

# Meditations on the Meridians

By Avi Magidoff



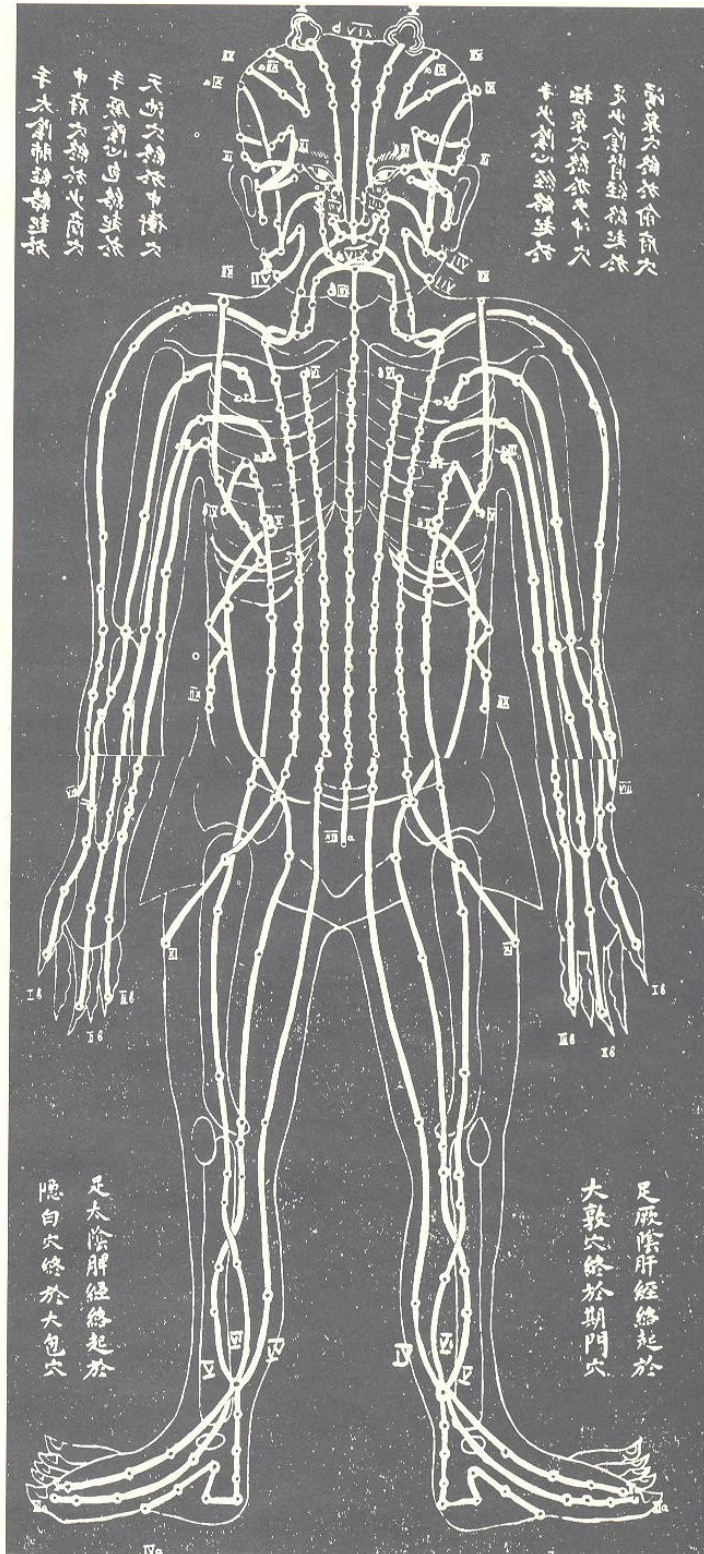
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The meridian system is an invitation to meditate on the nature of our lives in human form, as is implied in the Chinese characters for meridian system, *jing mai*. *Jing* is normally translated as a meridian, but it also means a sutra, or canon-

ized classic as in *Huang Di Nei Jing* (Yellow Emperor Inner Classic), or *xin jing* (heart sutra). The character implies an organized, systematized network, like the threads of silk. (It is worth noting that the word sutra in Indo-European languages carries a similar connotation of a suture, the underlying fabric of life.) The character *mai* means pulsation, or something that flows/pulsates in the body. We can say that the *jing mai* are the sutra(s) on life's pulsation, or life's animation and are thus an invitation to look deeply at life.

This article is not meant to provide a definitive and comprehensive source on the subject of what it means to be a human being with our interactions with the world, our struggles, our birth, our death, our sicknesses, etc. By nature, meditative work is always a work in progress. The ideas presented here are merely possibilities. There is no way to know for sure what the *Han* dynasty authors truly meant. Their writings were linked to their own cultural paradigms. My own understanding of these ideas is influenced by who I am as a 20th century human with a Jewish and Buddhist background, with teachers who include a Taoist priest, a Japanese practitioner, and a French sinologist.

The questions we ask will condition the answers we get. The questions one asks in a philosophical quest are somewhat different than those one asks when facing another person laying on a treatment table. We try and cultivate ourselves to a greater point of unity between the two, but often it becomes evident that the understanding we gain in our meditations is not always useful (and can appear to be quite incorrect) in our clinical reality. I believe that





much of the meridian understanding was researched by people whose interest was cultivation (*qi gong* types), and not necessarily by medical practitioners. Thus, as medical practitioners, we are faced with the further challenge of not just understanding the

There are two immediate statements being made in the general flow of the meridians. *Yang* meridians flow from heaven to earth and *yin* meridians from earth to heaven. This implies that the human domain is the result of the interaction of heaven and earth, of *yin*

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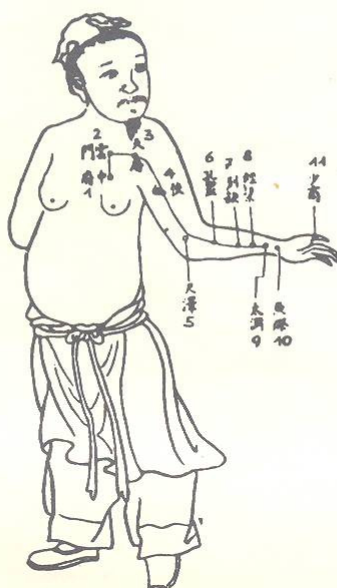
meridians philosophically, but also being able to apply that understanding clinically: how can we see that a certain point will reflect a certain pathology, or that another point will cure it, etc. Here, I attempt merely at exploring the first challenge, the philosophical one, and disregard clinical implications.

I present this material with hesitation. We each will come up with our own answers should we choose to ask these questions. I do not claim dogmatic or universal understanding. In fact, in offering what little understanding I have, I hope to stimulate you into asking more questions yourself and researching further.

#### The Ren and Du as Human Potential

Perhaps the first place to search for answers, or meditate upon, are the *ren* and the *du* channels, as they represent our human potential and what we do with that potential. These two channels start somewhere in the region of the *zhong ji* (Ren 3) that is the line between *yin* and *yang*. They move down to the perineum (Ren 1 – *hui yin*), the area that is between the reproductive/genital area and the anus, that is between what represents life and what represents death, the gate of *po*. Both move up to meet with the eyes and mouth, the opening of the *hun*. The statement made here is that life is about the meeting of the *hun* and the *po*, about taking the ancestral animation (*hun*) that allows me to individuate my life on this earth, and giving it substance (*po*). The *hun* requires the *po* for this life, and this life is about being on this earth rather than in the 'heavenly realms,' so that our life is about dealing with the challenges of physical existence, the pain and the joy, and moving on so as to enrich the *hun*.

and *yang*, and that in the human body earth must surely flow up to heaven and heaven flows down to earth, creating the flow



known as human (*ren*). All the regular meridians go through both the diaphragm and the waist (*dai*). This implies that the regular movement of life has to pass through, find harmony, in the two areas of great obstacle in life: the diaphragm, representing the heart, and the belt, representing the genitals.

#### The Lung Meridian

The lung meridian represents our ability to take in the world (air), spread it out to the whole body, and let go of the world (exhalation). Thus it is not surprising that the lung and the large intestine are pair-connected, as the large intestine is clearly an organ that

also lets go of waste material. We can understand why the emotions sadness and grief are intimately connected with these organs, since those are the emotions that can result when we do not let go of things we thought we owned, which we thought we took from the world and made an integral part of ourselves. If we have no attachments, we could let go of our emotions, states of mind, possessions, just as naturally as we exhale.

The functions of the lungs, taking in the world, spreading it everywhere in our bodies, and letting go, dictate the *qi* of the lung organ itself. Thus we say the lung descends the *qi* (breathing in, bringing the world in to the self, to the kidneys) as well as disperse it (spreading oxygen/breath throughout the body). The meridian reflects these exact same notions. It starts in the middle *jiao*, the place of assimilation, that is post-natal existence – I argue that it starts at Ren 12, the meeting of the *fu* since the lung is somewhat like a *fu*, it must become full and empty. It goes down, representing its descending action, a direction also described by the large intestine, the organ it meets as it goes downwards. It then comes back up and in the shape of a canopy to spread up to the throat and then out towards the edge of the clavicle, representing the spreading action. Here the external path begins, spreading further out to the lateral side of the arm, ending in the thumb. The lung meridian has to go all the way to the most lateral edge of the *yin* domain of the body because the breath must permeate the whole body. It has to reach the thumb, because it is with the movement of the thumb that we humans reach out and grasp the world (just as we do when we inhale). The index finger and the motion of the wrist usually aid the grasping motion of the thumb. Thus we have another branch starting at the base of the wrist (LU 7) going to the index finger (to the *LI*). So we see that the lung channel can be viewed as nothing more than a physical representation of the functions of the lungs and its philosophical implication.

Looking at the progression of point names, we also see an idea, the idea of how to deal with our life experiences (coming from what

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we digested in the center) and letting go, and the consequences of failing to do so. We start with LU 1 (*zhong fu*), the storehouse of the center, the center being the middle *jiao*; the lungs, with its capacity to naturally take in and let go of the world, receive what we have digested from the world and a storehouse (*fu*) is there simply to keep passing things on, it is a place of exchange. Next comes LU 2 (*yun men* – the cloud gate), which alludes to our ability to just allow for things to smoothly

ows, etc. So the qualities of the earth are to transform and to absorb. When it absorbs too much, there is dampness. The spleen is responsible for transforming life's experiences so that they become my own, part of my identity, so they have my stamp on them: these experiences acquire my meaning, my boundaries. If I store too much, my absorption becomes hampered and dampness is created.

Uprightness is part of the spleen: as humans, in order to 'digest the world' we need to have

transition to the outside world and the mobilization of *yang*. In meeting UB 1 the stomach channel also makes a connection with the place where *wei qi* is said to begin its flow (with the opening of our eyes as we wake in the morning), thus connecting to the *yang* functions of *wei qi* – warming and protecting.

The channel then goes down, circles the mouth, connecting with both the *du* and the *ren* (again allowing for the double aspect of *yin* and *yang* inherent in *yang ming*). Then up to the ear, to ST 8 and up to connect with the *du* and the brain at Du 24 (*shen ting* – spirit court). Both the top and the bottom, ST 44 (*nei ting*), of the stomach channel share the character, the court where one stands waiting for an audience with the Emperor.

**T**he point name progression on the liver channel seems to be concerned with the ability to surge out (to transcend – a yang function) of boundaries and limitations (*yin*), as would be expected on the channel that represents *yang-from-within-the-yin* (wood).

flow, like clouds, or else to condense (into rain). The next point is LU 3 (*tian fu* – celestial exchange-place), a reminder to let go of sadness, exchange the burdens as if they were clouds freely floating in the heaven. If we do not allow this free exchange, we are then going to be encumbered with things, thus we are going to start producing phlegm (stagnation), and become unable to let go. We will start to 'guard' this extraneous stuff as if it is actually our own true self; this is LU 4 (*xia bai*), the protecting white (white representing phlegm). Once we have come to this stage of creating attachments, life will be much murkier than it needs to. Thus we reach LU 5 (*chi ze* – measured swamp), the dregs and the left over mud. We keep collecting it (LU 6 – *kong zui* – collection hole), and creating more mud (LU 8 and LU 9 – the ditch and the abyss). LU 10 (*yu ji* – fish border) is a reminder of how once we created these attachments we start to swim around the real issues of our lives, unable to truly grasp them, like boats circling (bordering) the fish. However, we end with a reminder that it is always possible to exchange it all at LU 11 (*shao shang* – small exchanger) – all we have to do is breathe and let go.

#### The Spleen and Stomach

The spleen is the earth element. Earth is what allows for transformation: the earth absorbs seeds, water, dead organic matter, and transforms it into new life – plants, trees, mead-

an upright posture. Hence we see prolapse as a spleen issue. It is how we give ground (earth) so that we can sprout out of it without being over-burdened by dampness (undigested experiences). The spleen sinew channel also supports the spine, and thus our upright posture.

The spleen, being the origin of blood gives context to our life's experience: how I store and make a meaning out of whatever experiences life offers. It is responsible for our sense of satiation, of completeness. If there is an overflow of emotions this creates hemorrhaging since the blood stores emotions.

The stomach channel, more than the spleen, shows us the idea of digestion. *Yang ming*, the brightest of *yang*, is the point where *yang* expands the most in order to turn inwards (towards *yin*). The stomach as an organ takes in food and assimilates it: it takes *yang* (something from outside) and brings it inwards (giving it boundaries – an earth element function). Thus the stomach channel needs to satisfy a number of qualities: it needs to show expansion, and *yang*, it needs to also show *yin* (or movement towards *yin*), assimilation and nourishment.

Starting at LI 20 (welcome fragrance) at the nose it then moves up to UB 1 (bright vision) at the inner canthus. Here we see the two aspects the baby is exposed to at birth: light and breath. To the newborn this represents the

This first trajectory of the stomach channel represents our ability to take everything from the world via our sense organs and store it in our brains. It already contains most of the statements implied by the concept of the stomach channel.

However, not only does the channel need to move down to its organ and towards the *yin* (earth), along the way it will communicate with the two other aspects of *yang* – that is transformation and movement (we already communicated with warming and protecting). That is the stomach channel needs to further communicate with the *du*, at Du 14 where all the *yang* converges) and with the organ of transformation, the spleen.

On its way down from ST 5, the channel goes through to ST 9 (*ren yin* – welcome human). I have allowed for the ability to explore the world, now I can welcome myself and I can start to 'metabolize'/internalize the world. Here we are at the thyroid, a metabolic gland. As it moves down from ST 12, the basin where all the *yang* channels converge, it passes through ST 13 to ST 16 (*qi door*, the storeroom, the roof, the window of the breast) ending with ST 17 (center of the breast). Here we see a representation of building a house, a container, as we reach for the first and most primal source of nourishment in early life: the nipple, the source of the greatest condensation of blood. The next



point, ST 18 (root of the breast), continues the idea of building a container, as it is the root. Once having made the nourishment (and containment) connection, the channel can then move in towards the *ren*, towards *yin*. This trajectory ends at ST 30 (*qi chong*), communicating with the *chong*, allowing the idea of containment and nourishment to move into the *chong*, the sea of blood. Ending the second trajectory of the stomach channel.

What we see in looking at the spleen's trajectory is that it travels through the fleshier part of the leg, that the last point (SP 21 – *da bao*) seems to divert the channel off its original trajectory (which otherwise would end at SP 20 going into LU 1), and that many crossings take place along the channel.

Given that the spleen is associated with muscle mass, it makes sense that it would travel along the rectus abdominus, the quads, and along the arch of the foot (a fleshier part of the foot). SP 21 does indeed appear to have been added onto the channel. It would have made more sense for the channel to end its external trajectory at SP 20 going into the lungs at LU 1, and then making its ascent to the root of the tongue (the organ of taste – associated with earth). However *da bao* (SP 21) is the great *luo*, and the *luo* channels are outlets of blood/emotions. The spleen is associated with boundaries, so it was appropriate to tag SP 21 onto the spleen channel (rather than say the GB channel, in which zone SP 21 lies).

The many crossings of the spleen channel begin with crossing the liver channel – this is done exactly midway between SP 7 (leaking valley) and SP 8 (earth's crux), i.e., between the two properties of the spleen – sinking (leaking), and upward movement – this negotiation is done with the help of the smooth flow of the liver. The next crossing is over the stomach channel around ST 30/SP 12 (both of which are associated with the *chong*). Here we can see this as the interdependence of the spleen/stomach or as the notion that this marks the end of a trajectory which gives context to what we digest so that it can become part of our root self – the *chong mai* (sea of

blood). The next crossings are more zig-zags than crossings: this is where the spleen channel appears to come in from the lateral side to meet the *ren* channel at *Ren* 3, *Ren* 4, *Ren* 10, and *Ren* 12; these can be seen as the spleen being the intermediary with the outside world (lateral), which we digest so it becomes a part of our selves (the *ren* – the midline).

The theme of how I digest the world so as to become my own individuated self can be seen in the progression of point names on the spleen channel, ending with the *chong* – the archetype of self – at SP 12 (*chong men* – gate to the *chong*).

We start at SP 1 (*yin bai* – hidden white). This tells us that we start with something that was left by the lungs (white). How do we now digest what the lungs took in and have persevered into our body? The lungs take in the world in a spontaneous manner – it is our breath. The spleen is what 'digests' the world, it is now a matter of making the world my own through cognition. We then come to SP 2 (*da dun* – great city): in a big city there is a lot of movement, so we expect a lot of stirring/movement to occur as we take in the world. SP 3 (*tai bai* – great white, also meaning the great sage, referring to Venus) is a reminder of our final destination. Hopefully as we assimilate our world experiences we indeed become a great sage. In this process we create the connection with both our ancestors and descendants – this is SP 4 (*gong sun* – grandfather, grandson). Another interpretation of SP 4 is that as a *luo*, it is an outlet for accumulations that happen along the road, the possibility for release for unwanted digested matter. SP 5 (*shang qiu* – merchant mound), reminds us again of the possibility of letting go, of exchanging (the role of the merchant) before we 'take it all in'. Now we are ready to bring the world in (as we digest it), to the *yin*, this is SP 6 – *san yin jiao* – the meeting of the three *yin*. At SP 7 (*lou gu* – leaking valley) we are again given an outlet, this time it is digested matter that leaks out as diarrhea, or perhaps a reminder that stuff that is not properly taken in, properly digested, will be rejected. SP 8 (*di ji*) is normally translated as earth's crux, but it is also the ce-

lestial secret or the destiny. We take in the world in order to fulfill our destiny (or we are destined to take in and digest the world, even if we would rather live isolated from the outside world). Again we are reminded that it is about taking the world in, towards the *yin*, this time through SP 9 (*yin ling quan* – spring of *yin*), and so we can take it all to the sea of blood (*xue hai* – SP 10). *Ji men* (SP 11 – removal gate) allows for a final chance of distillation before we move on to the inner most, into the gate to the *chong* (*chong men* – SP 12).

This trajectory along the leg is a reflection of how we take things from the outside world and 'digest' them so as to create the self, the *chong*. Along the way we keep seeing that the road may not be smooth, that we need to have outlets for stuff that is not suitable to who we are.

From here we see more the actual physical digestion process: SP 13 (*fu she* – residence of the bowels), SP 14 (*fu jie* – abdominal knot), SP 16 (*fu ai* – abdominal grief or sadness) are the spleen abdominal points that show us that we need the bowels (*fu*) to digest, and that we can get a knot if we do not digest properly, and that sadness or grief (inability to let go) can affect digestion. So the theme here is of clear/easy passage.

As we move into the ribs we encounter SP 17 (*shi dou*), the cave or nourishment (also called *ming guan* – life passage), then moving into SP 18 (*tian xi* – celestial flow) that can also represent *ta qi* (air/world *qi*). SP 19 (*xiong xi-ang* – chest region) is related to *zhong qi* (*qi* of the chest), and finally SP 20 (*zhou rong* – all flourishes, or everlasting prosperity) is the result of the journey mixing the rough digestate from the bowels with the cosmic (*ta*) *qi*, we then move towards the lungs, into LU 1.

## The Heart

The heart channel is *shao yin*. *Shao* means small or hidden. The heart and the kidney are the hidden rulers of life, representing also the interaction of fire and water. As a *shao yin* channel one would expect the external branch to start in a hidden place: in the depth

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of the armpit (H 1). (The kidney channel also starts in a hidden place, in the depression on the underside of the foot.) We would further expect it to run down the arm in the most hidden place, i.e., the most medial position possible in the *yin* domain of the arm (the anterior surface). Thus the heart channel runs to the little finger (and H 9 is in the least exposed side of it, allowing SI 1, a *yang* point, the more exposed side of the finger nail). As the ruler of my life, it is natural for the heart to create a connection with the organs through which I take in the world and express myself to the world: the eyes and the tongue. Another part that expresses the depth of my heart is my wrist (through calligraphy in the case of the ancient Chinese), and so it is not surprising to find a cluster of heart points in the vicinity of the wrist.

When looking at the progression of points along the heart channel, one can do so backwards rather than forwards. This is because we aspire to come back to our true nature, to our highest source. Although we are born into the potential of our true nature, we inevitably managed to murk up our heart and obscure our true nature. (The same can be said about the pericardium: I chose to represent in the forwards order, but it too can be looked in reverse.) It shows us how through introspection on our suffering and willingness to let go of our notions about our lives we can liberate ourselves and become one with the great source of life.

The journey starts at H 9 (*shao chong* – lesser *chong*), which represents the blood (*chong*), that is the substance of my emotional life. H 8 (*shao fu* – lesser exchange-place) is where I begin to exchange (*fu*) what is stuck in the blood (emotional life); this starts a movement towards enlightenment. Once we start the spiritual journey, we stand at the gate of spiritual potential. We have arrived at *shen men* (H 7 – gate of spirit): it is a gate to be gone through and there are still stagnations to be cleared. The next point is H 6 (*yin xi* – accumulated *yin*), symbolizing the necessity to transcend the *yin*, the baggage, so that I can arrive at H 5 (*tong li* – penetrating miles), where through acceptance (understanding, and love) I can penetrate all. Through ac-

ceptance and having penetrated obstacles and suffering, I now become more inline with the *dao* (the character means one who walks with the head/mind), this is H 4 (*ling dao* – spiritual way). Once that has taken root, I arrive at the ocean (H 3 – *shao hai*) where everything is of the nature of free flowing and vastness. Now the soul is free and clear (H 2, *qing ling* – clear spirit), and we can finally pay homage to the source, the high spring of life, H 1 (*ji quan* – supreme spring, which relates directly, by point name and location, to K 1, *yong quan* – bubbling spring of life, that is to the potential of the true self).

This is a journey that starts with jettisoning what encumbers the self, the blood, shaking up notions and old habits, so as to transcend consciousness and my response to the world (*ying* and *wei qi*). This is how I can become free of defending myself of notions.



Kidney Meridian

**K**idney represents both water and fire (as in *ming men*). It is thus the force of life coiling up through the body — the kidney channel takes every opportunity to coil itself again and again.

#### The Kidney

The kidney channel represents the water element, a representation of my innermost depths. Kidney represents both water and fire (as in *ming men*). It is thus the force of my life coiling up through my body. So the kidney (*shao yin*) starts in a hidden place, on the un-

derside of the small toe, with its first point, a bubbling spring, being in a hidden depression under the foot, where I stand on the ground. As it proceeds up, it must surely take the most hidden part of the thigh and arrive at both the genitals and the spine (representing both bone and destiny: the ladder of life). Along this way the kidney channel takes every opportunity to coil itself again and again. Around the ankle (again the place upon which my stance is based), and then reaching *Ren* 1 it goes up the spine, comes out at K 16 (*huang shu* – hidden organ *shu*) and coils back down to the reproductive organs. From K 16 it also goes up to the chest (making its connection to the fire organs) and coils up in the throat where it controls the metabolic glands (e.g., thyroid - which represents both fire and water in terms of metabolic fire and endocrine excretions).

With the kidney points we see the interplay of fire and water, *yin* and *yang*, the spark and flow of life. Starting at K 1 (*shu yong quan* – bubbling spring) where life begins to gush, moving on to the fire of life (K 2, *ran gu* – blazing valley, representing the ignition of life, including desires). This fire is in a valley (contained) because we are in the domain of water, of kidney. And so the flow of life continues through the powerful stream (K 3, *tai xi* – great ravine), again to be gathered/contained in the great bell (K 4, *da zhong*). The bell is both a container and a reminder of our connection to our ancestors (the sound of the bell brings us in contact with the ancestors). The flow is reinforced at K 5 (*shui quan* – water spring), and then the reflection/contemplation of life occurs at K 6 (*zhao hai* – reflecting ocean) where the coiling of the kidney chan-

nel takes place around the heel, to continue to return the current (K 7, *fu liu*) so that we can build trust (K 8, *jiao xin* – connecting to trust), and become a vehicle so as to act as good host to our true selves (K 9, *zhu bin* – guest house). That is how we arrive at the valley of the *yin* (K 10, *yin gu*), a symbol of the depth of



life, which after moving up and recoiling again in the spine, come out again at the hidden organ (K 16, *huang shu*). From here the hidden strength of life is feeding both the physical bases of life, the *jing* as well as the spiritual. The *jing* from K 15 down to K 11: the central flow, the marrow mansion, the uterus gate, the *yin* gate and the human fire (these are K 15 to K 11, respectively). The spiritual, first through the transformative power of the middle *jiao* (various passage ways such as the bending merchant, the stone passage, the free valley, and the dark gate), then walking up the corridor (K 22 – *bu lang*, walking corridor) to reach the spirits (K 23-25, *shen feng* – spirit border/seal, *ling xu* – spirit burial, and *shen zang*, spirit storehouse), so that the center of my life may flourish (K 26, *yu zhong* – flourishing center), but still in order to keep transforming and moving at K 27 (*shu fu* – transporting exchange-place). Perhaps this is a further indication that the journey of water/*jing* is to manifest in order to exchange this life with another phase.

Note, that in the above description it is taken for granted that the kidney channel goes into the spine and emerges at K 16 where two trajectories continue externally, one moving down from K 16 to K 11, and one moving up toward the chest and throat. Unfortunately western books with the numbering of the kidney points consecutively upwards give the impression that the flow is from K 11 all the way up to K 27, even though the description of the channel clearly defies this idea.

### The Pericardium

The pericardium is the mediator of the world to the heart. As an organ the pericardium can be referred to as *xin zhu* (heart master) and it can also be referred to as *xin bao luo* (heart wrapping connection). The Chinese saw the pericardium both as the wrapping around the heart and as that which represents the heart's mastery that is over the blood. The pericardium is responsible for presenting to the heart the stimuli we receive from our external environment. It does so by relying on our learned experiences as to what we think we like or dislike. The lungs are our spontaneous interaction with the world, the peri-

cardium mediates this, and through a learned process selects what it is that I choose to interact with or not.

The pericardium is a filtering system that allows ideas in according to whether they fit in with our catalog of ideas and experiences. An idea that has no correspondence to what we currently know and understand is deemed 'weird' and is not allowed into our consciousness. This is a learned process: a child might entertain such ideas as the ability to fly, but an adult would not.

This idea of the pericardium as mediation can be seen in the trajectory of the channel. Naturally its external trajectory flows between that of the lungs and heart. Internally, it starts at the chest (presumably Ren 17 (center of the chest) also the *mu* point of the pericardium), and moves to meet the three *jiaos*. Thus it communicates the *qi* of the chest (related more to *wei qi*) with that of the lower *jiao* (related to *yuan qi*). It moves out from the chest to the region of P 1 and GB 22 and then continues along its external path (which represents bringing things inwards to the central hub – P 9). GB 22 is where the arm *yin* sinews converge. The arm sinews are responsible for reaching out (*yang* sinews) and grasping/bringing things in with our hands (*yin* sinews), while the leg sinews ensure our posture. So again, before it goes through the external trajectory, the pericardium channel picks up the influences brought in by the arm sinews and begins to process them through the external channel.

It is interesting to note that P 8, the fire point, is where a child might take something from the world and brings it to the mouth. This is how a child explores the world. In channel terms, the child grasps with the fire of fire, the need to go out and explore, and brings it to the tongue, the offshoot of the heart. This describes the role of the pericardium.

The idea of the pericardium as mediator of the external world (*wei qi*) to the heart (to the self, the blood) is shown by the progression in point names. P 1 (*tian chi* - heavenly pool) and P 2 (*tian quan* - heavenly spring) represent the heavenly (or environmental) in-

fluences. We then proceed to P 3 (*chize* - bent marsh) as the influences begin to internalize we come to some more murky ground. We then pass through some gates and mediations before reaching the inner self, represented by P 4 (*xi men* - gate of the cleft), P 5 (*jian shi* - in-between messenger), and finally P 6 (*nei guan* - inner gate). Once we pass through *nei guan*, we arrive at P 7 (*da ling* - great mound): the mound, a tomb, represents the accumulations we can create with what comes in from the outside. And P 8 (*lao gong* - palace of hard work) is where we can reach the palace after long and hard work of cultivation. Finally, P 9 (*zhong chong* - central surge/hub) represents the heart itself, as it is the central hub (P 9 also has reminds us of the *chong*, making a strong connection to blood).

We see with these point names what we do when we are exposed to the environment, i.e., heavenly influences. We tend to discern these influences and decide as to whether we want to take them as influences over our lives. We do this using our learned experience. We have learned that certain things will bring us pleasure, while others will not, thus we bring some things into our hearts while we ignore others. This process of differentiating what I want is the role of the pericardium. Without it, we will continuously engage in all external stimuli without discrimination, with too much control we become narrow minded and habituated into our thinking patterns.

The pathologies associated with the pericardium are associated with excess *yang* (external influences). Thus we see palpitations, fever, etc. These represent *yang* which is not properly assimilated into the body/psyche, an inability to mediate external stimuli, an inability to limit the internalization of external stimuli, or an inability to learn to avoid interaction with ones we are not ready to deal with.

### The Liver

The liver channel runs up quicker than any of the other channels (at the level of Liv 5, the spleen already has 7 points, and the kidney 9 points, by Liv 14, the spleen count is 17 and the kidney's 22). It also ends its external trajectory sooner than any other (at Liv 14). Liver,

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being wood, represents initiation, it needs to run faster, like the spring, but it need not go far as it is merely the initiator, thus its external trajectory stops as soon as it permeates a very *yin* area (the ribs). It then continues up to the top of the head (*Du 20*, representing the brain), the eyes and the lips. We can see here the representation of the *hun*. The *hun* is the spirit (animation) that comes from the ancestral world, animating my life, allowing me to be clever and productive, it accumulates the experiences of this physical body, and at death goes back up to commune with the ancestral spirits. Thus the *hun* represents my ability to do something with the physical mass of my body and create meaningful experiences. This is the transmuting of *jing* (physical) to *shen* (spiritual). And thus the liver channel circles the genitals (an area representing the *jing*, physical mass) and moves on to the brain (where my life experiences are being stored) and further allows for expression through the eyes and lips.

The point name progression on the liver

channel seems to be concerned with the ability to surge out (to transcend – a *yang* function) of boundaries and limitations (*yin*), as would be expected on the channel that represents *yang* – from-within-the-*yin* (wood). Starting with point names that infer accumulations or obstacles, Liv 1 (*da dun* – great pile) and Liv 4 (*zhong feng* – middle seal or middle mound), and reminders that with 'smooth flow' we can surge forward (Liv 2, *xing jian* – the moving space, Liv 3, *tai chong* – great surge). We are reminded that we can always find a way in the midst of obstacles, like a worm that will eat its way out of the wood (Liv 5, *li gou* – worm hole). Yet we must be careful to not make this new way all consuming, as that would only be another attachment and thus would create a hole in our own substance (just as a termite might eat up the wood). To do that, our path must be smooth, gentle, and well thought out, as one would navigate in the center of a large metropolis (Liv 6, *zhong du*). Then, a flow, like a spring is created (Liv 8, *qu quan* – bending spring): the bending part is a reminder that we must always keep an eye out and aspire

for smoothness, or we might again be encumbered by the *yin* accumulations (Liv 9 *yin bao* – *yin* wrapping, and Liv 11, *yin lian* – *yin* angle) and be trapped in a feeling of urgency (Liv 12, *ji mai* – urgent pulse).

We arrive at a the border of a very *yin* area the ribs, and the warning is that being 'stuck in our attachments, our *yin*, is a self-imposed death sentence: Liv 13 (*zhang men* – camphor gate) is a reminder of funerals (camphor is used in caskets). When we realize the importance of overcoming our obstacles in a smooth way, initiating our *yang*, but not in an all consuming way, we can see that life is cyclical, and our struggle is just a part of the cycle of life, again a lesson in moderation smoothness within the great surge of *yang*/initiation. This is Liv 14 (*qi men* – cycle/period gate). In other words we initiate new phases and cycles in our lives successfully only if we realize that all phases are phases and we manage to not be too attached to them.

When viewed in this way we can start to see some meaning to the flow of the meridians, they stop being some abstract notion that only some ancient wise *qi gong* masters could actually see. We can see the meridians with our own eyes, not just as muscle borders, valleys, contours, but also as statements as to what it means to be human and to move through life. The *qi* now becomes relevant and actual in our own lives. It is no longer an esoteric 'life-force energy,' which one might or might not believe in. Seen in this manner, the *qi* and the channels describe my very own movement and interaction through life, interpreted according to my understanding of life, not just in accordance to some ancient civilization.

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