

In Search of A Philosophical Medicine

By Avi Magidoff, LAc

All medicine is philosophical in nature. Even modern medicine is based on the modern-day understanding of life as a biochemical, possibly mechanical, process. Chinese medicine also is based upon certain philosophical understandings cloaked in cultural terms appropriate to its time and geography. If one gets caught up in the language, however, one could lose sight of the essence of the medicine, which is its view of the human process. But when one takes a deeper look, beyond the language and cultural differences, one discovers the core statements and their relevance to our lives.



Avi Magidoff, LAc

Change

The *Yi Jing* (*I Ching* - the book of change) represents the basis of Chinese understanding of life. The character *yi* (change) represents the sun and movement, like the movement of a flag in the wind. It is one stroke different from the character *yang*. Change is what life is about - everything changes, nothing remains static. If life did not consist of constant change, no biological process, or any other process, would ever take place. Sperm and ovum would never transform into an embryo, a baby, a child, an adult, and so on. Inherent in this concept is the notion that life is about being *yang*, interacting, moving, changing.

Response to Change

Because the process of life is the process of change, of movement, change must be respected, even if change might sometimes be perceived as adverse to one's happiness and health. Because change is inevitable and natural, it must follow that pathology is the re-

sult of one's response to change. Therefore, to study life and medicine is to study change, its course, and the response to it.

The character *feng* (wind) connotes the sun, motion and extension - that is, it represents the currents produced by the sun (atmosphere). One stroke difference is *ban feng* (half wind). The character *ban feng* is used here as it contains three important images: a worm, a hook that entices, and something that is being pushed. This is to say that wind is what entices and pushes a person into change. Therefore, change and wind can be viewed as synonymous. This is why wind is considered the spearhead of all disease: in disease "health" has changed to "disease".

Since change is inevitable and natural, one's response to change must be looked at as the cause of disease. Hence the major schools are based upon response to change: cold (*shan han*), heat (*wen bing*), and dampness.

The character *han* (cold) represents a person who is separated from his/her field (work) and is crying, implying an inability to produce, an inability to move forward. Cold is the response that locks one in; it is a refusal to change, perhaps even a denial of change. On a physical level, cold represents contraction and lack of movement. Philosophically, it represents a refusal to engage with the world. As a response to an external pathogen, this phenomenon might be described as the *tai yang* response - one attempts to fend off change, becoming stiff and rigid (getting body aches and stiffness).

Heat, on the other hand, is expansive, full of motion. When a person is overeager to change, moving too quickly towards the world, this would be heat. Again, this could be a physical response, an attitude towards life, or both. This phenomenon would be a *yang ming* response - the internalization of change/movement, creating heat (movement) inside the body.

Dampness is the viscous quality that makes it hard to move in either direction. It comes from hesitation, being uncertain as to whether to move with the change, towards

it, or against it. One might alternate between being "cold" and being "hot" towards a situation (change). This is the *shao yang* response: "maybe this, maybe that."

Dryness is the result of heat drying up and exhausting one's resources. Summer heat can be viewed as a combination of heat and dampness, one in response to the other. In other words, the dampness is trying to slow down the heat and the heat is trying to get rid of the dampness.

Based on the theory of change, it becomes apparent that the cause of disease might not really be wind (the enticing factor), but rather one's reaction to wind; that is, some rigidity within manifesting in various possible ways. "I refuse to change (cold) because of some pre-existing attitude within me." Or "I try to move too fast (heat) because of some resentment toward my current state which is enticing me to move away from the present." Or "I might be holding on to both desire for and reluctance to change (dampness)." Any of these responses represents some resistance to the present as it is, some rigidity, an attachment to the past, or an overzealous determination to be in the future. The climatic factors are no longer simply external pathogens, but reflect one's internal responses to the world, responses that one can take responsibility for.

Progression through the Meridians

Movement and interaction are inherent to the human condition, as reflected in the sequence of the regular meridians. To begin with, the human condition requires survival, that is, air and food, represented by the lung and spleen, as well as large intestine and stomach.

But physical survival is not enough. From there, it is necessary to move towards life and interact with it in order to gain what one might perceive as sovereignty over the world. This is the heart and kidney, as well as small intestine and urinary bladder. The heart represents movement (circulation) and the kidney represents what enables one to move (the skeleton/bones). This is the self that moves out to "conquer" or understand the

Continued on page 30

Continued from page 29
world around it.

Then one always limits which experiences, or which understandings, one wishes to engage in: "I choose to become a mathematician (or a doctor, or an actor, or whatever) and to concentrate my interactions with the world accordingly." This is the pericardium (heart protector), and the liver, as well as *san jiao* and gall bladder: the organs responsible for protecting/limiting us and detoxifying, or creating smooth flow in Chinese terms – smooth flow meaning harmony with the world. Thus it becomes apparent that human interaction with the world and movement may have some inherent inner structure and rationale.

Three Levels of Human Experience: *Wei*, *Ying*, *Yuan*

Having looked at how change represents the world side of the interaction, and having examined how humanity seeks to interact with, "conquer", and understand or limit the perceived world, it is now time to look at the terrain of the human being in order to understand the human side of the process.

There are three levels of *qi* (influences): *wei*, *ying*, and *yuan* (or *jing*). *Wei qi* (protective *qi*) represents our spontaneous reaction to the world, which might be defensive but could just as easily be offensive. The *yuan qi* (source *qi*) represents our original pattern, our connection to our ancestors, and our destiny. *Ying qi* (nutrient *qi*) nourishes the self through food, thoughts, or emotions. The *wei*, *ying*, and *yuan* are not just qualities, but three levels of depth.

Wei qi, which reacts spontaneously to change, is therefore theoretically accepting of change. Since it is spontaneous, it has no rigidity, no preconceived patterns. At this level, one may accept change or reject it all together without being bothered.

When change occurs on the *yuan* level, this means structural changes of the organs (or bones) and/or affecting the unfolding of one's potential destiny in life.

It is the *ying qi* that represents the most resistance to change. *Ying qi* represents blood, thoughts, patterns that have been built in order to nourish ourselves. These thoughts and patterns are often influenced by one's learned experiences, one's social consciousness.

Wei qi represents a desire to be one with the world as the current "winds" flow.

Yuan qi represents one's desire and ability to be one with the world through ancestral connection, through the common genetic code, connecting to the source of the vast ocean of life.

Ying qi is the qi that has the tendency to separate one from the world....(it) is the foundation of ego, thus it represents one's rigidity and learned behavioral patterns such as protecting the perceived self, separating the self from the world. This is where pathology easily develops, through the separation of self and "other."

Ying qi is the *qi* that has the tendency to separate one from the world. In one's desire to discover and understand the world, thereby nourishing the self, one could become overeager in this endeavor and consequently too consumed with the self as a separate entity from everything else that exists. *Ying qi* is the foundation of ego, thus it represents one's rigidity and learned behavioral patterns such as protecting the perceived self, separating the self from the world. This is where pathology easily develops, through the separation of self and "other."

If a person develops the virtue (*de*) to be in line with the way (*dao*) of all things/nature, then he/she is able to spontaneously be in contact with both the world and with his/her destiny without too much interference from the intellect, learned patterns, conceptualizations, and so on. A person should also be

able to nourish one's self, but not too much, not to the point where one feels separated from the flow of the world, needing to protect one's self against its currents. Perhaps the reason why acupuncture concentrates so much on the treatment of the regular meridians and why this system has been developed to such a greater extent is because this is the meridian system that deals with blood (self nourishment) and *wei* (interaction with and movement through the world).

The Process of Disease

The process or purpose of human life is to interact with, learn about, and understand the world. Change is inevitable and resistance to change is what creates disease (blockage in TCM terms). One's interactions with the world affects the three levels within the human domain: *wei*, *ying*, and *yuan*.

As one examines the process of disease, it is important to remember that in distinguishing the different stages of pathology, the goal is not to isolate one level or phenomenon as independent of others, nor to say that disease progresses from stage one to stage two in an absolute manner. Any stage or level will inherently contain and reflect the other stages and levels.

In studying the process of disease, it is useful to look at how an unresolved issue might disrupt the flow of life. The process might begin on the *wei qi* level. Initially, a person might not even be conscious of encountering an issue or change in life and might accept it or fight it without much awareness of his/her own response (just like pulling one's hands out of the path of fire before having figured out the fire was hot). Later, the response might be one of cold (slowing the change), hot (moving towards it faster than invited), or damp (moving both toward and halting at the same time).

If one does not accept the encountered change, one begins to develop a greater awareness of its existence. Slowly, one might become more and more irritated by it. Once it is in the consciousness, it is in the *ying* level. The response of cold, heat, or dampness becomes more pronounced. Then one

starts to "invest blood" in the struggle. The way one "digests the world" (spleen) becomes affected, and one's emotional disposition might become affected. At this point, it is no longer very easy to ignore or expel the pathogen ("pathogen" here means any issue, emotional or physical, that feels foreign to one's life). In this stage there will typically be pain, mental or physical, and the beginning of disruption of function. As the irritation increases, one may opt to "harmonize" the problem, that is, learn to live with it. The problem is not gone, but it is manageable, it no longer has a pronounced effect on one's life. Perhaps the problem is dormant, perhaps one simply learns to live with it, or perhaps one suppresses its symptoms.

At some stage, one either is unable to maintain this "harmony," or becomes so accustomed to suppressing the problem that it starts to become part of one's self. This is the *yuan* level. Physically this may show as damage to actual structure or organs. Mentally it may show as repression and a change in outlook that is no longer conscious but has become part of the self, as in "my pain and I are one" or "I am my problem." Or it may show as a feeling of total separation from the problem, as if it were a demon that had taken hold of and rewritten one's destiny.

Another way to describe this process of penetration is through the concepts of latent heat and latent cold. Once the pathogen has entered the *ying* level, one's reaction is no longer spontaneous. Now the enticement for change (wind, or *wei qi*) is in the blood, and might disrupt what is perceived as normal functioning. In response, the body mobilizes the blood in order to suppress the pathogen. This response can be triggered by defensive emotions or changes in behavior, and can cause relatively small changes in function and structure, e.g., the building of extra capillaries, or hardening and closure of blood vessels, reducing function so the body is no longer at an optimal level. This is called "latent heat" because that which is *yang* (change and movement which are hot by nature) has been suppressed, perhaps encapsulated with blood. This is the stage that might be observed in the *luo* vessels on the surface, which

represent the mobilization of blood. Symptoms may show as something like phlegm nodules.

At some point, there will not be enough blood to handle the issue and suppress it. At this stage, the *jing* gets mobilized in order to maintain the suppression. As it is the energy of the kidneys (cold), our core, that is being utilized, this stage might be called "latent cold". Here greater substantiation takes place, the encapsulated pathogen begins to become more consolidated, fibroids and tumors are being formed, the loss of function is quite great, and grosser structural changes occur. Eventually, the *jing* is unable to contain the pathogen, and metastasis begins: the pathogen (heat, movement) is no longer held and starts to spread.

This, of course, is a natural process: everyone has issues that have not been dealt with satisfactorily (physical or mental) and which have been suppressed to varying degrees. Thus we all have cancer: encapsulations, mutated DNA (changes in the *jing*), the potential for uncontrolled growth, and spreading of heat (movement). One could say it is just a question of degree and of how "reasonable" our response is compared to our functionality.

This process can be seen in accordance with the three schools of thought: cold, hot, or damp/phlegm. This is the process of degeneration, of death and rotting. We can view it as a process of becoming colder and colder, that is, less able to function, being less *yang*. We can view it as a process of heat, the possibly uncontrolled movement towards death. And we can view this as a process of phlegm accumulation, as the body builds up greater and greater accumulations that disrupt clarity and function. Rather than assume a particular dogma, it might be most useful to assume that all three are correct and can coexist, but depending on the person, one will be more dominant.

More Ways to Look at the Process of Disease

Aside from disease, one can also correlate this process of *wei* to *ying* to *yuan/jing* movement with anatomical blockages. Anatomically speaking, the neck, diaphragm and pelvis

represent major thoroughfares in the body, and hence obstacles. At the *wei* level, one might exhibit wind (cold, or heat) symptoms with blockages in the upper body, the head and neck area. As the pathogen moves deeper, to the *ying* level, one might get diaphragmatic constriction, while later, as blockages become more substantial, one will develop pelvic obstructions. In the author's personal experience, these three levels cannot be relied upon for palpatory diagnosis since most people will have at least some issues on all three levels, and thus may exhibit hardness/blockages on all levels. However, it does give one the option of freeing these blockages anatomically as an approach to bringing resolution.

This description of the process of disease as the process of creating accumulations emphasizes the importance of the *fu* organs. The *fu* organs are often given relatively little emphasis in modern acupuncture. However, if we see disease as the over-accumulation of undealt with experiences (toxins), then keeping the *fu* (bowels) open so that they can fill and empty as prescribed is of utmost importance. We see this attitude exercised in Western practitioners who believe in the critical role of leaky gut syndrome in chronic degenerative and autoimmune disorders.

The meridian system is the conduit system of *qi*. *Qi*, not just righteous *qi*, but also pathological *qi*, means influences. How is the meridian system involved? *Wei qi*, the *qi* of the lungs, flows in the sinew or tendino-muscular meridians (*jing jin*), making the liver (sinews) and lung (*wei qi*) especially related to *qi* response. The *luo* meridians (*luo mai*) carry blood, thus they are the meridians responsible for the process at the *ying* level. The system of the primary meridians could also be categorized in with the *ying* level, as can the spleen (producing blood *ying*), the heart, and pericardium. Finally, the 8-extra meridians (*qi jing ba mai*) are the conduits of *yuan qi*, and the kidneys and *san jiao* are also involved here.

Since the regular meridians are conduits of both *wei* and blood (*ying*), they mediate be-

Continued on page 32

Continued from page 31
tween the *wei* and the *ying* levels. The primary meridians can also represent the *ying* level, and the *luo* system can be seen as the bridge between the *ying* and *yuan* levels. This is because the *luo* are said to fill when the regular meridians can no longer hold the pathogen. This interpretation is a matter of personal judgement, and depends on the individual presentation.

The divergent meridians (*jing bie*) represent an attempt to divert the pathogen away from the organs, resulting in the pathogen being pushed into the joints where these meridians originate. These meridians are somewhat equivalent to the lymph system both in location as well as function (diverting pathogens). The movement of a pathogen from the *wei* level directly into the *yuan* level (bones) occurs so that one might not have to consciously deal with the problem (the *ying* level). Thus the divergent meridians communicate between the *wei* and *yuan qi*, to the exclusion of the *ying qi*.

Applying Theory to Treatment Practice

This view of the channel systems and the type of *qi* involved, the depth of penetration, and the stage of the disorder or disease can be helpful in selecting treatment points. One might first determine what stage predominates in the person: *wei*, *ying*, or *yuan*. This dictates the corresponding channel system on which one might want to work. The practitioner also needs to assess whether to encourage the body's current tendency, or to introduce a new direction. In other words, does the client seem ready to handle the issue, or is it perhaps best to help suppress the issue at this point until the client is indeed more able to handle it (this might be especially considered in very weak patients)? And what would be needed if the client did indeed confront the issue? This evaluation process can be helpful in selecting points that resonate with the channel system involved, as well as points which might facilitate the direction chosen.

For example, if it is determined that the divergent meridian system is involved in, say, the bladder/kidney confluence, and the prac-

itioner wishes to encourage the pathogen outwards, one might choose to use UB 40 and UB 10, the confluent points of this divergent system. Along with those points, one could add UB 67, which is a *jing*-well point activating the sinews, hence indicating the direction towards the *wei* level. Or SI 12 could be used, which is the meeting of the three *yang* zones and which, by name, *bing feng* (catch the wind) implies expelling the wind/change/pathogen factor. Such combinations are naturally a matter of personal choice for each practitioner.

A common mistake is to automatically treat the *yuan* level through the correlating 8-Extra channels as the treatment protocol of choice. Because the 8-Extra channels involve the core self, naturally every issue has some 8-Extra component within it because there is always some "core self" involved in all action, on all levels. However, not all issues at the *yuan* level (and certainly not on the other levels), call for treatment of the 8-Extras. Many issues that have become "latent cold" and are threatening to our existence, be they tumors, fibroids, structural and functional deterioration, and so on, are not necessarily a matter of the 8-Extra channels. If they are not genetic ("pre-heaven") or were not created at a very early age, then they are not likely to be in the 8-Extra domain. Many diseases are in the *yuan* level and have been created through behavioral choices over the years, which would connote the regular meridians (behavior). In cases of autoimmune disorders, the *wei qi* attacks the *yuan* level, connoting the divergent meridians. Instead of opting for 8-Extra treatments, one might consider *mu* points, the *yuan* (source) points, as well as the (back) *shu* points in such cases.

As reflected in the progression of point names on the *ren*, or humanity, channel, the purpose of human life is to convert the *yuan/jing* into *shen* through the alchemical process of the *qi*. The use of *jing* for interactions with the world convert it to experiences that are stored in the brain/marrow. When the *jing* is exhausted, life ends, and what remains are our experiences. The *hun* (the corporeal soul) then rejoins the ancestral realm to contribute that life experience to the collective con-

sciousness. The *shen* can also influence the *yuan/jing*. We have all seen people who overcome cancer and other "terminal" diseases through the power of the mind, demonstrating this principle. Therefore, in selecting to work in the domain of *yuan qi*, we must not ignore the power of the mind/spirit: our target, to a large extent, is the person's animation (*shen*), to allow the *shen* an exploration that may have been obscured previously.

Acupuncture Technique

It is important to remember that the various meridian systems share points. For example, UB 40 is the earth point of the bladder regular meridian, but it is also the lower confluent point of the bladder/kidney divergent system. One must be quite clear in one's intention when choosing a point so that the level of desired influence truly gets tapped into. This also means that one might accomplish more by selecting points according to their relationship with the problem's level and nature rather than by prescription. Nothing exceeds mental intention; however, not everyone has such great mental clarity as to consistently have that intent transmitted through the needles. The following techniques can help.

When working with the *luo* meridians, for example, one can use bleeding or cause redness in the area, such as with a 7-star needle, as a technique that supports one's intention to activate blood.

The sinew meridians are distinguished by the *jing*-well points, which can be anywhere in the vicinity of the nail, not just the corner. The meeting points of the sinews (SI 18, GB 13, Ren 3, and GB 22) can also be used, as well as knotted trigger points in the muscles, or local points, which would be needled superficially like a trigger point. Cupping is another technique that resonates with the sinew meridians.

The divergents are needed in a way that creates a circle, going through the lower and upper confluent points first (e.g., left UB 40, then left UB 10, right UB 10, then right UB 40). Each needle points to the next point to be needled, needling at the superficial, then deep, then superficial levels at each point.

Herbal Methods

The treatment methods of herbal medicine can also be viewed accordingly. When encountering a challenge or a call for change (wind), the body energetics may fail to accept the change as useful and will attempt to expel it altogether. This is basically the equivalent of the vomiting method – total rejection upon first encounter. At the *wei qi* level, the pathogen has penetrated to some extent but it can still be expelled, except that it will require effort. This involves the sweating and purging methods. If the pathogen persists beyond this stage, one could use the "opposition method," assuming the person has the physical or mental strength to confront the issue. These are the warming, cooling, draining and reducing methods, and are opposite to the three responses to change of cold, hot and damp. Note that the body energetics also uses this method, for example, by creating dampness in response to heat, or heat in response to dampness.

There are times when a person is unwilling to confront the issue, and this is when the harmonizing method is used. This is by far the most popular choice of most ill individuals (as well as for many practitioners) as it allows one to live one's life relatively undisturbed while still not fully dealing with the issue. The harmonization technique, a method that came into popularity much later than the others, is often deceiving in its results as it gives the appearance that the person is doing well, but in reality the issue might come back to afflict them at any moment. Thus, in spite of its popularity (e.g., Bupleurum formulas), it has some major drawbacks.

Finally, when the person becomes too weak to confront the issue and has lost the ability to both harmonize and confront the problem, the tonification method is chosen. Once the person has gained greater strength, they will hopefully be able to go back and confront, expel, or harmonize the problem. Again, there is a great tendency to use tonification, and one might consider whether this method is merely making the person more comfortable in avoiding change, or whether tonification is truly the only choice.

Conclusion

In looking at the human process this way, one starts to develop a reverence for the processes exercised by the body energetics. One may have an affinity for the opposition approach, such as, "warm what is cold," "cool what is warm," but perhaps such approaches at times do not pay enough homage to the inherent wisdom of life's patterns. Perhaps what is warm simply needs resolution, or what is cold needs to be "confronted." By viewing the process philosophically, one simply gains more options, not the least of which is the option of bringing the client's awareness to where the problem is and to what options are available.

It is not clear that the meridian system was formulated purely for the purposes of needling. In fact many of the contributors to the understanding of this system were not necessarily medical practitioners, but rather shamans, philosophers, *qigong* practitioners, and other inquirers. Thus, not the least of the

advantages of viewing the meridian system and the process of life in this manner is our ability to further understand our own processes, and bring greater awareness to our lives, perhaps the highest achievement of the pursuit of medicine.

This article was written in response to colleagues' requests for a simplified (or perhaps systematized) presentation of the basic concepts underlying Jeffrey Yuen's work. Naturally, I cannot attempt to represent anything but my own understanding, and hence all errors, misconceptions, and misstatements are mine.


Avi Magidoff, LAc has studied extensively with Jeffrey Yuen and Kiiko Matsumoto and teaches classes in the U.S. and Europe. He is currently in private practice in San Francisco.

Avi Magidoff will be speaking at the CSOMA Expo 2000 on Strategies for Treating Neurological Conditions.



O.M.

**The Original...
And Still the Best**




**Jade
PHARMACY**

The First
We were the first U.S. company to introduce Chinese herbs to the Western market in 1971.

The Original
Jade Pharmacy, the original Ted Kaptchuk formulas, were first introduced to practitioners in 1986.

The Best
Our proprietary manufacturing process produces the best extracts with the highest levels of active constituents.

The Only
Jade Pharmacy is the only choice for the practitioner who insists on the safest and most potent formulas.

Manufactured by

Distributed by
Crane Herb Co.
800.227.4118
www.craneherb.com

