Emotions and the Movement of *Qi*

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Chinese medical tradition identifies only a limited number of emotions as fundamental. However, the simplicity of this perspective does not imply a reductive simplification of the psychic/psychological universe compared with the refined analysis of sentiments that is often considered the prerogative of Western culture. The Chinese model consists, rather, of recognising the essential by attributing the various emotional manifestations to their roots. The five emotions are therefore equivalent to a sort of concentrate of emotional movements, in which the infinite range of sentiments and dynamic relations are distilled and condensed into the 'nuclei' of the primary emotions.

The essential point is that anger, euphoria, thought, sadness and fear correspond to internal movements and constitute primary movements of *qi*. The various sentiments, such as love, hate, envy, affection, nostalgia, jealousy, liking, compassion, attachment, aggressiveness, shame, fault, dependence, regret, generosity, avarice, worry, inadequacy, etc., concern relations with the exterior world, but the root from which they develop identifies with internal movements of *qi*.

TERMINOLOGY

In both classical and modern Chinese medical language, emotional, affective and in a broader sense psychic aspects are referred to by the term 'emotions'. One speaks of *qingzhi jibing* (情 志 疾 病), illness of/from emotions, in which *qingzhi* is an abbreviation of *qiqing wuzhi* (七情五志) – a term originating from the classics, which speak both of *qingzhi* and of *wuzhi*, often translated as the 'seven passions' and the 'five emotions' respectively. The reader is referred to the end of the chapter for an in depth discussion of the separate emotions, but we note here that *qi* means 'seven', the character *qing* is very similar to *jing* 'essence', *wu* signifies 'five', and *zhi* is the same term used to define the psychic aspect 'willpower' of the kidney.[1]

[1] *Jing* (精), 'essence' has the same phonetic part as *qing* (情), but the radical 'rice' in place of 'heart' (Karlgren p. 1085). See the notes on terminology in the Introduction; for a discussion on *zhi* 志 see Chapter 3.

Although there are some variations on the theme, the same principles are already seen in texts from the 'pre-Han period', which precede the compilation of the classic medical texts such as the *Neijing*.

Liji, the Confucian classic on rituals, which presumably dates to before the 4th century AD, discusses *qing,* emotions, which are defined as innate, within which one recognises the grand poles of desire and aversion.[2]

The concept of the five elements (*wuxing*) had already appeared in the *Zuozhuan*, but without reference to the emotions, which are called the six *zhi* and presume the existence of an attraction–aversion pair from which euphoria and joy, anger and sorrow originate.[3] These same emotions appear in the *Xunzi*, but there are called the six *qing*.[4]

The concept of attraction–aversion appears throughout history and is found again in the 'Treatise on causes and symptoms of diseases' – in which we find the definition of the internal causes of disease as emotions and which specifies how 'the internal causes that can produce illness pertain only to the interweaving of the seven emotions, to the conflict between love-*ai* and aversion-*wu*'.[5]

The *Neijing* always defines them as *zhi* and links them to the five *zang* organs. The five emotions euphoria-*xi* 喜, anger-*nu* 怒, thought-*si* 思, sadness-*bei* 悲 and fear-*kong* 恐 were afterwards maintained as fundamentals of Chinese medical tradition.[6]

The denomination of seven emotions, *qiqing*, adds anguish-*you* 忧 and fright-*jing* 惊. However, in the medical tradition this goes back only to the 'Treatise on causes and symptoms of diseases' of 1174.

[2] 'What is meant by passions-*qing* in man? Euphoria-*xi*, anger-*nu*, sorrow-*ai*, apprehension-*ju*, love-*ai*, aversion-*wu*, desire-*yu*: man is capable of these without learning them. Drinks, food, man, woman, the great desires are stored in them; death, poverty, suffering are the great aversions, therefore desire and aversion are the two great extremes of the heart'. In: Liji ('Memories of the rituals'), Chapter 7. For a discussion on terminology regarding emotions, see the introduction.

[3] 'In man there are attractions-*hao* (好) and aversions-*wu* (恶), euphoria, anger, sorrow, joy, which originate from the six *qi* [which in this text are *yin* and *yang*, wind and rain, darkness and light]. And these are the six *zhi*. […] joy originates from attraction, anger from aversion […] Attraction for things produces joy-*le*, aversion to things produces anguish-*you*.' In: *Zouzhuan*, 'Zhaogong Ershiwu nian' chapter. The *Zouzhuan*, a philosophical encyclopaedia compiled around 240BC, is part of *Lüshi Chunqiu* ('Annals of the Spring and Autumn by Master Lu'). Over 45 descriptions of illnesses appear in it, among which the most ancient is a diagnosis of a Jin prince in 580BC, and the discussion found there by Doctor He on the fundamental principles of medicine dated around 540BC is highly interesting.

[4] *Xunzi*, Chapter 22. The text takes its name from Xunzi, one of the principal exponents of early Confucianism who lived in the 3rd century BC and to whom we owe numerous quotes from the Master which do not appear in the 'Dialogs'. The *Baihu Tongyi* ('General Principles of the White Tiger') also defines the same emotions *liujing*, with the simple substitution of the term love-*ai* in place of *hao*.

[5] Chen Wuzi, *Sanyin Jiyi Bingzheng Fanglun* ('Tractate on the Three Categories of Causes of Disease', 1174).

[6] Certain passages however, present variations, for example, in Chapter 5 and in a passage of Chapter 67 we find *you* in place of *bei*; Chapter 23 attributes *wei* (畏) to the spleen ('apprehension, trepidation, respect') and *you* to the liver; Chapter 39 also adds fright-*jing*.

EMOTIONS AND CLASSICAL THOUGHT

The history of classic philosophical thought, which attributes a profound role to interior experience and the immediacy of feelings in the search for wisdom, is deeply traversed by reflections on emotions. As we have seen, according to Chinese thought any agitation of the heart prevents one from being able to act in accordance with the *dao*.

More prosaically, if nothing else, we can all agree that in general our state of wellbeing or discomfort is bound up with changing emotional states. We know that movement is intrinsic to *qi* – the *qi* of the universe, just as in the *qi* of humans. We know too that the *qi* of humans is also feelings and emotions. Furthermore, we also know that the heart of man – our interior world – is related to heaven, with that which occurs outside of us: 'the *yi* of the heart of man responds to the eight winds, the *qi* of man responds to heaven'.[7]

The term *qing* in the classical age meant that which is essential in something; in particular, the *qing* of man is that which he himself is, those essential qualities humans possess by which we can be called 'human' and which distinguish us from other creatures. The *qingyu*, the essential desires, are those without which we would not be human.[8]

The concepts of measure and control over the emotions are tied to the ability of distinguishing the essential desires. In the pre-Han text 'Annals of the Spring and Autumn' it is stated that desires come from heaven, that eyes, ears and mouth desire the five colours, the five notes and the five flavours, and that these are essential desires which are the same for nobles and the poor, for the knowledgeable and for the ignorant, owing to which 'the sage cultivates measures for controlling desires and therefore does not go beyond the essential when acting'.[9]

In Confucius we read 'When joy and rage, sorrow and happiness have not yet appeared, this is called the centre, when they have appeared but with measure, this is called harmony'.[10]

[7] *Suwen*, Chapter 54. 'Responds' is the translation of the character *ying* 应, a term often paired with *gan* (感) 'awaken, stimulate, influence', utilised in Daoist philosophical texts when referring to that immediate and spontaneous response which precedes thought, assimilated to a resonance or an echo. In this regard, also see the introduction to classical thought in Chapter 1.

[8] During the Classical Period, from 500 to 200BC, the period of major splendour in Chinese philosophy which saw the flowering of the Doctrine of the Hundred Schools (*baijia zhixue*), 'the concept of *qing* approaches the Aristotelian 'essence', but is none the less linked to denomination rather than being'. In: A. C. Graham, 1999, p. 130.

[9] *Lüshi Chunqiu*, 'Qingyu' chapter. As specified in the Introduction, we use a translation that strictly adheres to the original text leaving the task and pleasure of choosing a more adequate syntactical structure to the reader.

[10] *Zhongyong*, ('The correct centre'). This passage is recorded by the neo-Confucian Zhu Xi (1130–1200) in his commentary *Zhuzi Yulei* ('The sayings of Master Zhu by category'): 'Euphoria, anger, sorrow and joy are emotions-*qing* (情), when they have not yet been produced then it is nature-*xing*, they have no partiality and are therefore called the centre-*zhong* (中); when they have been produced with measure-*zhong* (中) and regulation-*jie* (节) this is called correctness-*zheng* (正) of emotions, meaning there is no overpowering of one by the other and it is therefore called harmony-*he* (和)'.

We have also seen how the Daoist sages consider it necessary to still desires so that the *dao* can take residence.

According to Graham, *qing* begins to be used in 'the Book of Rituals' and in *Xunzi* to indicate the elements of genuineness which are masked in man by rituals and morality, which assume the significance of 'passions' in the sense of 'hidden naturalness which is at the root and threatens to erupt through the civilised exterior'.[11] Desires, emotions, and passions all belong to the depths of our being and potentially hold great danger with respect to both the rules of society and the tranquillity of the heart.

The awareness that 'the seven emotions are the normal nature of man' and that 'the seven emotions which move with measure and regulation do not of themselves cause illness',[12] which we find in medical texts of later periods, is already clearly present in pre-Han literature. Emotions can become damaging – for example, 'if sorrow and joy are out of step, there will necessarily be negative consequences'. However, no emotions are useful or damaging in an absolute sense: 'there are no attractions or aversions that are good or damaging (in and of themselves); benefit and injury are in their adjustment'.[13]

The idea that emotions are elements of disturbance which can alter the state of balance of *qi*, injure the heart and the *shen*, becoming in the end true causes of illness, is certainly a concept that precedes the appearance of the first medical texts known to us, even though the description of the pathological processes aroused by the various sentiments does not always correspond exactly with the systemisation that took shape over time. In texts that precede the *Neijing*, we read, for example, that: 'With worry and apprehension the heart is fatigued and illnesses are produced', or that: 'Great euphoria, great anger, great anguish, great fear, great sorrow – if these five manage to take over the *shen* there will be injury', or furthermore that: 'Great anger breaks the *yin*, great euphoria strikes down the *yang*, great worry collapses the interior and great fright generates terror.'[14]

EMOTIONS AS CAUSES OF ILLNESS

The *Neijing* is the first text that analyses emotions as a cause of illness in a detailed way, examining the factors which can produce emotional alterations

[11] A.C. Graham, 1999, p. 336. See further on for a number of passages translated from Chapter 7 of the *Liji* and Chapter 22 of the *Xunzi*.
[12] Chen Wuzi, *Sanyin Jiyi Bingzheng Fanglun* ('Tractate on the three categories of causes of disease'). The term *zhongjie* is the same as that we have seen utilised by Confucius in the *Zhongyong*.
[13] *Zuozhuan*, Zhuanggong Ershinian chapter and *Mozi*, Jingxia chapter. The Moist commentary text *Mobian Fahui* underlines: 'we are speaking here of the fact that attraction and repulsion must be adequate because everyone has a heart with attractions and aversions, but only if they are adequate they are beneficial, if they lose their adequacy-*yi* (宜) then they are damaging; saying that attraction is beneficial and aversion is negative does not correspond to this principle'.
[14] Respectively in: *Zuozhuan*, Zhaogong Yuannian chapter; *Lüshi Chunqiu*; *Huainanzi*, Chuanyanxun chapter.

including socioeconomic factors, the quality and characteristic of aetiological processes, relations among the emotions and the individual differences in responses.[15] As with all stimuli, individuals of an emotional type also act in different ways according to the pre-existing energetic situation, therefore provoking different alterations in the state of *qi*.

Illness can occur if there is an internal deficiency or where the emotional stimuli are excessive in relation to the specific situation of the individual: 'Where *xie* strike, *qi* is empty; if *zhenqi* in the interior is stored, then the *xie* cannot attack.'[16] Concise while simultaneously richly informative, the *Neijing* recognises in this statement that: (1) illness is the product of interaction; (2) the response is individual; (3) the internal state of balance is decisive.

Illness can derive from an interaction with external pathogens of a more concrete nature, or from stimuli of a different type also defined as 'internal components' in our contemporary culture, which were already called 'internal causes' in classic Chinese nosography. The *Neijing* takes into consideration that we are profoundly influenced by feelings and fatigue; it also recognises the existence of individual differences – both innate and deriving from interaction with the environment – and therefore invites us to observe the patient attentively in order to understand the situation – in other words, to make a diagnosis. 'Huang Di asks: 'Is it true that [the *qi* in the] channels of man changes according to his habits in life, his activities, and his constitution?' Qi Bo responds, 'Fright, fear, anger, fatigue and rest can all influence changes. In strong people *qi* circulates and therefore illnesses are resolved [...] In weak people *qi* becomes stuck and the result is illness. Therefore the attentive observation of the constitutional tendencies of the patient, his strength or weakness, his bones, muscles, and skin, in order to understand his condition is a part of the ability to diagnose properly'.[17]

This passage is also extremely interesting because it connects the power of *qi* with its ability to maintain movement and interprets illness as a result of the stagnation of *qi*. A more detailed discussion of the pathologies due to constraint and stagnation will be approached later, but it is worthwhile to note here how a two thousand year old saying is still widespread in our times: 'Flowing water does not spoil and a door's hinges are not eaten by worms.'[18] Furthermore, the most ancient medical texts already illustrated exercises for maintaining health and the primary action of needling is moving *qi*.

[15] Please also see the discussion regarding the doctor-patient relationship and methods of investigation and diagnosis in reference to passages in the Neijing (Chapter 15).
[16] *Suwen*, Chapter 62. We remind the reader that in the *Neijing* all causes of illness are called *xie*, a term which later assumed the restricted meaning 'perverse energies' or 'external pathogens'. The term *xie* (邪) 'bad, irregular, deviant' counterpoises the term *zheng* (正) 'upstanding, correct, right', from which the modern translation of *zhengqi* as 'anti-pathogenic *qi*' derives. (Karlgren p. 791, Weiger p. 112i, Karlgren p. 1198).
[17] *Suwen*, Chapter 21.
[18] This saying appears in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, Chapter 12 and is taken up by Sun Simiao in the 'Yangxing' section of the *Qianjin yaofang*. For a discussion on *yu*-constraint, please see Chapter 4.

To enjoy good health it is important to 'nourish life', to remain in a proper relationship with the macrocosm (the four seasons), to maintain flexibility in respect both to factors originating from the surroundings that do not depend on us (heat and cold) and also to internal emotional movements (happiness and anger), to be calm in everyday life, to have a balanced sexual life, and to continuously integrate the opposing and complementary aspects of life: 'The sage nourishes life, conforms to the four seasons and adapts to heat and cold, harmonises anger and happiness, remains serenely in one place, balances *yin* and *yang*, and regulates hard and soft. In this way, illness and perverse energies do not encroach and one lives a long life.'[19]

The enormous potential of internal attitudes, which can exhaust all resources, seriously injure nutritive and defensive *qi*, destroy the *shen*, and render acupuncture useless and healing impossible, is recognised: 'Desires without limits and worries without end consume *jing*, cause nutritive *qi* to congeal and defensive *qi* to be expelled; it is then that the *shen* departs and the disease is not curable.'[20]

Modern Chinese classifications of the causes of illness go back to the Song Dynasty and are divided into 'external causes', 'neither internal or external causes' and 'internal causes', which consist of the seven emotions, *qiqing*.[21] This nosography therefore proposes a complete coincidence between passions and the internal causes of disease, but the *Neijing* had already recognised emotions as a fundamental factor of pathologies: 'If happiness and anger are not regulated then they will injure the organs, when the organs are injured, the illness originates in the *yin*.'[22]

The text relates the origins of disease to *yang* (climatic causes) or to *yin* (diet, life style, emotions and sexual activity): 'the causes of disease can originate in the *yin* or the *yang*. Wind, cold, and summer heat originate in the *yang*. Diet, life style, euphoria and anger, *yin* and *yang* have origin in the *yin*.'[23]

None the less, the *Neijing* not only distinguishes between internal and external origins, but also recognises that the consequences of each are substantially different, attributing the possibility of directly attacking internal organs to internal factors, whereas injury deriving from external factors mainly regards

[19] *Lingshu*, Chapter 8. The term 'nourish life' *yangsheng* (养 生) refers to the internal practices discussed in Chapter 1; 'happiness and anger' is a typical metonymy which stands for all emotions; 'to balance *yin* and *yang*' can refer to sexual activity; 'hard and soft' are opposite and complimentary terms which allude to the trigrams of the *Yijing* (*I King*), in which the continuous and divided lines are defined as 'hard and soft'.

[20] *Suwen*, Chapter 14.

[21] Chen Wuze, *Sanyin Jiyi Bingzheng Fanglun* ('Tract on the three categories of causes of disease'). The 'external causes' are the *liuqi* (六 气), the six climatic *qi* (wind, cold, summer heat, dampness, dryness, fire), which become *liuyin* (六 淫), 'excessive, overflowing'; the 'neither internal or external causes' include excesses of mental, physical, and sexual activity, improper diet, trauma, parasites, poisons and improper treatment.

[22] *Lingshu*, Chapter 66.

[23] *Suwen*, Chapter 62. According to many commentators, '*yin–yang*' refers to sexual activity.

the body and initiates from the external layers: 'Wind and cold injure the form; worry, fear and anger injure the *qi*.'[24]

EMOTIONS, MOVEMENT OF *QI* AND ORGANS

Chinese medicine views emotions as physiological events, a response of the *shen* to stimuli from the outside world. Emotions are movements of *qi*, each movement being characteristic, and the qualities of response of *qi* vary according to the emotion involved. In the case of an excessive emotional force there will be an alteration of the physiological movements of *qi* and therefore illness.

The two chapters in the *Neijing* in which the consequences of pathological emotions are described in detail state in similar terms that when anxiety and worry manage to injure the *shen* one has a continuous fear of everything, and loses all resources.

In particular, sadness consumes *qi* and life, euphoria disperses the *shen*, thought and anguish obstruct the flow of *qi*, anger leads to bewilderment and a loss of control, fear confuses and agitates the *shen*, descends *qi* and does not contain it.

The *Suwen* offers a very concise description: 'I know that all diseases originate from *qi*. Anger, then *qi* rises. Euphoria, *qi* is released. Sadness, *qi* dissolves. Fear, *qi* descends. Cold, *qi* contracts. Heat, *qi* overflows. Fright, *qi* becomes disordered. Fatigue, *qi* is exhausted. Thought, *qi* is knotted'.[25]

The images presented by the *Lingshu* are just as effective:

> So it is, sadness and sorrow, worry and anguish injure the *shen*, injured *shen* is followed by fear and apprehension, which drain and overflow without stop; sadness and sorrow move the centre, therefore exhaustion and consumption, loss of life; euphoria and joy, the *shen* is frightened and disperses, it is not stored; thought and anguish, then *qi* halts and is obstructed, it does not circulate; strong anger, then confusion and shock, there is no control; fear and apprehension, then the *shen* oscillates and is frightened, it is not contained.[26]

[24] *Lingshu*, Chapter 6. 'Form' here is the translation of the term *xing* (形), in other words, that which one sees and has a specific form, the body. In the character there are three lines that represent shade (in other words, a solid body), while the other part of the ancient form of the character was a well, which however, according to Henshall stands for the structure, the model (*jing* 精 represented a field divided into nine lots the central one of which – with the well – was public) (Karlgren p. 1084, Henshall p. 104).

[25] *Suwen*, Chapter 39. See also the 'Clinical notes' at the end of this chapter. 'Is released' is the translation of *huan* (缓), the same term used for the pulse, which can have a different valence depending on whether it means 'moderate' or 'slowed down'; 'disordered' is the translation of *luan* (乱), a recurring term which defines disorder, the chaos in the movement of *qi* when it does not follow its usual paths; 'knotting' is the translation of *jie* (结), another common term which describes the conditions of *qi* which are later called constraint-*yu* (郁) and stagnation-*zhi* (滞).

[26] *Lingshu*, Chapter 8. As specified in the 'Introduction' we chose a translation that is very close to the text, leaving to the reader the pleasure and task of selecting the most appropriate syntactic structure.

These alterations in the movement of *qi* constitute the root from which the various clinical patterns with their somatic manifestations develop. The history of Chinese medicine, leading up to the differential diagnosis as it is formulated in TCM, offers an extremely refined analysis of the imbalances of *qi* and blood, the accumulation of pathogens, and the relation with the functions of the organs, but it is fundamental to remember that in any case the primary origin of disease goes back to the consumption of *qi*, its exhaustion, its knotting and its disorder.

Just as *yin* and *yang* do not have an autonomous existence and are not independently determined, but exist only as polarities in a complementary pair, so too psyche and soma are not conceived of as distinct entities, but are defined by their juxtaposition, constituting an indivisible and dynamic unit. In Chinese medicine, psyche and soma do not only interact sporadically, but coexist, each rendering the other's life possible, thanks to which as doctors, we find we do not need to choose between the material–physical–biological dimension and the spiritual–emotional–affective one.

The concept of *qi* causes our viewpoint to shift: that which is physical and that which is metaphysical are simply two expressions of the same thing. Emotions can give rise to somatic disorders as well as psychic illnesses; organic illnesses can, in turn, give rise to emotional alterations and psychic pathologies.

On the other hand, the 'organs' of traditional Chinese medicine also possess a sort of intermediate status between the substance of the body and the more subtle characteristics of *qi*; as 'energetic structures' these functional systems, which are obviously very different from their Western counterparts, still have a certain substantiality with specific manifestations and actions.

As such, emotional movements, which originate in the organs and at the same time act on the functional and organic systems, cannot be considered as in any way separate from the body. This implies that psychic disorders should be treated starting from the energetic system of channels and organs, utilising the usual diagnostic process, the same principles of treatment and the same therapeutic tools.

The following passage well illustrates these diverse aspects: firstly, it affirms a relationship between man and heaven, it notes that the organs produce the emotions through transformation and that emotions are *qi*, and lastly it states that emotions and external pathogens strike at different levels. 'Heaven has four seasons and five elements to generate, grow, gather, bury and produce cold, heat, dryness, dampness and wind. Man has five organs which produce five *qi* for transformation: euphoria, anger, sadness, thought and fear. Euphoria and anger injure the *qi*, cold and heat injure the body.'[27]

[27] *Suwen*, Chapter 5. If we refer to the triadic model with the three layers Heaven–Man–Earth, the emotions are positioned at the intermediate level 'Man', between the *shen* in its various expressions corresponding to the 'Heaven' and the organs with the structures and functions depending from them and corresponding to the 'Earth'.

Emotional disorders can give origin to somatic illnesses:

> If euphoria and anger are not regulated, if lifestyle does not have a proper rhythm, if one is fatigued, all this can injure the *qi*; if the *qi* is stagnant, fire is exuberant and invades the spleen–earth. The spleen governs the four limbs; if the heat is oppressive, there is no strength for movement, one is lazy in speech, when moving there is a shortness of breath, there is heat on the surface, spontaneous sweating, restlessness of the heart and no peace.[28]

A modern text on psychiatry and TCM specifies:

> Under external stimulation, emotions encounter change and they move internally; therefore alterations also occur on the level of the organs, channels, *qi*, blood, and liquids. Consequently, the regularity or lack of regularity in the functions of the organs and the vigour or weakness of *qi*, blood and liquids can be reflected in the change of emotions, while an excess or deficiency of emotions can directly influence the functions of the organs and the transporting and transformation of *qi*, blood and liquids. For example, the heart governs the *shen*, in the group of five emotions it corresponds to euphoria; an excess of euphoria influences the interior, injuring the heart, if the heart is injured *shen* becomes dull and loses its functions. According to the classics, it was the heart that took responsibility for the ten thousand things, and this function of the heart depends on the *shen*; if the latter is sick, upright *qi* accumulates and does not flow. This inevitably results in illness characterised by a loosening of the heart's *qi*. The liver governs the *hun*, its emotion corresponds to anger; a strong and unstoppable anger displaces the *hun* and injures the liver, if the *hun* is displaced the liver is injured, it loses control of its function– of regulating free flowing circulation – and the *qi* tends to rise perversely upward; if the *qi* rises and does not descend, constraint and knotting of liver *qi* occur.[29]

A number of points can be schematised as follows:

- Man's *qi* corresponds to heaven's *qi*, with a continuous interaction between internal movements and external stimuli.
- Emotions are movements of *qi*.
- The movement of *qi* can be altered: *qi* can rise inversely, disperse, knot, be depleted, become disordered.
- Emotions are expressions of the organs, just as are the colour of the face, the state of the tissues, and the climactic factor, and correspond to all the other aspects considered in the five elements model.
- Emotional disorders can crop up following alterations in the *qi* of the organs.
- Emotions generally act on the *shen* and its five forms, *wushen*.

[28] Li Dongyuan, *Lanshi mizang* ('The secrets of the orchid chamber', 1276), chapter 'Yinshi laojuan' ('Tiredness and exhaustion, food and drink').
[29] Li Qingfu and Liu Duzhou, *Zhongyi jingshen bingxue* ('Psychiatry in Chinese medicine'), 1984, p. 103.

- The five *shen* (*shen, hun, po, yi* and *zhi*), which reside in the five *zang* organs, influence emotions and vice versa.
- Excessive emotional movements injure the organs, in other words, they alter the normal physiology of their energetic structures.
- Emotional disorders can generate somatic illnesses.
- The control-*ke* cycle has a fundamental role in emotional dynamics.

THE 'BENSHEN' CHAPTER OF THE *LINSHU*

These elements are expressed in the chapter of the *Lingshu* whose title refers to *shen* and its root/rooting-*ben*. The passage follows the description of the genesis of *shen*; we cite a translation that sacrifices English syntax in order to remain true to the original text and offers the possibility of following its original flow. A reflection on the passages referring to the spleen follows, which can, by analogy, be applied to the other organs.

> Heart: anxiety, worry, thoughts and apprehensions, the *shen* is injured, injured *shen* then fear and terror, lost control, the muscles are consumed. The hair becomes fragile, the appearance is of premature death, one dies in the winter.
>
> Spleen: oppression and anguish that do not dissolve, the *yi* is injured, injured *yi* then restlessness and disorder, the four limbs do not lift up. The hair becomes fragile, the appearance is of premature death, one dies in the spring.
>
> Liver: sadness and sorrow convulse the centre, the *hun* is injured, injured *hun* then mania-*kuang* and oblivion, no *jing,*[30] no *jing* then abnormal behaviour, the genitals retract and the muscles contract, the ribs do not lift up. The hair becomes fragile, the appearance is of premature death, one dies in the autumn.
>
> Lung: euphoria and joy without limits, the *po* is injured, injured *po* then mania-*kuang*, in the grip of mania the mind does not see others, the skin dries out. The hair becomes fragile, the appearance is of premature death, one dies in the summer.
>
> Kidney: intense and incessant anger, the *zhi* is injured, injured *zhi* then one forgets what has been said, the flanks and spinal column are painful and do not bend forward and backward. The hair becomes fragile, the appearance is of premature death, one dies at the end of summer.
>
> Fear and apprehension without end injure the *jing*, injured *jing* then pain in the bones, atrophy-*wei* and reversal-*jue*. There is often spontaneous descending of the *jing*.
>
> The five zang organs store *jing*, they must not be injured, if injured they no longer protect, *yin* becomes empty, empty *yin* there is no more *qi*, no more *qi* then one dies.

[30] In this context the interpretation of *jing* is controversial; it can refer to a loss of *jing*-essence, *jing*-sperm or *jing*-mental clarity.

> Therefore, one who uses needles observes the state of the patient in order to learn if *jing* and *shen*, *hun* and *po* have been maintained or lost. If the five (*zang*) are injured the needles can not heal.
>
> The liver stores the blood, blood is the residence of *hun*, if the liver is empty there is fear, if it is full there is anger.
>
> The spleen stores nutritive *qi*, nutritive *qi* is the residence of *yi*, if spleen *qi* is empty the four limbs do not function, the five organs are not in harmony, if it is full the abdomen is swollen and menstruation and urination are difficult.
>
> The heart conserves the vessels, vessels are the residence of the *shen*, if heart *qi* is empty there is sadness, if it is full there is uncontrollable laughter.
>
> The lung stores *qi*, *qi* is the residence of *po*, if lung *qi* is empty the nose is obstructed, the passage of air is difficult and the breath is short, if it is full one has laboured and hoarse breathing, fullness in the chest and needs to lift the head to breath.
>
> The kidney stores *jing, jing* is the residence of *zhi*, if kidney *qi* is empty there is reversal-*jue*, if it is full there is swelling and the five zang organs are not calm.
>
> The form of the illness of the five organs must be examined to learn the fullness and emptiness of their *qi* and regulate it in a wise way.[31]

If, for example, we examine the spleen, an organ which in our society and culture has a front line role, we find a situation where psychic pain, depression, and the weight of sorrow do not manage to 'find a way out', in other words to resolve themselves or, in the words of the Chinese text, to dissolve. This oppression acts on the *yi*, and the capability of thinking. Psychic and physical consequences derive from this, with agitation and disorder of the spirit and fatigue of the body, which in turn no longer responds properly, and 'the four limbs do not lift up'.

Utilising the typical feature of a single part to represent the whole, it is said that 'the hair becomes fragile' to indicate a body which is suffering, which shows signs of extreme consumption with 'signs of premature death', and the phrase is repeated identically for all five *zang* organs.

One dies in spring, the season that belongs to the element that in the control-*ke* cycle dominates the spleen, which is too weak to sustain balance. For each element it is said that death occurs in the season that dominates it, to indicate the fundamental importance of the control-*ke* cycle in emotional pathologies.

After the description of the events which regard the individual organs, the text continues by reminding us how continuous fear injures the *jing*, the deepest level, and how injury to the organs signifies compromising the ability to store *yin*. If there is no more *yin*, then there is no more *qi* and one dies.

[31] *Lingshu*, Chapter 8. A complex work of translation and interpretation of this chapter was carried out through the years by C. Larre and E. Rochat de la Vallée (see for example *Les Mouvements du Coeur*, 1992).

The analysis of the various organs is then resumed, to remind us that the spleen stores nutritive *qi*, the residence of *yi*, and if spleen *qi* is lacking then the body does not function, relinquishing the regulatory system of the organs, while if it is full the stagnation manifests itself mainly at the abdominal level. For other organs (heart and liver) the consequences of their emptiness or fullness are seen primarily in the psychological domain – for example, they may produce fear or anger, sadness or uncontrollable laughter. The fundamental principles according to which an 'organic' (in the Chinese sense) alteration can cause both somatic and psychological disorders are derived from this analysis.

PATHOGENIC PROCESSES

Emotions alter the movement of *qi*. In general, emotive alterations first compromise the 'functional' level of *qi*, after which they produce organic damage:

> In the *Lingshu*, 'Benshen' chapter the pathological changes that occur when organs' associated emotions are damaged are described in great detail. Normally, the emotions injure the organs' *qi* first, producing functional changes in the organs themselves along with emotional changes. If the illness progresses, the emotions will then injure the *jing* of the organ, in other words the body, so that organ-related symptoms emerge – for example when it is said: 'the hair becomes fragile, the appearance is of premature death'.[32]

The change in the movement of *qi* can be a cause of pathology, with the involvement of blood, compromising of the organ's function, and syndromes of stagnation or emptiness.

A modern Chinese text introduces the subject by stating:

> The movements of *qi* are the physiological basis of emotions. When the intensity of the emotional stimulus exceeds the organ system's capacity for regulation and in particular the ability of the liver to drain and release *qi*, the circulation and movements of *qi* cannot occur in a normal manner and they fall into disarray and the state of balance and harmony among the organs is shattered. In this way, emotional illnesses are generated and, for example, stasis of blood and *qi* stagnation are produced.[33]

[32] Zhu Wenfeng, *Zhongyi xinlixue yuanzhi* ('Principles of Psychology in Chinese medicine'), 1987, p. 101.

[33] Li Qingfu and Liu Duzhou, 1984, p. 104. 'To drain and release' is the translation of *shuxie*, discussed in the Chapter 4 on constriction-*yu*; 'movements of the *qi*' is the translation of *qiji*, that is the movements of coming in and going out, downwards and upwards, 'emotional illnesses' is the translation of *qingzhi jibing*, as specified in the Introduction.

The pathogenic process is complex and, as always, numerous factors intervene, of which the foremost is the patient's energetic balance – or, in other words, the sum of pre-heaven and post-heaven *qi*. In general, emotions have greater effect in a 'terrain' that is not the ideal one of dynamic equilibrium between *yin* and *yang*, free flowing *qi*, and harmony among the five organs. Great sadness will have different impacts and pathological developments in a person with a good reserve of *jing*, in a person with deficiency of lung *qi*, and in a person with spleen deficiency and an accumulation of phlegm.

The first changes following an emotional stimulus occur at the level of *qi*, causing alterations in its basic physiological flow. These are short term changes that can be compared to the automatic responses of the vegetative nervous system: 'The organism's physiological reactions which appear following changes in the movement of *qi* such as, for example, the free flowing of blood in the vessels due to joy, redness in the face and ears due to anger, heavy breathing and sobbing due to sadness, stagnation and non-transformation of foods due to worry, and sweating and trembling due to fear, are all reversible changes. At this stage, it is sufficient to remove the emotional stimulus and the movements of *qi* will return to normal.'[34]

It is, rather, in the next stage that these changes are consolidated, accompanied by compromise at various levels. At first the changes become chronic, so worsening the alterations in the flow of *qi*: for example, a 'perversely' rising *qi* can be produced, in which stomach *qi* rises instead of descending, spleen *qi* drops downward and does not maintain its supporting function, lung *qi* does not descend and diffuse, liver *qi* does not manage to produce a free flow, heart *qi* does not harmonise and kidney *qi* does not control opening and closing.

In any case, when *qi* movements are altered they become laboured and therefore consume *qi*, with specific consequences on the various organs.

A deficiency of *qi* can, in turn, cause deficient circulation, which predisposes to stagnation/stasis and the formation of various accumulations – for example *qi* stagnation, blood stasis, accumulation of dampness and phlegm, transformation into fire and emission of internal wind.

Stasis and accumulations then attack the more substantial aspects and excess syndromes transform into deficiency syndromes, with consumption of *yin*, blood, and *jing*.

The same modern text describes the 'phases of becoming chronic' thus: 'One can then have: (a) concurrent presence of full and empty, and injury to both *yin* and *yang*, pre-heaven and post-heaven; (b) the production of phlegm or stagnation which further aggravates the pathological conditions; (c) further strengthening of the emotional alterations. The flow of *qi* and blood will have even more difficulty returning to normal. The treatment will be very

[34] Li Qingfu and Liu Duzhou, 1984, p. 104. 'Worry' is the translation of the contemporary term *yousi*, 'preoccupation, anxiousness'.

complex: you will need to take action using the psychic method to eliminate the causes of illness and using prescriptions to regulate and eliminate phlegm, stagnation, etc'.[35]

RELATIONS AMONG EMOTIONS AND THE FIVE ELEMENTS-*WUXING*

The *Neijing* recognises five emotions, which have specific relationships with the five elements and the five *zang* organs. As with other correspondences in this analogical model, such as dryness which belongs to metal and at the same time easily injures the lung, so too emotional manifestations of *qi* are both expressions of the corresponding element – whichever has the most resonance – and at the same time specific areas of danger.

The *wuxing* system is regulated by physiological relationships of generation and control and can be subject to pathological changes due to deficiency or excess of an element and the related consequences on the other elements.[36]

EMOTION	CORRESPONDENCE	CYCLE OF CONTROL-KE
xi(喜) euphoria	corresponds to heart – fire	dominates sadness – metal
si (思) thought	corresponds to spleen – earth	dominates fear – water
bei (悲) sadness	corresponds to lung – metal	dominates anger – wood
kong (恐) fear	corresponds to kidney – water	dominates euphoria – fire
nu (怒) anger	corresponds to liver – wood	dominates thought – earth

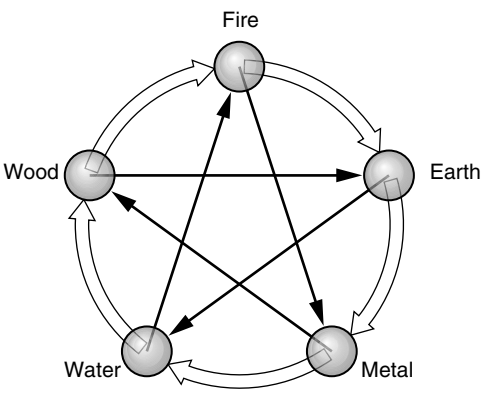

Figure 2.1 Relationship among emotions and organs in the *wuxing* system

[35] Li Qingfu and Liu Duzhou, 1984, p. 104. 'Psychic method' is the translation of *jingshen liaofa*, which is a generic term.

[36] *Wuxing* 五行: we have kept the translation 'five elements' which is now commonly used even though the term 'phase', 'processes', 'motions' or 'movements' would give a better idea of the concept of movement encompassed by the character *xing*. Moreover, unlike the Four Elements of the Greek and Medieval philosophies, they are not conceived as elements constituting things, instead they imply a continuous movement through links of generation-*sheng* and control-*ke*.

The cycle of domination or control-*ke* assumes particular relevance when considering the interaction among corresponding elements: every emotion dominates, controls and limits the emotion that follows the next one in the sequence (the 'grandchild'), and so it is necessary to take this into account in evaluation and treatment.[37]

> Illnesses that appear suddenly do not necessarily have to be treated according to the cycle of generation-*sheng*, since they may not follow this order, especially in suddenly appearing emotional disorders. Thought, fear, sadness, euphoria, and anger often do not follow the cycle of generation and for this reason can cause more serious disorders. Therefore an excess of euphoria provokes emptiness [in the heart] and kidney *qi* exercises too much control. Anger, liver *qi* exercises too much control [on the spleen]. Sadness, lung *qi* exercises too much control [on the liver]. Fear, spleen *qi* exercises too much control [on the kidney]. Thought, heart *qi* exercises too much control [on the lung]. These are illnesses that are provoked by emotions, which do not follow the cycle of generation-*sheng,* but rather the cycle of control-*ke*. Therefore the basic illnesses are five, but there are 25 variations.[38]

As will be noted, the overwhelming of an element can depend on an actual excess of an element, which therefore subdues its controlled element, or on a deficiency, which causes the weak element to be invaded.

Wang Bing, the great commentator of the *Suwen* of the Tang Dynasty, discussing the phrase 'anger dominates thought', specifies: 'When there is anger there is no thought, in the impetus of rage one forgets one's misfortunes, and this is the victory (of anger over thought).'[39]

Famous clinicians used this relationship in the course of various procedures in their treatments. This type of therapy was particularly developed by Zhang Zihe:

> Sadness can treat anger: one must move the patient with sad, painful and bitter words; euphoria can treat sadness: one must entertain the patient with jokes, wisecracks, and practical jokes; fear can treat euphoria: one must frighten the patient with threatening words about death or bad luck; anger can treat thought: one must provoke the patient with insolent words; thought can treat fear: one must divert the patient's attention towards another subject, so that he forgets the cause of his fear. […] I have tried the method of imitating the moves of the witchdoctor and the courtesan to treat knotting due to sadness.[40]

[37] In Italy it is sometimes referred to as 'grandfather–nephew'. The cycle *ke* acts on the element following the generated -*shen* 生 one (that is the one following immediately). The character *ke* 克 means: 1. 'power, being able to'; 2. 'dominating, controlling, submitting'; 3. 'containing, limiting'; 4. 'digesting'; 5. 'setting a limit in time' (Wieger p. 75k, Karlgren p. 415).
[38] Wang Bing, *Zhu huangdi suwen* ('Commentary to the *Huangdi suwen*'). The sentence can be found in Chapter 67 of the *Suwen*, 'Wuyunxing dalun' ('Great treatise on the five movements').
[39] Wang Bing, *Zhu huangdi suwen* ('Commentary to the *Huang Di suwen*'). The sentence can be found in Chapter 67 of the *Suwen*, 'Wuyunxing dalun' ('Great treatise on the five movements').
[40] Zhang Zihe, *Rumen shiqin* ('Confucian responsibilities towards family and parents'), chapter 'Jiuqi ganji gengxiang weizhiyan' ('Treatment of illnesses of the nine *qi*'). 'Imitating the moves of the witchdoctor and the courtesan' means 'to amuse, distract, induce laughter'. On this issue see also Chapter 14 on the treatment with emotions in the classics.

CLINICAL NOTES

In Chinese clinics, little time is spent on the baring of the patient's soul and the pangs suffered, yet it is always surprising how the doctors manage to determine the weight of eventual psychic components in a short time. When we listen to their conversations and the questions and answers, we find ourselves in what is an alien universe for us, but then the patient is cured and we can only accept the results.

Such a prudent attitude towards emotional labours is often difficult for us to comprehend, so much so that one can have the impression that modern Chinese doctors simplify the psychic universe to a level which is crude and banal, and it is easy for us to suspect that the five or seven codified emotions are a superficial reduction with respect to the refinement of our analysis of feelings.

The fact that the Chinese do not show their emotions also seems strange to us, even more so given that hiding emotions implies being untrustworthy in our iconography.

Certainly, Chinese culture is profoundly different from our own, which particularly since the 1800s and in contemporary thought has placed personal aspirations and the feelings that link us to others at the centre of attention. This process finds full expression in the development of psychoanalysis and our general way of perceiving and referring to ourselves nowadays. However, that which seems obvious to us – specifically the expression of feelings, or the introspective search for the person's internal truths and his psychological aspects, cannot in reality be identified as absolute human traits.

Chinese tradition, for example, attributes a different role and importance to emotions: in Confucian ethics the individual – and therefore his personal affairs including those of an emotional nature – is of secondary importance to his role as part of a collective; in Daoist thought, in order to adhere to the *dao* one must calm the *shen* to avoid its being disturbed by external and internal events; in Buddhist tradition, the first step towards understanding consists of distancing oneself from the various attachments of the soul.

In any case, we cannot forget that even in Western civilisation the question of the identity of the individual only goes back to the first centuries of the Christian era. In Ancient Greek society, taking care of oneself did not mean turning oneself into an object of consciousness, but rather constituting oneself as a subject of action with respect to world events, asking oneself what one's obligations were with respect to the family or as a citizen in the *polis*.[41]

[41] On this issue see also the article by Frederic Gros on the last Faucault, 'what do we want to do with ourselves?', Il Manifesto, 21.6.2001.

Diagnosis

In Chinese thought, theoretical reflections on feelings and passions followed specific paths: as we said in the beginning of this chapter, the five emotions can be compared to primary nuclei, equivalent to a sort of concentration of internal emotional movements.

However, just as the treatment of prevalently emotional syndromes is carried out on the basis of the general picture which includes signs and symptoms of a somatic type, so too the diagnosis will be based on the four methods, whose integration is particularly valuable in those patterns where emotions play an important role.

The words the patient uses regarding a specific emotional problem are, in fact, only some of the methods we have available for perceiving where and how *qi* flow has altered. The verbal explanation can be limited or even lead us astray; in this case the somatic symptoms and the objective elements based on observing and touching can be of great help.

When interpreted according to traditional systems of correspondences, we can also put mental states, movements of the soul or other conditions that do not coincide with the five classical emotions (for example, shame, guilt feelings, frustrations, feelings of abandonment, etc.) into context. In this regard, the reading of the pulse and the palpation of the points (especially *shu* and *mu*, the *yuan* of the three *yin* channels and the *he* of the three *yang* channels of the foot, and, naturally, the symptomatic points), the examination of the tongue, and the accurate observation of the patient's being (the *shen* of the eyes, the complexion, signs on the face, the state of various tissues, attitude, movements, etc.) are fundamental.

However, even if a definite diagnostic hypothesis is indicated by all these signs and symptoms, it is still essential to listen closely to what the patient is saying, without taking anything for granted and without making premature inferences.

Since emotions are movements of *qi*, physical experiences correspond to them. If – as often happens – a patient tends to tell an abstract story, it is necessary to find a means of arriving at an understanding of what his real physical sensations are.[42]

Perception of Emotions

This is not the proper place to enter into a debate over whether or not there is greater somatisation of psychological disorders in China compared with

[42] See also Chapter 16 on the events related to acupuncture and case study 6.1.

more developed countries, or the decreased capacity for interaction that this hypothesis often implies. We should remember, however, that a somatising tendency is also decidedly relevant in studies on Western populations. Feelings of malaise are extremely frequently referred to as somatic symptoms in the absence of objectively demonstrated organic pathologies – so much so that, according to certain studies, psychiatric disorders are referred to as somatic by patients in over 90% of cases.[43]

Emotions can injure *qi*, blood and organs, but above all they are movements of *qi* and pathologies derive from a disorder in the physiological movements of *qi*. *Qi* is constrained, knotted, rises inversely, stagnates, sinks, and hesitates in abnormal excesses and deficiencies and so forth, and this produces physical and emotional sensations.

Knowing that people often lack both the habit of direct perception of emotions and their verbal expression, it can be useful for us to direct our attention to a number of elements that help in recognising the five emotions in themselves and in the clinical setting. The following sections review the observations and language encountered in daily clinical practice so that we may better understand how best to deal with both the complexity of patients' emotions and the reactions that these produce in us.

It is a good rule to recognise emotions as authentic and genuine movements of *qi* (for example, rather than 'producing *qi* which rises perversely', anger is in itself '*qi* that rises upward'); we need to appreciate fully that rather than cause and effect, it is a matter of concurrence.

Knowing that words are often used to explain and rationalise, it is important to discern and acknowledge every emotion as a specific internal sensation inside ourselves, revealing and identifying every movement of *qi* as a direct experience (and the various forms of practice with *qi* help with these aspects). This refining of our own sensibility simplifies the job the patient has to perform in order to discover his emotions beyond the words with which he usually describes them.

In basic manuals, the relationship between emotions, organs and movements of *qi* is explained; however this information is often restricted to the general context and difficult to apply to clinical practice.

Anger-*nu* (怒)

Pertains to wood–liver.

Nu means 'anger, rage, ire'; like many of the terms which refer to the mental/emotional area, it contains the radical 'heart', while the phonetic

[43] Goldberg, D., *Epidemiology of Mental Disorders in Primary Care Settings*, 1995. A first explanation of this mechanism is in the fact that dysphoric emotions are socially stigmatised, while somatic symptoms are more easily accepted.

part utilises the semantically quite suggestive character *nu*, meaning 'slave'.[44]

Being angry is feeling 'the rage mounting', which corresponds precisely with the classic description 'anger, then *qi* rises'; 'with anger, *qi* rises in an unstoppable way, heat rises attacking the heart, breathing is short as though one is about to die, there is no air to breathe'.[45]

However we certainly cannot ask a patient if he gets angry often; quite apart from the fact that direct questions often produce wrong answers, the term 'getting angry' generally evokes scenes of furious rage in which the person quite honestly does not recognise himself.

This movement of *qi* rising is important to take into consideration; it is a sudden internal movement, immediate and uncontrollable, a type of 'internal excitement' following the most varied events. It is like an internal cry (the crying–shouting of the liver), it is an irritable response to even little things that happen or do not happen, that others do or do not do, or that we ourselves do or do not do – events that are often of little importance, but are in effect destabilising. It can also manifest as simple intolerance without bad moods or ruminations, but rather an ever-present readiness to snap, and we can detect that everything about the person remains tense, like the *xuan*-wiry pulse, typical of the liver.

This movement may not have an immediate direct expression in words or deeds, due to its natural tendency to subside – if it is not too powerful – or due to a constraint which keeps it on hold, considering it inopportune, with enormous and unhappy effects on the psychological balance.

Furthermore, we note that the relationship between anger and aggressiveness was already recognised in the *Nejing* in its affirmation that when liver *qi* is empty there is fear.

Euphoria-*xi* (喜)

Pertains to fire–heart.

The difference between *xi* and *le* is that, whereas the first represents a type of happiness closer to a euphoric state, the second is a more harmonious form of joy; euphoria or 'excess of joy' is expressed in the patient mostly as a state of excitation, possibly slight, but continuous – a form of being constantly 'out of bounds'. Such people are generally hyperactive, they communicate a

[44] The character *nu* 怒 'slave' is composed of 'woman' and 'hand' (Wieger p. 67c, Karlgren p. 674).
[45] Chao Yuanfang commenting the sentence 'rage, thus the *qi* rises' *nu ze qi shang* 怒 则 气 上 in the *Suwen*, Chapter 39. In: *Zhubing yuanhoulun* ('Treatise on the origin and symptoms of illnesses', 610). In the general medical tradition there is also a more specific reference to *yunu* 郁 怒 'contained rage', *baonu* 暴 怒 'exploding rage' and *fennu* 愤怒 'resentment-indignation' (for example in *Lingshu*, Chapter 6).

sense of nervousness, they fill their lives with commitments and amusements, and often the more they are agitated the more they have to do.

Fire, with its agitating flames, can also manifest itself through grandiose maniacal behaviour.[46]

A specific indicator is a slight laugh at the end of a sentence even when communicating painful events (laughing pertains to the heart).

It is said: 'euphoria, *qi* slows down';[47] we also certainly recognise this movement of *qi* that is dispersed, which unravels like a fraying fabric. The *qi* is no longer united, it loses its centre, and everything escapes. As the harmony of the heart and its integrating action is diminished, the whole breaks apart.

The patient suffers from an internal agitation, complaining of not being able to concentrate, sleeps poorly, has no sense of where he actually is or cannot recognise his part in what is happening around him. In extreme cases, the various personality parts fragment explosively; these are delirious states of psychosis, where the patient loses all grasp of reality.

Thought-*si* (思)

Pertains to earth–spleen.

The character *si*, whose lower part is made up of the radical 'heart' and whose upper part represented the head or brain in ancient times, means (1) 'think, consider, deliberate'; (2) 'think about, having nostalgia'; (3) 'thought'.[48]

We recall here that in the classic Chinese conception, in contrast to the Greek–Jewish tradition, thought is considered to mediate an immediate response to the conditions in which the answer rings like an echo, follows like a shadow and accurately expresses adaptation to the *dao*.[49] In our culture, thought is considered pathological when it becomes cold intellectualisation that excludes feeling, a process of rationalisation that allows no room for emotions or sentiments. In clinical practice, the most common manifestation is

[46] In psychiatry a maniacal behaviour is defined as a 'psychological condition characterised by great euphoria, disinhibition, unlimited confidence in oneself, dispersive racing of initiatives and ideas that fly out of every biographical context, and to which the subject relates in an absolutely uncritical way'. In: Galimberti, *Dizionario di Psicologia*, 1992. For a definition of manic or hypomanic episode see the notes on diagnostic framing in conventional psychiatry notes, in Appendix B.

[47] X *i ze qi huan* 喜则 气 缓, *Suwen*, Chapter 39. On this issue see also the discussion on the clinic of *shen*, *hun* and *po*, in Chapter 3.

[48] The upper part now matches with the character *tian* 田 'field' (Karlgren p. 813).

[49] In the Homeric conception of thought (*fronein*) it has a wider meaning, embracing the sphere of sensations and emotions. See also Onians, 'The origins of European thought', 1998, for a description of how knowledge and intelligence were thought to be placed in certain organs, and for the relationship between perception, physical emotion, thought and propensity to action: 'Where cognition and thought are so connected with sensation and propensity to action, the relationship between moral qualities, virtues, and knowledge is deeper than when cognition is more "pure".' p. 40.

obsessive rumination, in which endless thought circles do not transform or result in action.

Thought belongs to the spleen, whose *qi* performs the functions of transformation and transportation: in a similar way as with a heavy meal, heavy thoughts overburden this movement and become ruminations.

Thought as a form of reflection, a moment in which one stops and elaborates sensations, perceptions, and fantasies, is a correct movement of transformation of earth; if this function becomes excessive, though, if it develops into preoccupation – or in other words it preoccupies all the space – it then produces knotting of *qi*.[50]

If we try to imagine ourselves as being knotted, in other words bound up, we can immediately understand what happens to *qi* in these cases and it is not a pleasant sensation. *Qi* that 'blocks and closes up' corresponds to a monotone voice, along with somatic symptoms such as oppression, bloating and heaviness, while the feeling that the patient transmits to us is one that reminds us of sinking in a swamp.

During conversation with patients, one must take into account that many describe themselves as 'anxious', but what they intend by this term is a tendency to ruminate, to return in their thoughts to things that have already happened. They are worried by recurring thoughts and on waking their thought processes are already at work, to the point where they may suffer from actual obsessions in which the mind has no choice but to retrace the same path infinitely.

Obsessive thought is a good example of the *ke* cycle's mechanism of control: the fear of water can be moderated by the reflection of the earth, but if the system becomes inflexible it cannot hold together indefinitely and the attempt to control the world in order to defend oneself from its dangers becomes an obsessive–compulsive pathology.

Sadness-*bei* (悲)

Pertains to metal–lung.

We translate *bei* or *bei ai* as 'sadness, pain, suffering, anguish, melancholy'.[51] While there should apparently be no major problem in recognising

[50] Zhang Jiebin comments on the sentence of the *Suwen* Chapter 39, 'thought, knotting *qi*', *si ze qi jie* 思 则 气 结: 'Anguish and excessive though, thus the *qi* knots itself, if the *qi* is knotted transformation can not take place'. In: Zhang Jiebin, *Jingyue quanshu* ('The complete works of Jingyue', 1640), Chapter 'Yige' ('Blocking of the diaphragm').

[51] The character *bei* 悲 is composed by the phonetic part *fei* 非, negative particle, and the radical 'heart' (Wieger 170a, Karlgren 27). An example of a reading of this character is: '*bei*, the heart refuses: the person opposes to himself (back to back) in his heart, falling into contradiction, negation, and negativity. The weariness caused by this fight destroys the breaths in the heart and lung region.' In: Larre and Rochat de la Vallée, 1994.

these emotions, in practice the contrary is often the case because when faced by great pain, whether recent or in the past, the patient is evasive, since the wound is so deep that in order to maintain the little life that remains he withdraws, as though every contact and communication risks allowing a little *qi* to escape.

'Sadness, *qi* dissolves.'[52] We know how pain consumes life. *Qi* is exhausted, and this is exactly the sensation we feel, of having nothing left.

Obviously, in the majority of cases the pain is neither so pervasive or destructive, rather there is a diffuse anguish, sadness that is the suffering of living, the existential ennui mentioned in romantic and psychiatric literature. These feelings are decidedly difficult to identify, as we are poorly prepared to perceive them and even the words used to express them are obsolete.

The patient often refers to being 'depressed', a very widespread term to which a wide range of meanings are attributed, all of which therefore need to be investigated. Due to the fact that modern society tends to focus on 'action', a pathological condition can be identified by the non-action of depression.

A whining–wailing tone of voice (whining and wailing pertain to the lung) can also be of help in identifying sadness.

Fear-*kong* (恐)

Pertains to water–kidney.

Pertaining to the kidney, fear is therefore a part of the deepest *yin*, the root of life. It is also the root of all the other emotions: the anger of aggressiveness, the sadness of abandonment and loss, the thinking that attempts to control everything, the euphoria that hides the panic of desperation are all connected to it, and fear embraces all of them.[53]

We note here that in the definition of the seven emotions the term *jing* appears, meaning 'fright, alarm'.[54] Zhang Jiebin had already pondered this point:

> We ask ourselves why, while both fright and fear belong to water, the damage wreaked on man by fear-*kong* is so much more serious than that provoked by fright-*jing*. The latter comes from something which is temporary and being temporary permits a return (to the original situation), fear however, accumulates in a progressive manner and being progressive cannot be resolved, when

[52] *bei ze qi xiao* 悲则气消, *Suwen*, Chapter 39. We recall how in our society it is difficult to find a space and way to live the mourning after painful events and how the suffering consequently fails to be contained by the gathering movement of the lung.
[53] The character *kong* 恐 is composed of the radical 'heart' and by the phonetic part *gong*, an ancient term for 'hugging', where the pictogram was composed by 'work' and by a person stretching his arms (Karlgren p. 469).
[54] The simplified form of *jing* 精 'fright' contains the radical 'heart'; the complete one contained the radical 'horse' (Karlgren p. 396).

> it becomes serious the heart weakens and *shen* is injured, *jing* withdraws; the *yin* therefore atrophies, is extinguished and withdraws as time passes.[55]

Whereas fright is the response to a sudden and usually real threat, fear and apprehension are rather related to a continuous expectation of something dangerous, and in many cases refer to a persistent, pervasive and often undefined sensation.

Fear-*kong* frequently appears together with apprehension-*ju*, whose ancient form contained the radical 'heart' and the doubled radical 'eye' above that for 'bird' – interpreted by Karlgren as a frightened, timid, nervous appearance like that of the eyes of a bird. Wieger, however, relates it to the vigilant state of birds, which must remain alert for their survival. It in any case contains the idea of a continuous state of alarm.[56]

Whereas fright strikes with force, ruffling and rendering the *qi* chaotic, fear causes *qi* to sink.[57]

More than fear of something specific, this emotion is often apprehension that something might occur, fear of what the future may bring us; we usually refer to this as anxiety. We are speaking of that state of continuous restiveness which the patient may refer to, for example, as 'constantly feeling my heart in my throat, even if I know no one is chasing me' – a state which the *Neijing* describes under the symptoms of the kidney channel as 'kidney *qi* deficiency, easily frightened, the heart beats as though someone is grabbing at you'.[58] This manifests as the symptom 'easily startled by sudden sounds' that is included in the descriptions of these syndromes, also those patterns of commotion and deep fear which invade some people as soon as someone dear to them is late, or the actual disorder of panic attacks.[59]

NOTES ON THE GALL BLADDER AND DETERMINATION

Even today, in the common usage of China a courageous or fearful person is said to have a big or small gall bladder. This connection goes all the way back

[55] Zhang Jiebin, *Jingyue quanshu*, chapter 'Zhenzhong jingkong' ('Palpitations from fear and fright'). Zhang Zihe in the chapter on the reciprocal control of emotions states: 'Fright-*jing* is *yang* and comes in from the outside, fear-*kong* is *yin*, it comes out from the inside'. In: Zhang Zihe, *Rumen shiqin*, chapter 'Jiuqi ganji gengxiang weizhiyan'.

[56] Wieger p. 158g, Karlgren p. 490.

[57] In *Suwen*, Chapter 39 reads: 'fright, thus the *qi* is messed up' and 'fear, thus the *qi* descends': *jing ze qi luan* 惊则气乱 (*luan* means 'mess, licence, chaos, confusion', Wieger p. 90b, Karlgren p. 582) and *kong ze qi xia* 恐则气下 (*xia* means 'under, down below, downwards'). The relationship with the heart is also highlighted by many texts since '*kong* moves the heart and the kidney reacts-*ying*'. In: Yu Chang, *Yimen falu*.

[58] *Lingshu*, Chapter 10.

[59] See also Chapter 9 on classical syndromes for a discussion of the *bentun* illness, where: 'The *bentun* illness starts from the lower abdomen, rises and attacks the throat, when it burst out one feels like he is dying, it comes back and then stops, it all comes from fright and fear'. In: Zhang Zhongjing, 'Jingui yaolue' ('Prescriptions in the golden chamber'), Chapter 8.

to the *Neijing* and the assessment of the consequences of a weakness of gall bladder *qi* appears throughout the history of medical thought.

The gall bladder is spring and *Shao Yang*, its *qi* rises and allows the other *qi*(*s*) to flow upward.[60]

It is, furthermore, a curious or extraordinary viscera, *qiheng zhifu*, in that it fills and empties like all the other viscera, but at the same time it acts like a *zang*-organ since it preserves fluid-essence, *jingzhi* (惊志).[61]

The first aspect, 'viscera of the centre's *jing*', which is already present in the *Neijing*, is incorporated into the *neidan* internal alchemy practices; these consider bile as pure *jing*, associating it with fire and attributing to it a precise function in the process of birth and development of the spiritual 'fetus' in the *dantian*.

The correspondence with emotions belongs, first, to the organs-*zang* aspect, but the viscera-*fu* gall bladder aspect has nevertheless a particular role in the expression of the human soul. A substantial difference between the two is, however, evident: that aspect which corresponds to the gall bladder is not an internal emotion or movement of *qi*, like fear and anger, so much as a way of relating to the outside world.

The *Neijing* states: 'the gall bladder presides over justness and correctness and from these determination and decision are derived'.[62] Judgement enables choice and therefore action; 'deciding' signifies 'arriving at a final judgement ending all pre-existent doubts and uncertainties, choosing'.[63] Deciding therefore corresponds with the moment of choice; it coincides with the initial moment of action when one passes from the all-possible to something concrete that is being actualised. The human, being finite, must choose with respect to the potentially infinite. It is therefore natural that this moment of passage called decision belongs to the gall bladder, which is *Shao Yang*, the beginning of *yang*, of movement, of externalisation.

[60] 'The gall bladder is the *qi* of the rise, of the spring, of the *shaoyang*. If the *qi* of the spring rises the ten thousand things are in peace. If the gall bladder *qi* rises all other organs follow it.' In: Li Dongyuan, *Piweilun*, chapter 'Piwei xushi zhuanbian' ('Transformation of emptiness and fullness in spleen and stomach'). And when he speaks about its role in sustaining the function of the spleen in transforming food he says: 'The defensive *qi*, the *qi* of the cereals, and the original *qi* are all one, that of gall bladder […] Food and drink come into men through the stomach, the nourishing *qi* rises and this happens thanks to the gall bladder *qi*.' In: Li Dongyuan, *Lanshi micang*, chapter 'Yinshi laojuanmen' ('Tiredness and exhaustion, food and drink').

[61] 'The gall bladder is the viscera-*fu* of the *jing* of the centre.' In: *Lingshu*, Chapter 2.

[62] *Suwen*, Chapter 8. In this chapter all the *zangfu* are connected with a function, using for each one the same syntactic construction of which one can give apparently multiple translations. Here the term 'presides' is the translation of *guan* 脾, which means both the functioning and the role; 'justness' is the translation of *zhong* 中, the 'centre' in the classical sense of correctness, which also means 'to hit the target'; 'correctness' is the translation of *zheng* 正, the term is also used to define the correct *qi*; 'determination' is the translation of *jue* 决, whose character contains the idea of the water getting round the stones in the river, and 'decision' is the translation of *duan* 断, a character which also means 'to interrupt' and has in its ancient form many silk threads and a chopping axe (*zhong* Karlgren p. 1269, *zheng* Karlgren p. 1198, *jue* Karlgren p. 440, *duan* Karlgren p. 331).

[63] Zingarelli, *Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana*, 1994. 'To decide' derives from the latin *caedere* 'to cut' and *de* 'away'.

The *Neijing* explains it this way: 'All *qi*(s) are important, but the gall bladder makes the final decision because it supports all the *qi*(s) that begin to arise.'[64]

Determination has its origin in discernment of that which is just and correct; as well as being the effect of deciding, the term 'decision' also signifies 'resolution' in English. In this sense, determination does not signify obstinacy or stubbornness, but rather derives directly from the person's understanding of and adjustment to the *dao*, the way. When there is no disconnection from the unfolding of the *dao* there is also no problem of choice, and action then has the characteristics of immediacy, spontaneity and inevitability.

In everyday life, 'having a good gall bladder' means being able to make a choice and carry it out: being able to see the situation with lucidity, to make decisions without excess difficulty, and at the same time to possess sufficient determination to transform these into action. It is in this sense that we speak of judgement, decision, determination and courage.

Insufficient gall bladder *qi* causes fearfulness, *danqie*, 'a cowardly gall bladder'. The meaning that comes closest to *qie* in English is 'fearfulness, apprehension'.[65] It can also be a case of timidity, in the sense of insecurity – in other words, that feeling of discomfort and inadequacy that comes from the lack of an immediate connection with the situation.

An emptiness of gall bladder *qi* therefore manifests as fearfulness, uncertainty, indecision, lack of initiative and courage; it can also be accompanied by an emptiness of heart *qi*, producing a state of apprehension, anxiety and a continuous state of alarm.

The *Yanglingquan* point, GB-34 was suggested by Sun Simiao in those patterns where there is 'apprehension and fear as though someone is grabbing at you' and successive texts also referred to this susceptibility to being frightened, speaking of 'easy fear, apprehension, as if someone is grabbing at you, this comes from an emptiness of heart *qi* and gall bladder *qi*'.[66]

The concept that 'when one encounters an external danger and is frightened, those who are strong of heart and gall bladder are not injured, but those who are weak of heart and gall bladder will be easily frightened by just coming into contact with it' is returned to in the following contemporary case

[64] *Suwen*, Chapter 63. We also recall that the gall bladder corresponds to *jia*, the first of ten celestial trunks and to *zi*, the first of the 12 earthly branches. The character *jia* 甲 represents the part which protects the seed (Karlgren p. 344); *zi* 子, whose pictogram represented a child, means 'child, seed, young' (Wieger p. 94a, Karlgren p. 1089).

[65] The character *qie* 怯 is the opposite of brave, it means: 1. 'fearful, coward, shy, craven'; 2. 'gross, clumsy'; it is formed by the phonetic part *qie* and by the radical 'heart' (Karlgren p. 491). The relationship between the gall bladder and braveness is highlighted by Zhang Zihe in the chapter on the reciprocal control of emotions: '*Shao Yang* of the gall bladder belongs to the liver-wood, the gall bladder is *gan* 脾 "braveness, to dare".' In: *Rumen shiqin*, chapter 'Jiuqi ganji gengxiang weizhiyan' ('Development of the treatment of the illnesses of the nine *qi* through the reciprocal alternance').

[66] Sun Simiao, *Qianjin yaofang* ('Remedies worth a thousand golden pieces for urgencies', 625); Gong Tingxian, *Shoushi baoyuan* ('Reaching longevity preserving the source', 1615). Regarding the 'Emptiness of the gall bladder and heart *qi*' see also the clinical discussion in Chapter 11.

studies, which outline its features with respect to stress-related pathologies.[67] If gall bladder *qi* is strong enough it can withstand agitation, tension, and the fear that derives from violent change and one is able to overcome the emotive changes that follow due to the pressure of external solicitations.[68]

Case Study 2.1

Hiccups

One of my patients arrives with her 50-year-old brother, whom she had spoken to me about a few days earlier. The man has been hiccuping continuously for the last 8 days with a worsening after meals.

The hiccuping is not violent, but it is without pause, present during the night and with a burning sensation in the back at the level of T7. The only time the hiccuping was interrupted, for about one hour, was after an inhalation of ether. Investigation of the case shows the presence of a peptic ulcer and a hiatus hernia, but no pathologies involving the phrenic nerve.

I really have no time for proper data collection so I listen to his brief story; he informs me about nausea (absent, however there had been two episodes of vomiting), thirst (strong), and bowel movements (a tendency to constipation); I ask if he can relate the beginning of the hiccuping to something that may have occurred. 'A fit of anger', he responds.

Observing his physique, he seems strong, although his state of weariness is evident. The tongue is red with a greasy yellow coating, the pulse is full on the right and strong on the left.

Diagnosis
Anger that causes *qi* to rise.

Therapeutic Principles
Regulate perversely rising *qi*.

Treatment
First treatment:

[67] Li Zhongzi, *Yizong bidu* ('Essential readings of the medical tradition', 1637). Similarly: 'The heart is threatened so the gall bladder becomes cowardly.' In: Cheng Guopeng, *Yixue xinwu* ('Medicine revelations, 1732). The relation with this heart *qi* and with the fright also pass through the closeness of sovereign fire and minister fire: 'When the fright-*jing* 惊 hits, from the heart it immediately reaches the gall bladder and the gall bladder reaches the liver, it follows that the sovereign fire *junhuo* 君 火 ruled by the heart and the wood-wind of the liver and gall bladder minister fire *xianghuo* 相火 suddenly rise. This because the fright received from the outside moves the wood, fire, wind on the inside.' In: Ye Tianshi, *Lingzhen zhinan yian* ('Guide cases in clinic', 1766).

[68] For a discussion on the current interest in this concept and its clinical application see also the work by Qiao Wenlei in Chapter 18.

- LIV-3 *Taichong*, LIV-2 *Xingjian*

During the treatment, the hiccuping calms down. The next morning the patient mentions that it disappeared for three hours after the treatment, but started again in the evening and during the night, albeit in a lighter form, and in the morning it became rare.

Second Treatment:

- LIV-3 *Taichong*, LIV-2 *Xingjian*, BL-17 *Geshu*

Since it is Friday and at the moment I have no space to fix an appointment for the next week, I tell him to call me on Monday to see what can be arranged.
I do not hear from him, but at the end of the week I see his sister, who tells me that he no longer has the hiccups.

Comments

The primary points for hiccups are generally different, but in this case the precision of his answers guided me in the direction of liver *qi*, which appeared to have reversed its normal flow.

From the few indications gathered and the brief interaction that we had, it seemed probable that lifestyle, psychological and emotional balance and *qi* all suffered from constraint-*yu* and stagnation-*zhi*. An event that had generated strong anger had knocked the system off-balance, further knotting-*jie* the *qi* and unleashing a violent counterflow-*ni*, which also manifested physically as contraction of the diaphragm, causing hiccuping.

The internal path of the liver channel enters the abdominal cavity, circumvents the stomach, connects to the gall bladder and liver, and ascends past the diaphragm into the hypochondria: by choosing two points on the same channel, the effect on the *qi* is strengthened.

In the first treatment the stimulation of the two points was quite substantial, with the intention of regulating *qi*, liberating its constraints and guiding it downwards.

In the second treatment I used a gentler stimulation, attempting to consolidate the proper movement of *qi* and furthermore to free the diaphragm by acting upon its *shu* point, which was also indicated by the location of the burning symptom.

Follow-up

At an interval of 3 weeks, the symptom has not reappeared.

Case Study 2.2

When Mood Improves by Moving *Qi*

This patient, a 53-year-old chemist, is sent to me for a problem of trigger finger that began 8 to 9 months previously without any apparent cause or correlations.

Functional impediment and pain are present when moving the interphalangeal joint of the index finger of the right hand.

During the examination, intestinal disorders such as borborygmi, swelling, and flatulence are revealed, although the pain has become more sporadic since the patient has reduced his consumption of bread, dairy products and sugar; bowel movements are regular. He also presents non-itching rashes that appear only in the area of the cheekbones and which recede after taking antibiotics (amoxicillin). Appetite and sleep are good.

The tongue is lightly tooth marked with a thin yellow coating at the base and two skinned zones in the liver and gall bladder area. The pulse is full and rapid.

Diagnosis

Blood stasis and *qi* stagnation in the right lung channel.

Qi stagnation with heat and dampness in the viscera and in the stomach channel.

Therapeutic Principles

Circulate blood and *qi* in the lung *jingluo*; activate and regulate stomach *qi* and release dampness-heat.

Treatment

First to third treatment at an interval of 2–3 days:

- LI-4 *Hegu*, LU-11 *Shaoshang*, LU-10 *Yuji*, LU-7 *Lieque* (all one sided)

To activate *qi* and blood in the directly involved channel and its paired channel.

The flexing–extension of the finger has already returned to normal by the second treatment and no longer jerks, and in the third session all that remains is a light pain during forced extension.

Fourth to Tenth Treatment, With Weekly Frequency

- LI-4 *Hegu*, LU-11 *Shaoshang*, LU-10 *Yuji*, LU-7 *Lieque*
- ST-2 *Sibai*, SI-25 *Tianshu*, ST-36 *Zusanli* and ST-44 *Neiting* (or ST-37 *Shangjuxu* together with ST-39 *Xiajuxu*), SP-4 *Gongsun*, P-6 *Neiguan*, Ren-6 Qihai.

The ST-44 *Neiting ying* point activates the *qi* in the channel and is supported by ST-36 *Zusanli* and ST-25 *Tianshu*, while it is guided towards its cutaneous zone by the local point ST-2 *Sibai*.

ST-36 *Zusanli*, ST-37 *Shangjuxu* and ST-39 *Xiajuxu* are the lower *he* points of the main *fu*-bowels involved and they release heat-dampness, an action shared by ST-25 *Tianshu*, which together with Ren-6 *Qihai* regulates *qi* and resolves stagnation.

The two *luo* help activate the flow of *qi*, with a specific effect on the *Chong Mai* – the extraordinary vessel most implicated in these digestive disorders – and the involvement of the *shen*.

From the fifth session onwards, he no longer has any dermatological manifestations, the movement of the finger is normal, and flatulence and abdominal swelling are markedly diminished. The intestinal disorders still appear with certain foods (he loves onions and baked peppers), but he pays more attention in general to what he eats.

Normally, I attempt to summarise the situation at a certain point during the therapy; generally this is in response to a specific request on the part of the patient, or

when the treatment cycle is finished and I foresee only one concluding session, or, in chronic illness, before interrupting the treatment, for instance over a holiday. This point of review also includes the psychological aspects, which may not have previously been mentioned specifically and which I purposely do not solicit directly.

During the ninth session, 2 months after the first treatment, I ask: 'What do you think of your general mood?'

Response: 'I didn't intend to say anything, but it seems to me that it has improved greatly, and I feel better. I always slept well, but now I sleep better, maybe due to the fact that I am less weighted down, having eliminated various foods.'

Comments

During the first three sessions, the treatment is restricted to the specific problem in the involved channel. Only later, when considering the results obtained, is a more general intervention considered.

During the subsequent seven sessions in which the points for the lung channel are retained, the stimulation used is, however, of lower intensity since the strength of the manipulation is less important than the intent, as the initially pressing call for *qi* has now become more of a memory of a problem which may still persist.

The releasing of *qi* stagnation and clearing of heat-dampness are performed through action on the stomach channel, whose disorders manifest themselves both on the level of the viscera and through cutaneous signs.

This case does not have particularly important psychological aspects; however, it is presented here specifically because it is one of those truly innumerable examples in which a treatment that takes its cue only from somatic symptoms actually has effects at various levels (in this regard, please see the notes on the psychological effects of acupuncture in Chapter 16).

As often happens, this patient already knew what would be considered more proper behaviour, for example regarding eating habits; what he acquired was the possibility to put them into action.

Another interesting element is that, although he initially defined himself as a person who is not impatient, anxious or who mulls over things, he now considers his mood to be generally improved.

Follow-up

After 6 months, I see the patient again for a pain in the elbow: his mood has remained good, he has had no further disorders in the face or abdomen and he continues to eat properly.

His tongue is still slightly tooth marked and continues to have a thin yellow coating at the root, but the two areas of skinning have disappeared and the pulse is full.[69]

[69] A swelling due to an accumulation of liquid had appeared on his right elbow 2 weeks earlier; this accumulation had already been drained twice, but it had reformed and now presented as a painless and non reddened mass of 7 cm. We proceed with four treatments in the space of a week (after which New Year's holidays begin) using points on the channel and points adjacent to the mass, which is rapidly reduced due to reabsorption of the liquid. In January the patient confirms that the syndrome has regressed and the joint has returned to normal.