteen connecting vessels (*luo mai*), which are not called *jing* because, to use a weaving metaphor, they are the shuttle that weaves the weft and runs on the warp of *jing*.

Six Main Channels

The main channels (*jing mai*) described in Chapter 6 of *Basic Questions* number three yin and three yang. The founding elements, to me they engender all the energetic structures and functions of a being. To begin with, they are the origin of the five phases and therefore of the yin and yang organs, at the center of the four directions. Next, by dividing in two, they engender the twelve primary channels, the twelve channel divergences, and the twelve channel sinews as well as the eight extraordinary channels. They can be considered the original channels.

THREE YIN

The three yin are called *tai yin*, *shao yin*, and *jue yin*. Related to the interior, they are connected with the five yin organs. Their diagnosis depends on the presence of symptoms that correspond to one of the six main channels, located simultaneously on that of the hand (*shou*) and of the foot (*zu*),¹ and on the disturbance of one of their functions. This is why it is important to know them. Once one has identified which main channel is disturbed, the next step is to choose the indicated point or points along its path.

Tai yin pertains to the surface, in connection with yang. *Tai yin* is “mother,” welcoming and receptive, as stated in Chapter 79 of the *Divine Pivot*. It is related to the Lung and Spleen, and schematically to respiration and nourishment.

❖ Case History

A patient who was in psychoanalysis told me that she “needed to be freed of the qi of her old-fashioned, possessive mother.”² The combination of digestive and respiratory problems that she showed—slow digestion with intolerance of sugar, fats and alcohol, diarrhea with soft stools, occasional asthma attacks influenced by humidity, periodic shortness of breath during effort, and negative diagnostic tests—made me think of *tai yin*. SP-15 of the leg *tai yin*, located at the level of the navel, helped clear up her symptoms. Note the combination of digestive and respiratory symptoms as well as the relationship with the mother.

Shao yin is deep vitality; we know that it corresponds to the Kidneys and the Heart. The mandate of life (命 *ming*) is linked to the Kidneys. One’s proper nature (性 *xing*) is linked to the Heart *shao yin*, which relates to an inner actualization. An earlier case history illustrates this.

Jue yin is an “ending,” a “servant” (*Basic Questions*, Chapters 7 and 79), precisely, the

servant of the Heart, along with the Minister of the Heart, which according to Larre is “that by which the Heart commands”;³ and the Liver, the “general of the armies,” who seconds and protects the Heart. The two require the free, flexible and easy circulation of qi, blood and fluids all the way to the extremities, just as the sap of the tree in spring-time runs from the tips of the roots to the ends of the branches without obstruction.

❖ Case History

A 32-year-old woman was suffering from endometriosis with gynecological pains in the left iliac fossa radiating to the thigh along the *jue yin* channel; these occurred at the end of her periods, but also at unpredictable moments throughout her menstrual cycle. She was knotted, tight, and tense, and prone to anxiety. She said that nothing was easy for her. LR-9 relieved these pains.

Note the pain along the trajectory of the channel and the knotted, tight, tense feelings that indicate difficult circulation of the qi within.

In addition to their relationship with the five yin organs, the fundamental laws established and governed by the three yin include receptivity, the mother, deep vitality, servants of the Heart, and internal free circulation.

THREE YANG

The three yang are called *tai yang*, *shao yang*, and *yang ming*.

Tai yang is described in *Basic Questions* as being the ruler (Chapter 49) and the father (Chapter 79). It is the outermost on the arms, the topmost on the head, and the furthest back on the neck, the trunk and the lower limbs. To me, it marks the north of the body (traditionally in China the emperor always sat facing south); the aspect related to the laws of earlier heaven (the prenatal state); and the mark of the unseen made visible on the body.

❖ Case History

A young man, age 22, consulted me for generalized eczema, and intense headaches along the lines of *tai yang*, starting at the nape of the neck at point BL-10. While he had rejected the rules of his father and of all social and religious orders, he had not yet achieved his own set of rules. Puncturing BL-10 and BL-40 relieved these symptoms and the comments about *tai yang* enlightened him about their causes.

Shao yang is described in *Basic Questions* as relating to regulation (Chapter 79), the hinge (Chapter 6) and to wandering (Chapter 79), or the free circulation of the yang to the exterior—the surface of the body and of the outside world. So its course, which is on the lateral aspect of the limbs, head and trunk, makes incursions both onto the surface

(*tai yang*) and into the depths (*yang ming*). It means ‘wandering’ in a positive sense of psychological and physical freedom; it corresponds to the skin, muscles, and vessels. It is often involved in people who feel knotted, tight, and tense. *Shao yang* plays the role of mediator in the yang and in the body as a whole in relation to what is external, our self, as well as with heaven and the archetypes that are the foundation of our existence.

❖ Case History

A 37-year-old woman came to see me in 1999 for headaches that had started after a phase of considerable nervous tension in the summer of 1984. The pain started in the eyes, radiated to the temples, to the top of the head, the nape of the neck and, in rare cases, to the ears, with a superficial trajectory along the *shao yang* channel. These dull headaches were neither improved nor aggravated by pressure on the eyeballs. However, they were accompanied by a distinct feeling of fullness in the head.

Local application of heat gave some relief, which suggests stagnation and confirms *shao yang* involvement. So I looked for the general mechanism, in relation to *shao yang*, that maintained this local disturbance.

During my interview of the patient I learned that she had been married for ten years and had an eight-year-old child. She had never had any surgery; she reported some digestive problems and nasopharyngitis triggered by dampness and cold. She had trouble falling asleep and complained of muscle pain, especially in the morning, after meals, and in damp weather. She was impulsive, irritable, knotted and tense, particularly when she was stressed.

In this case, the *shao yang* axis was implicated. What had happened in the summer of 1984? It was something important of which she could not speak. I punctured the root of *shao yang*, GB-44, and combined this with GB-15 on the skull, which helped her significantly.

Yang ming is described as protective in *Basic Questions* (Chapter 79) and focuses on nutrition, in the sense of internalization of nutrients. It is also, in the interior of the person, connection (Chapter 79) and closing inwards (Chapter 6). It closes toward the yin, toward *tai yin*. In this way, it contributes to wholeness. It circulates on the front of the face, the trunk, and the lower limbs, and on the radial aspect of the arms. It faces the south and the light. It connects with the west, the autumn, heaven that withdraws, and the harvesting of the fruit that falls from the tree. *Yang ming* is about breaking up and discontinuity. For me it is about the human adventure, from the moment of conception to the end of our path. It has a dialogue with the *shao yin* Heart and Kidneys, with nature (*xing*) and with destiny (*ming*). In this discontinuity, this human adventure, the person needs to be protected. This is the function of the points ST-14, ST-15, and ST-16.

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What Do Acupuncture Points Do?

We do not yet know how acupuncture works. Surely, it can only be neuroendocrinological; but we cannot explain the diversity of effects of the thousands of different possible combinations. All we can do is turn to Chinese tradition and to the notion of qi: linked to form, to manifestation, to the appearance of a form, qi is perhaps in-*form*-ation. Puncturing a point may also enable the body to recall information that it has forgotten or no longer uses for its general functioning because it has become obstructed. Clearly, one should not place too many needles in a patient: the body can understand and perceive what I want to tell it if I provide only a small amount of information that is also coherent; it cannot do so if I inundate it with information in the form of needles. Moreover, these pieces of local, regional or general information must be complementary rather than conflicting. It will be geared to answering the question that is always posed before any enduring pain or symptom: What are the regional and general disturbances that maintain the body and prevent it from being healed? This forces us to try to understand the being as a whole, to look past symptoms and focus on the person, a concept that we will expand upon in our conclusion.

Puncturing (with a needle), heating (with a moxa stick or cone), or massaging (especially for small children) all stimulate a point and its functions. Before puncturing, I massage to familiarize myself with the point, sense the surface opening and the underlying direction. I choose the needle (the diameter and length) according to the depth of the point. With the needle in hand, I clear my mind and center my weight in my pelvis so that the needling motion can occur spontaneously; it is during that suspended moment that I allow needling at the end of exhalation.

To conclude this section, I want to stress the importance of teamwork between the patient and practitioner. The former observes and is precisely aware of the symptoms that have arisen between two sessions; the latter interprets and translates these; it is the soundness of this relationship that makes it possible to find the effective point. Because it is often a 'minor' initial symptom that provides the key, patients must therefore feel they are in a relationship of trust, so that they can say anything without fear of causing trouble or of appearing ridiculous.

Points: Names, Locations, Functions and Symptoms

By tradition, each point has one or more names, a location, symptoms, and functions.

NAMES

The names are significant, even if it is sometimes difficult to understand the reasoning behind them. Certain points even have secondary names that explain their function. The name of CV-5 is Stone Door (*shi men*), and as a foundation stone, it is indicated in breakdowns, when, under certain life circumstances, a person has the feeling that

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everything is crumbling; in this case, the pulses in both of the proximal positions are deep and broken down as well. GV-3, or Yang Barrier (*yang guan*), enables the yang qi and the Lung qi to descend to the pelvis, sacrum and lower limbs. LU-2, or Cloud Door (*yun men*), at the top of the thorax, governs the exit of qi from the Lung upward toward the clouds. BL-58, or Flying Yang (*fei yang*), makes it possible to keep the qi of leg *tai yang* from ‘flying’ off the surface, bringing it deeper, toward the leg *shao yin* with which it is paired. In my experience, patients with a dysfunction affecting this point often dream that they are flying away.

Points with the same Chinese character in their names have similar functions. Some examples are points with the characters for spirit (*shen* 神), wind (*feng* 風), pivot (*shu* 樞), and vitals (*huang* 育) in their names. Thus, the “wind” (*feng* 風) points are readily attacked by external wind, and, in the interior (like the wind), facilitate the flow of the different forms of qi in the corresponding areas. These are GV-16, BL-12, SI-12, TB-17, GB-20, and GB-31.

This idea can lead us to research the related functions of groups of points. Not only do points whose names use the word spirit (*shen*) often have psychiatric indications, but so do those with the word divine (*ling* 靈). The *ling* points are HT-2, HT-4, GB-18, KI-24, and GV-10.

The names of the points can help us to understand when they should be needed.

❖ Case History

Mr. N., a smiling, squat, medium-sized 51-year-old man was an Argentinean writer who came to see me in 1993. He left his country in 1981 soon after his father had gone into exile, persecuted by the dictatorial government. His father was a tolerant, human, kind and generous man who died soon after moving to France; he was simply unable to deal with what had happened to his country.

Mr. N. consulted me for pains that were all located on the right side of the body: in the nape of the neck, the trunk, the upper and lower limbs, the hip and the groin. They had been aggravated by a fall ten years previously. He complained of a constant tension in the pelvis. These pains, aggravated by cold, were clearly linked to the weather. The soreness along the pathway of the Yang Linking vessel implied that he should react acutely to all climatic and human environments; this in fact was the case.

He did not complain of other symptoms. He slept well, had a lot of energy, but could not tolerate heat as well as he previously could.

Moreover, he mentioned a huge grief “there, in the chest” since his father’s death and exile.

He divorced his wife and had chosen not to have any children, even though it had been a difficult choice to make. This type of issue often involves the Gall-bladder, *shao yang*, or Kidneys, *jue yin*.

The first obvious point to needle was TB-5 as the opening point for the Yang Linking vessel. It seemed wise to needle another point in connection with Argentina, for TB-5 did not take into account the depression and the grief constrained in the interior. I then chose CV-18, a point linked to the arm *jue yin* because of its pairing with the arm *shao yang* in an exterior-interior relationship. This is a major point linked to the *jue yin* as a node (based on Chapter 5 of *Divine Pivot*), especially in connection with family lineage; it also connects with a compression of the energy in the chest. After two monthly treatments using TB-5 and CV-18, the improvement was quite noticeable. The pains nearly disappeared and the psychological state of the patient was gradually improving.

The patient came back six months later, complaining of frontal headaches; in addition, “grief and tears are buried; I cry silent tears.” Two points have “close to tears” or “cries silently” in their names: GB-15 and GB-41. I chose GB-41, the opening point of the Girdle vessel, coupled with TB-5. The headaches disappeared within 48 hours.

Three months later he came back with a severe urticaria that had started eight days before. Had he eaten some kind of fish that triggers urticaria? In fact, he already suffered from this condition as a child but could not think of a triggering factor. To be coherent, I chose another point of the *shao yang*, GB-31, very much indicated in cases of pruritus. The effect was immediate.

He consulted again eight months later. On a physical level, he was well, apart from a frequent sensation of closure in the chest. But fear had not left him and “the ancestors are present.” First his grandfather had “died, lost in the forest, wandering, and was never buried,” and then his father had died a long way from home. Which points refer to the ancestors? TB-7 and SI-11. Of course, I chose TB-7, located on the arm *shao yang*. Two months later, he could feel that his chest was opening and fear was going away. I needled this point once more three months later, after which he said, “Now, our journey is over.” Note how, in his evolution and personal journey, I always followed the course of the *shao yang* as the main thread of my choices.

LOCATION

Each point located on one of the primary channels, or the Governing or Conception vessel, is defined by a location with points of reference found on the skin, bones, muscles, etc. For example, CV-6 is on the abdomen, 1.5 units below the navel, along the midline. BL-25 is in the loins, or lower back, vertically located between the 4th and 5th lumbar vertebrae and horizontally at 2 units from GV-3. TB-10 is at the elbow, 1 unit above the olecranon. ST-41 is at the center of the anterior ankle crease. ST-4 is on the face, at the height of the mouth’s labial commissures, directly underneath the pupil when the patient is looking straight ahead. Once the area has been defined, we have to

locate each point precisely, by massaging the depression in which it is located to determine the corresponding special skin texture, the opening, its direction and depth, and, in a manner of speaking, to ask for permission to puncture it.

Here I report a case that shows how the anatomic or energetic location of a point can be a useful guide.

❖ Case History

Mrs. G., age 56, was a midwife who consulted for “a lack of drive and enthusiasm.” “I’m sinking,” she said. She complained of a sensation of epigastric heaviness and oppression radiating to the back, between the shoulder blades. Her back and her shoulders felt heavy. Her chest felt closed. The onset of these symptoms coincided with the menopause. She had few other symptoms apart from occasional bouts of hypertension, but her underlying blood pressure, checked three times a day, was normal (135/75 mmHg). Her sleep was satisfactory. The first time she came, her proximal pulses, as well as the KI-3 pulses, were deep. Her married life was difficult: “the situation is not ideal but bearable; we each live our own life; we share the same views on the children’s education.” Her father died young in Poland, and her mother had left this country when she was a teenager, and, as a Jew, had to live hidden for several years. “Maybe it can explain why I do not like to be seen?” she asked ... and also why her chest and shoulders were closed.

On her first visit, I needled CV-5 to treat the fact she felt she was “sinking.” Why did I not choose CV-3 or CV-4 or CV-7? She had no urinary problems or constipation requiring the use of CV-3; there were no signs linked to the Penetrating vessel, no fatigue or cold requiring CV-4; and there were no symptoms related to the lower burner that could justify needling CV-7.

After I had needled CV-5, she felt tired for three days, but then felt a bit more lively. Maybe she was “sinking” a bit less. The KI-3 pulses were back to normal.

I still had to open the closed chest, which can be done with some points on the *tai yin*, *yang ming*, Conception and Governing vessels. Nothing in this pattern called for the *tai yin* or the *yang ming*. When I asked her, “Do you feel that you always want to control everything?” she answered, “Yes, very much so,” which stressed the role of the Governing vessel, the function of which is to control. I chose to needle the Governing vessel point which opens the chest, GV-10, located between T6 and T7. The improvement was remarkable, including a marked decrease in the sinking sensation and the feeling of heaviness in the epigastrium, the back and the shoulders. The patient was obviously much more cheerful. Two other treatments using this point reinforced this result. The origin of the disorder could be linked both to the absence of the deceased father (because of the relationship between *tai yang*, the Governing vessel and the father) and to the fact that her mother did her best to stay hidden, especially during the war.

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under the symbolism of fire. It separates, so that the universal becomes the particular or personal.

There are two functions that maintain the life of this distinct individual being:

- That of their nourishment (food, respiration, affective, intellectual and sensory needs, etc.) with the Triple Burner, and the yin and yang organs, in particular by the Stomach and Gallbladder.
- Their perpetuation (with each breath) and that of the species is ensured primarily by the extraordinary organs and extraordinary vessels.

MECHANISMS THAT BEST EMBODY WATER AND FIRE IN HUMANS

In this section we will review the concepts discussed above in terms of other aspects of the body. Here they are laid out so as to put them in relation to the symbolic functions of water and fire.

Why should we attach so much importance to symbols? Primarily because Chinese medicine uses a symbolic language to describe the wonderful architecture of life and therefore of human beings. To optimally access this vision and its clinical applications, we have to utilize this symbolic language. Furthermore, in terms of understanding symptoms, this view provides a supplementary perspective and can sometimes be used to relate the mechanisms that apparently have no connection, thereby to better understand these patients and to treat them with more precision and efficiency. For example, the symbolic function of fire is to distinguish, illuminate, discern and separate; consequently, fire drives transformations. We know that the Heart discerns and illuminates when the Gallbladder decides and so they therefore drive transformations. These two mechanisms (their channels are part of a midday-midnight couple) are linked here by the symbol of fire. Simultaneous disruption of the Gallbladder and the Heart can have its origin in the loss of one of the symbolic functions of fire, as an inability to separate. When that occurs, we must treat this inability in order to treat these organs. Of course, there is no set formula on how to accomplish this; it depends of the context, the person's history, and so on.

Kidneys and Heart

In Chinese medicine, only the Kidneys are considered to be double organs; this is not so in the case of the Lung.¹² The Kidneys are called “double” because “like the original Chaos, dual in nature, they contain the two cosmic forces and, like Chaos, they are where life emerges.”¹³ They are in charge of the creative functions that require two parents, a father and a mother, yin and yang, heaven and earth, to unite their essence in order to conceive a being.

The Heart is the son of heaven and the mirror of spirit, as we saw above. Their relationship is essential, like that of water and fire, which temper one another.

❖ Case History

Mrs. M., age 51, was simultaneously very depressed and excited, complaining that she was afraid of everything, suffered from phobias, had constant insecurity, thoracic anxiety with agitation and tachycardia, and insomnia with difficulty falling asleep and nightmares. She was talkative, explaining that she was depressed but determined to fight her way out of it, which is what she had been doing for at least 15 years. Although she had been married for five years to a man who was profoundly gentle and affectionate, her life prior to then had been difficult, both during her childhood and during a first marriage, in which she had given birth to a child with birth defects. She said that she had felt very lonely until the last five years. Her childhood had been marred by violence, particularly from her father.

Physically, this small but sturdy-looking woman said that since adolescence, she had periodically suffered from painful, liquid diarrhea, burning pain in the bladder with frequent urination; white vaginal discharges without itching; some low back pain, connected with these episodes, that had occurred since adolescence without any apparent cause due to food, weather or psychological factors. Her menstrual periods were normal and her sex life was variable but often good over the last five years. She had the one child already noted; her pregnancy had been normal. She did not want to have more children, nor had her circumstances been in favor of more children. Without any other specific issues in her history, everything else appeared to be normal. The tip of her tongue was red. The proximal pulses were faster and stronger than the distal pulses.

We note that some symptoms were pelvic (diarrhea, bladder pain, vaginal discharges, and low back pain). On the other hand, the tachycardia, insomnia with nightmares and red tip of the tongue were evidence of an issue with Heart fire. The psychological symptoms arose from both categories. On the one hand, she suffered from fear, phobias, and insecurity, while on the other hand there was depression, agitation and anxiety and talkativeness. We know that fear can block the Kidneys' qi in the pelvis, resulting in a disconnection between the Kidneys (with pelvic symptoms) and the Heart (with thoracic symptoms). There was an excess of Heart fire: it was not being tempered by the water of the Kidneys.

That the proximal pulses (pelvis) were stronger than the distal pulses (thorax) suggested that there was a pelvic blockage of the Kidney qi. Point GV-5, located below the spinous process of L1, causes the qi to rise from the Kidneys.

In this case, the best point for tempering, liberating and unblocking the Heart fire is CV-15. I punctured this on her third visit, after starting with two treatments to release the Kidney qi. The first two sessions were two weeks apart. There were distinct signs of improvement in the Kidneys. With the third treatment, which included CV-15, the cardiac symptoms began to improve as well.

Maintenance of Life with Nutrition

The Triple Burner is the leading mechanism in charge of nourishing a being. It is a function that, as it says in the *Classic of Difficulties*, No. 25, “has the name but no form.” The 17th-century text, *Thread Through Medicine*, states that the ministerial fire is at the behest of the gate of vitality, which to us means that it is something like the “minister of the gate of vitality,” mediating between the gate of vitality and the body, it is simultaneously fire (“burner”) and also “pathways of water” so it can be seen as a cauldron in which water boils under the influence of fire and generates vapor, or qi. It controls the mechanisms that ensure our nutrition. The alarm point of the Triple Burner is CV-5, on the midline, at two units below the navel. We will return to it shortly. Its associated point is BL-22, located laterally two units from GV-5, the pivot point, the mediator that causes the qi to rise from the Kidneys. At the same height, at a distance of four units, is the point BL-51, which controls lactation, as well as the nourishing mediation between mother and child. Note the “mediating” relationship of these three points.

Gallbladder and Stomach Participate in the Same Symbolism

In the middle regions, the Stomach is on the side of water, while the Gallbladder is on the side of fire. The Stomach receives, cooks and digests food, and is the locus and source of transformations, so it is of the order of water. It is the sea of water and grains and provides for the entire body, thus making the *yang ming*, according to Chapter 44 of *Basic Questions*, “the sea of all the yin organs and yang organs.” Thus, the qi of the five organs is always blended with the qi of the Stomach and cannot act alone. It is the sea of qi, blood, and all the yin organs. Together with the Spleen, it is in charge of the granaries. With its affinity for the Kidneys and water, it is the source of qi for the Kidneys. It is in opposition to Heart fire: an excess of Heart fire can cause a Stomach ulcer.

❖ **Case History**

Mr. L., age 23, told me that for about five years he had been suffering episodes of intense fatigue for no apparent reason. These lasted several weeks or several months. The episodes occurred gradually and he then felt drained and worn out, which drove him to conserve his strength to the best of his ability. He tried not to speak too much or make too many gestures, and he kept his activity to a minimum. Yet however little energy he spent, his condition worsened very quickly, both on a psychological level (when he had worries or had to concentrate) and on a physical level (when he practiced physical exercise, sport or had sexual intercourse). He felt better in bed and when resting. This fatigue was obviously linked to an essence deficiency.

It is a deficiency because the condition is aggravated by the least effort and improved by rest. A fatigue of an excess type is aggravated by rest and improved by physical exercise; a fatigue of a stagnation type occurs in the morning and

gradually lessens during the day and disappears in the evening.

It is a deficiency of essence because of his difficulties with concentration and the aggravation of the fatigue following intercourse.

Other symptoms also occurred during these episodes:

- dull headaches with a sensation of fullness in the head, especially at work
- an aversion to noise of any kind and to bright lights
- pronounced difficulties in concentrating without particular memory issues
- slight depressive episodes with a need for company, sadness and gloomy thoughts
- an aggravation of all these symptoms by alcohol.

All of this suggested that another factor was involved, namely, an excess of yang above, especially in the head (headache of the excess type, aversion to noise, light and heat).

Moreover, he reported:

- digestive problems: constipation (he also had a few episodes of diarrhea due to emotional stress, e.g., before he took an exam), slow digestion with post-prandial fatigue, a fairly frequent burning sensation and cramps in the stomach, difficulties in digesting starchy foods
- a slight loss of hearing and sexual problems.

When I saw him, Mr. L. was a first-year university law student because he had failed the competitive exams that would have allowed him to go to the more prestigious schools. He was naturally anxious and worried, tried to hide his timidity, acknowledged he was meticulous, precise and methodical (he came to my practice with a well-written list of his symptoms).

His childhood was a happy one, and so was his adolescence. After minor troubles at school initially, he got high grades until he was in tenth grade. At that time, he changed high schools and realized that he was just an average student, which he could not face.

I thought a Stomach disturbance was the origin of his digestive problems, with difficulty digesting starchy food and stomachaches, which are typical *yang ming* signs, and can lead to essence deficiency: “the Stomach is the sea of water and grains” (*Basic Questions*, Chapter 33).

He also showed Kidney signs: hearing problems, depressive episodes, recent sexual difficulties. The Kidney disorder was then secondary to the Stomach deficiency. The relationship between the Stomach and the Kidneys is well known. Both pertain to water and both are the root of the five yin organs, as the Kidneys are the root of production of the five organs and “the five organs all receive qi from the Stomach” (*Systematic Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion*, Chapter 1).

I needled two points on the external branch of the leg *tai yang*, BL-50 (Stom-

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ach) and BL-52 (Kidneys). The function of most of the points on that branch is to store up the essence and spirit of the corresponding organs. An improvement was noticed after the third session and the symptoms had disappeared after the sixth treatment.

The Gallbladder in the middle regions is of the order of fire. It has the role of taking the initiative, starting the process of transformation (including but not limited to digestion). It ensures that these occur in the right time and place, like the emperor who initiates the beginning of the year in the east in the spring, bringing together the corresponding time and space. It is the only 'pure' yang organ that has no contact with food, and is among the extraordinary organs, which serve to perpetuate existence. The Gallbladder and Heart, both of the order of fire, are strongly related in terms of physiology, pathology, and their midday-midnight pairing. (See p. 37 for a case about headaches and digestive problems.)

We note that initiative and decision are related to the fire of impulse, which initiates a process that separates one from a previous state.

Maintenance of Life: the Perpetuation of Life by the Six Extraordinary Organs

The six extraordinary organs in charge of perpetuating human beings and the species include "the brain and marrow, bones and vessels, Gallbladder and the gestational envelopes." In each of these pairs, one organ is placed under the symbol of water (marrow, bones and gestational envelopes) and the other is placed under that of fire (brain, vessels, and Gallbladder).

The pair of Gallbladder/gestational envelopes illustrate this relationship. The Gallbladder decides, in the sense of "cutting" through indecision. It separates things and sets them in motion. It is responsible for all beginnings, including the beginning of life at the time of conception, in that first moment of gestation where a being becomes separated, in the midst of the indistinct, from an enduring principle. As we have seen, the mechanism that distinguishes a being from the midst of chaos, and that begins a life, is of the order of fire. The Gallbladder, which separates and initiates, is related to this initial moment, so I place it under the symbol of fire. A disruption of this particular function of the Gallbladder results in functional infertility, an inability to gestate. BL-48 corresponds to this function.

The gestational envelopes, which are the place of all transformations, are of the order of water. They are controlled by the point CV-5, and are not limited to the uterus; they comprise all types of gestation carried out by anyone, which all involve the same mechanisms, in different ways. For clinical purposes, it is connected with infertility, sexual assault, abortion, etc. We have already seen this point as the alarm point of the Triple Burner. It governs the nutrition and perpetuation of the being. We can see that it is a foundation stone, as its name suggests: *shi men*, or "stone door."

(See p. 68 for a case history using CV-5 in this way.)