

The Paradox of the Unity and Duality of the Kidneys According to Chinese Medicine: Kidney Essence, *Yin*, *Yang*, *Qi*, the *Mingmen*-Their Origins, Relationships, Functions and Manifestations

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First published in American Journal of Acupuncture Vol. 27, No. 3&4, 1999

Abstract: This paper explores the relationship between Kidney Essence, *Yang*, *Yin* and *Qi*, and the *Mingmen*, their origins, the variety of functions they provide to the human organism, mentally, physically and spiritually, and the fundamental paradox they represent in terms of unity and polarity. This exercise is part of an ongoing personal exploration in the service of a more complete understanding of the cosmic and material functions of the Kidney in Chinese medicine and culture, also illuminated by Chinese pulse diagnosis. It is not meant to convey a final statement or as a repository of absolutes, but as an attempt to stimulate and ultimately share new ideas.

This paper was originally intended to examine the enigmatic intricacies of Kidney *yang*. However, considering one aspect of Kidney function separate from another is too artificial to be entirely useful. To quote from the work of Jesuit Sinologist and co-founder of the European School of Acupuncture, Father Claude Larre, and co-author/translator Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallee:

"Commentators say that as the only double *zang* in the body, the Kidneys are the prototype of the alliance between *yin* and *yang*."¹

and,

"...analogically *mingmen* creates the two Kidneys (*yin* and *yang*) which in turn create the six *zang* and six *fu*, which in turn create the four limbs and the one hundred bones of the body and so on."²

They later continue:

"So why does the commentator speak of the Water of Heaven and the Fire of Earth? I think it is his purpose to show the *yin* inside the *yang* and the *yang* inside the *yin*, which is precisely the definition of the Kidneys."³

The inseparability of the *yin* and *yang* Kidneys is discussed throughout their book *The Kidney*, from which these quotes are taken, and reflect my own experience and impressions of the relationship between Kidney Essence, *Yang*, *Yin* and *Qi*, and the *Mingmen* spelled out in the following pages in terms of origin, function and paradox.

I. KIDNEY PHYSIOLOGY ACCORDING TO CHINESE MEDICINE

Information about the Kidney according to Chinese medicine in either English or from Chinese sources has not been readily available, nor does the material that is available suffice to address the challenges which face the practitioner at the end of the 20th century.

While in China I made a special effort to get this information from the traditional doctors with whom I was in contact. They seemed curiously resistant to my inquiries and

delegated the task of studying the archives, buried in the basement of Guan An Men Hospital, to a young female student.

What came from those archives, and what no one disagrees with, is that Kidney *qi* is closely bound with the archaic substrate of all existence, the genetic code which organizes it into form and substance, and the force which brings it into life. In order to have a perspective on the importance of Kidney function to the basic integrity of our being and to chronic disease, especially that associated with the separation of *yin* and *yang*, we must examine briefly the origins and functions of Kidney *qi*.

A. Embryology

1. *Essence, Yin and Yang*

From European and mainland Chinese sources I learned that the Kidney energies originate *in utero*, and that the universal cosmic energies of pure *yang* (Spirit) combine with the pure *yin* (essence) to form the *yuan qi*. The *yuan qi* is stored in the Kidneys of both male and female parents and is mobilized at conception. Managed by Triple Burner (*sanjiao*) energies, *yuan qi* provides the template and force of ontology, the development of the fetus, and brings *qi* to the Source points of the channels to be distributed to the rest of the organism. According to Larre, the Triple Burner is:

"...connected with Mingmen on the right"; and from the *Nan Jing* in particular we know that the Triple Heater can be considered like a messenger or servant of mingmen for the distribution of *yuan qi* through the body.⁴

The act of birth is the final transformation of the Yuan energy of the cosmos to the essence (*jing*) from which evolves the duality of *yin* and *yang* (Fire of *mingmen*), to the earth or human plane. Kidney essence is often associated more with Kidney *yin* than with Kidney *yang*; partially because on the pulse, deficiency of Kidney *yin* and Kidney essence have similar qualities (Tight and Wiry). However, the functions of essence include equally *yin* and *yang* since it is the origin of both.

I have found that a deficiency of either Kidney *yin* or Kidney *yang* can be associated with Kidney essence deficiency. Kidney essence is, after all, the stored True *qi* of the entire organism from both before and after birth and is the lifelong source of *yin* and *yang*. Rather than just *yin* and *yang*, there is *yin*-essence and *yang*-essence, and since Kidney *qi* is a combination of *yin* and *yang*, we must also have Kidney *qi*-essence.

Therefore, I use the terms Kidney *yin*-essence and Kidney *yang*-essence to keep the origins and relationships clearly in focus. The essence is everywhere in Kidney physiology and pathology as the substrate of Kidney *yin*, *yang* and *qi*. I shall use Kidney *qi* as the term which expresses the totality of their function. (This is consistent with the information which came from the archives of Guan An Men Hospital.)

2. *Kidney Qi and the Foundation*

The combined forces of Kidney *yin*-essence and *yang*-essence constitute what I call "Kidney *qi*-essence," which is responsible for all growth and development throughout life. During life, it is stored in the Kidneys as essence from which it manifests *yin*-essence, *yang*-essence and Kidney *qi*, the foundation upon which rest the function of all Organ systems. Larre and Rochat de la Vallee interpret the ideograms associated with the Kidneys as "firm, solid and durable," "bound tightly" and "[making] a firm

foundation for life so man can stand upright." It is the primitive intelligent (*yin*-essence) Will (*yang*-essence [*mingmen*]) which throughout life overcomes the status quo, and which, when balanced against the laws of entropy, create an orderly and timely evolution. Or, as Larre and de la Vallee state, "having all the wisdom which is necessary to hold the important things of life."⁵

Root (also referred to as the "trunk") is the traditional term equivalent to our term "foundation," applied to the basic physiological role of these essences. On the pulse, Root refers to the Kidney, or proximal (*chi*) positions. Because the Kidneys are associated with this basal energy of the body, if the proximal pulse positions have strength (substance), the body has Root. This implies a greater resistance to disease, or if a disease has occurred, the prognosis is accordingly better.⁶

According to J.D. "Dick" Van Buren, pioneer of British acupuncture and founder of the International College of Oriental Medicine in 1972:

"Root means there is strength in the deep position. This has two interpretations, the first says that there is some pulse in the deep position; or it can mean the third position is there, basically meaning that the Kidney has energy."⁷

Townsend and De Donna note:

"If the Root is in good condition, the Deep level pulse at the *Chi* position should be clean and reasonably forceful, with a feeling of intrinsic strength and slight elasticity. Now press the pulse more deeply until it nearly vanishes. The pulse should disappear slowly as the pressure is increased, with a hint of pulse still present even at very deep pressure. If the pulse cuts off sharply on deepening pressure or weakens and fades very significantly, this indicates a weakness of the Root."⁸

On the other hand the proximal positions are frequently described as normally slightly deeper than the middle (*guan*) positions. Wang Ping states that "It should sound deep and strong like a stone thrown."⁹ The reasons for this are not explained anywhere in the literature with which I am familiar. The fact that the Kidney represents the Root energy at the "end" or bottom of the body does not seem sufficient explanation, since I have noted elsewhere that the position gets Deeper with age and with abuse, either by self (e.g., dietary, tobacco, alcohol), or by others (e.g., sexual, emotional, etc.).

Since the Kidney *qi*-essence, which these positions represent, is the foundation of all of the body *qi*, it is constantly being used to support our use and abuse of all other functions. The Deep quality is a sign of the depletion of *qi*, which for the reasons just offered would explain the usually deeper position of the proximal pulses.

This certainly explains why the proximal positions are deeper in older people. However, I have noticed a most disturbing development during the 28 years that I have studied and practiced Chinese medicine; that is, the loss of the Root at younger and younger ages. I can only attribute this to the stresses and pace of modern life, to pollution, fast food, sex at an early age, excessive exercise at an early age and perhaps to the artificial birthing techniques of the past 40 years. While people seem to be growing larger and stronger on the outside, they seem to be growing weaker on the inside.

3. Left & Right Kidneys and the Mingmen

Larre and de la Vallee have reviewed this issue in an analysis of the *Nan Jing*³ in terms of the double aspect of this zang as different from the others.¹⁰ They say that "It's only this double aspect of the Kidneys which is able to make the unity of life, and we call it Fire and Water, *yin* and *yang*."¹¹

In another model, the left Kidney is the one we normally associate with Kidney function, including water metabolism. Here, the right Kidney is the *mingmen*...

"...the door of individual destiny...*Mingmen* is the residence of *jing-shen*, Spirits/essences; it is where the Original Breath, *yuan qi*, is attached. There, man stores the essences (jing, sperm) and woman attaches the reproductive organs (bao, uterus). Thus, the Kidneys are unique."¹²

In another model the *mingmen* is said to be on the right...

"...in order to command the ascending movement, because the right side is *yin* and from *yin* comes the Fire of the *yang* which is within the *yin*. The Kidneys are on the left because as the power of the Water they mark the power of the *yin* within the *yang*."¹³

Another explanation is based on the *I Ching (Yi Jing)*, the *Book of Changes*. In this explanation the *mingmen* is believed to be between the two Kidneys due to the broken and solid lines of the trigrams...

"Fire (*li*) and Water (*kan*) with the unbroken lines being *yang* and the broken lines being *yin*."

and,

"Fire comes first when a living being appears and it contains Water or *yin* within in the shape of the broken line. With the trigram for Water, it's the same in that Fire is contained within the *yin* power, and this is an exact image of the two Kidneys with *mingmen* between them. Here *mingmen* is not the right Kidney, but rather it's the Breath and Original Breath of the Fire of Life which is itself between the Kidneys or inside the power of Water."¹⁴

The final explanation comes to the same conclusion through a different line of reasoning based on an analogy between the *tai ji*, or supreme "ridgepole," and the *mingmen*. Each create two principles, the first the *yin* and *yang* which in the tradition of the *I Ching* eventually leads to the 64 hexagrams and the latter,

"...[the *mingmen*] creates the two Kidneys which in turn create the six zang and six fu, which in turn create the four limbs and the one hundred bones of the body, and so on."¹⁵

The debate goes on throughout the *Nan Jing*, which as far as I can see comes to no clear resolution. Larre and de la Vallee leave the impression that each of these explanations were extant in different dynasties. If we read Unschuld's series *Medicine in China* correctly, the preferences would be determined by some sociological aspect of that time period in the evolution of Chinese culture and civilization.

4. The Pulse

In the classical literature, the left proximal pulse position is associated with Kidney *yin* and the right proximal position with Kidney *yang/qi*. However, it is my clinical impression that deficiencies of both Kidney *yin* and *yang* can be found at either or both proximal positions, with the former accompanied by a Tight, and the latter by a Feeble-Absent pulse quality.

In this regard, 16th century physician and prolific author Li Shi-zhen (1518-1593 AD) stated:

"Even though the ancients say that the left *chi* pulse belongs to the Kidney and the right *chi* belongs to the Gate of Vitality, actually the weakness or strength of the *yang* Source *qi* can be felt at both pulses."¹⁶

These positions tell us a great deal about the origin of a disorder, since the Feeble-Absent quality (Empty, Changing Intensity and/or Qualities, etc.), in all but the aged are usually associated with a constitutional etiology, and a Tight quality with postpartum etiology, often due to overwork of the mind and nervous system. This is important in terms of how one advises the patient about self-care.

Especially if the left proximal position is Feeble-Absent in other than the elderly, the etiology is clearly constitutional, and the patient should understand that they do not have the innate strength to do certain things that others can do easily, without becoming ill. I have found this to be one of the most emotionally releasing pieces of information for people who have lived a lifetime burdened by guilt and a sense of inferiority that they were not performing as they were expected to by parents and peers. They are relieved to be released from the guilt and to be able to cease performing disabling activities that enervate them and lead to symptoms and disease.

If the etiology is from a later stage of development, one can seek to delineate the habits, which create the excesses and the symptoms about which the patient complains, and initiate lifestyle changes that would create less stress. Changes in addictive and ego based lifestyle patterns, such as excessive sex and/or work, are then the focus of treatment. In such cases, there is usually more resistance to change.

In the early stages of a *yin* deficiency, a Tight quality will appear at first at the left proximal position, and as the *yin* deficiency grows a Tight quality appears also at the right proximal position. It has been my experience that if a Kidney *qi/yang* deficiency is developing, the qualities which characterize this condition (Feeble-Absent, Empty, Changing Intensity and/or Qualities etc.) will appear equally at both proximal positions.

In the early stages of a simultaneous Kidney *yin* and *yang/qi* deficiency, the *yin* deficiency will manifest itself as a Tight quality at the left proximal position, and the *yang* deficiency as a Feeble-Absent quality (Empty, Changing Intensity and/or Qualities etc.) at the right proximal position. In the presence of both deficiencies simultaneously the harder *yin* deficient quality, Tight, might overshadow the more Yielding Reduced qualities such as Feeble-Absent, and both proximal positions would feel Tight, especially if the *yin* deficiency was clearly greater than the *yang/qi* deficiency.

On the other hand, the Feeble-Absent (etc.) quality will dominate if the *yang/qi* deficiency is significantly greater than the *yin* deficiency. In chronic conditions, with either sign of deficiency manifesting, the likelihood is that both *yin* and *yang* are deficient. For example, Dr. John Shen, CMD (with whom I have been associated for 25,

and worked closely for eight years) states that lupus erythematosus is a condition reflecting a severe Kidney *yin* and *qi/yang* deficiency in which external Cold has invaded the Kidneys, which were the most vulnerable Organs when the Cold invaded the body. (He considers it as one form of chronic fatigue syndrome.) Here the pulse picture is in a state of flux depending upon the stage of the disease.

If an acute (or exacerbation of a chronic) colitis, pelvic inflammatory disease or prostatitis should occur, the qualities in the proximal positions will take on an entirely different character (Flooding Excess, Pounding, Slippery, Tight-Wiry qualities and Rapid Rate) reflecting these processes rather than the innate condition of the Kidneys. Once the acute condition passes, the true qualities will return.)¹⁷

5. Other

According to Chinese tradition. *Mingmen* is the central factor in both Kidney function and to all of the important aspects of life. It involves the Will and Destiny which are discussed in a following section.

It also involves Virtue and morality. According to Larre and de la Vallee:

"...but there is another ideogram [*xing*], which is often joined with *ming*-and it means all the circumstances of life and all I must do according to my nature to follow the right way, which is the way of authenticity. If I realize my nature I become authentic and I become a celestial being. It's the same at the level of a dynasty, the so-called *tianming*, mandate of Heaven, just the same as for an individual. If a lineage has a virtue, a power which enables it to ensure the charge of emperor or warrior or king, then it has to follow that way through each of its members, generation after generation. [If the lineage is unworthy and loses its authenticity, then] Heaven would withdraw its mandate because there's no more power and virtue in the lineage and it no longer realizes its original and primitive nature. It's the same for man."¹⁸

On the relationship of the Kidneys to the North, Larre refers to this in terms of "the supreme unity of each being and all beings." He states that:

"...the Pole Star was considered, in the second century BC, to be the dwelling place of the great deity tai yi, the Supreme Unity."¹⁹

Willmont has just published an exhaustive review on the subject of *mingmen*, which unfortunately arrived too late to be used for reference in this paper but which, after a cursory reading, I can recommend.²⁰

6. Comments

The understanding of Kidney *yin* as the left Kidney and Kidney *yang* as the right, with the *mingmen* between, is the one which is most congenial to me primarily because I have found that treating the Governor channel in the Lower Burner is more relevant to mental-spiritual issues than treating the Kidney shu points. On the pulse, I find that right and left side do not consistently correspond to *yin* or to *yang*. Li Shi-Zhen supports this perspective in this 16th century excerpt:

"According to recent [!] findings, *mingmen* is located between the two kidneys."²¹

I believe that the *mingmen* is the Yuan which at birth resides in the "uterus" and issues forth the Kidney duality associated primarily with the Du Mai, Ren Mai, especially the Chong Mai, which is associated with the other Kidney channel points 21-27, most effective in treating emotional-spiritual issues and closely related to the Pericardium-Heart. I was heartened to find this approach reinforced in a further discussion of the subject by Larre and de la Vallee.²²

B. Function

1. Will (Zhi)

The following are excerpted from my previous thoughts on Kidney Yang which appeared in *Dragon Rises, Red Bird Flies*:²⁶

Material Being

"Kidney *yin* and Kidney *yang* give, respectively, the 'life' and 'force' to the 'life-force.' The 'force' induces the movement that distinguishes that which is living from that which is not, and it is coincident with the concept of 'the *qi*.' If 'energy,' to which all Organ systems contribute, is the total capability of the organism to survive, then *qi* is the working agent or the power provided partly by the Lungs, Kidney, and Liver. *Qi* moves that energy over a specific distance in a specific time, generating power, work, movement, and circulation. Energy is potential; *qi* is kinetic. Kidney *yang*, the Kidney's contribution to *qi*, is the kinetic component of the Water element." [For a more exhaustive discussion of 'structive energies' and 'active energies,' I refer the reader to Manfred Porkert's book, *The Theoretical Foundations of Chinese Medicine*.²³]

"Kidney *yang* (also known as Kidney Fire or the Fire of *mingmen*) is, therefore, the functional energy that provides 'drive' to all the Organ systems and circulation. The heat energy, required for the physical and mental digestive functions of the Earth element, comes from the *mingmen*. The bonding and separation of the Earth element depend on the motivating force of Kidney Fire. Without this drive, the body will function sluggishly. On the mental level, this drive is motivation and will power. The assertive role of the Wood element in the 'evolution of being' requires the will power provided by the Fire of *mingmen*. Kidney Fire provides the metabolic heat to transform what would otherwise be a relatively inert organism into a dynamic, goal-oriented, aggressive being. From the beginning, it provides the 'force' to the 'life-force' and the 'will' to the 'will to live.'

One component of this forward motion, mediated through Kidney *yang* energies, is an appropriate involvement with the future. Kidney *yang* energies provide the prospective aspect of the 'through time' phenomenon, just as Kidney *yin* energies afford us the retrospective, historical view. With the former energies, we become capable of collating all of the current available information, in combinations of possibilities; these we can test against our concept of reality in order to produce a reasonable approximation of the future. Those in whom this talent is more highly developed are the visionaries and prophets, almost always unsung in their own time and canonized in retrospect. Poet/artist William Blake saw this function as belonging to the imaginative and creative faculties of people, and Ezra Pound called poets 'the antennae of the race.' In our time the 'prophetic'

impulse²⁴ is strong among science fiction writers, who have fared generally better in the scientific age than their counterparts did in other times.

"The propensity to see ahead involves a 'gift' for projection, which permits us to move outside ourselves to other places and times, both past and future. This may be realized in esoteric ways (such as an out-of-body experience), or, as with all natural functions, it might become a defense, in this case a rehearsal in preparation for future 'insults,' which we call 'paranoia.' The 'clear vision' capacity of the Wood element as expostulated by Worsley is the focused use of this gift of the Water energies for a specific purpose.

"Kidney *yin* provides the 'Water of Life,'²⁵ the medium of nutrient substances necessary to material being. Kidney *yang* provides the Fire that fuels the biochemical processes and stabilizes the balance of these substances through the control of glomerular filtration. Between the Lungs and the Kidney *yang*, homeostasis of anions and cations in the body is maintained. Electrolytes are one of three bodily systems in which there is little tolerance for any major imbalance without a threat to life itself. Any compromise in the performance of Kidney *yang* carries serious potential implications. Though Chinese medicine itself does not make references to Western biochemical science, I feel there is no harm in speculating on the possible correlations."²⁶

Literature

According to Larre and de la Vallee, the Will resides in the essences (*jing*) which are within the Kidneys, both left and right, *yin* and *yang* as a couple.

"When we say Will, *zhi*, we understand will-power, and we are just using a shortened form....when we talk of Will in the West, it's a very intellectual consideration of man's activity, but the Chinese character *zhi* has to do with what makes life within an individual emerge from all the universe... So in *zhi* we must understand the roots of life where Will is built, and the power to organize things, not from an intellectual point of view, but in terms of the strength which arises from the five zang, and in particular from the Kidneys which is where the essence resides and where they are controlled from."²⁷

2. Power

In regards to power, Larre and de la Vallee state that:

"The Kidneys have charge of arousing the power; skill and ability stem from them...

and

"...the *jing shen* (the vitality) is prosperous and healthy and that makes one agile, alert and lively but also that the muscles and bones are full of strength and power, and movement is vigorous."²⁸

They also note that:

"It's the image of the double bow which is bent or stretched, and when the arrow leaves, that is the Liver. The Kidneys are not that which makes the arrow leave, but they are the retaining power behind it... But nothing is kept and retained if it is not for up-thrust, or springing up. The power of the Kidneys is the ability or possibility of producing something, an effect. Afterwards, the "skill and ability'

are to fashion or shape something and they are the result of sharing power. According to some old commentaries, we can see in the arousing power the specific power of the *yang* in the man during sexual intercourse, and [in] the skill and ability to give shape we see the specific power of the woman."²⁹

3. *Destiny*

Again from my previous thoughts in *Dragon Rises*:

"Where Kidney *yin* transmits the genetic essence (material life) from one generation to another, Kidney *yang* transmits the genetic force (the Fire of *mingmen*). This inherited, surging force impels men beyond their material essence and sensory awareness to Divine Awareness, to intuitive wisdom that transcends the obvious, to knowledge beyond the power of our senses, and to Divine Power. In the theological perspective, Divine Power gives man the strength to exercise his Creative Intelligence (Heart energies), to wisely assess and exploit all of his life-enhancing Divine Will, and to infuse Divine Love with passion, excitement, and direction. Divine Power may be said to mandate a rational self-appreciation, a proportioned egocentricity, a stable center of gravity, and the centered focus inherent to the meditative phrase, 'I am purpose itself.' Only from this center can humankind enjoy its unique talent to 'know' God, in a rudimentary sense, through its own creativity, and to identify with Him as the ultimate stage in one's becoming a 'whole person.'

"On the spiritual plane, the final step and ultimate freedom stimulated by Kidney *yang* and mediated by Kidney *qi* energies in the 'evolution of being' is the internal search for God's Will and the surrender of our inherited Will to the Will of God. It is the paradoxical function of the Kidney energies to supervise the endless transmission of the ego from generation to generation, always directing it to its conclusive destruction, to the Death of the Ego."³⁰

Literature

Larre and de la Vallee discuss Destiny within the context of the meaning of the ideogram *ming*. They say:

"So what is the meaning? It is that I start my life through this conjunction of two other essences, or Spirits, or living beings -my parents representing the two complementary forces of the universe, *yin* and *yang* and so on-these two essences make a new composition and I exist. And I exist with my proper nature, which is the composition of elements given at the very beginning, having the ability to develop in the highest and best way. It is a way of expressing the power and virtue of Heaven in me. It's the idea that heaven for me or the destiny given to me by Heaven is nothing other than the unfolding of my proper nature in the best way. This must also be according to the circumstance of life, but there is another ideogram [*xing*] which is often joined with *ming*-and it means all the circumstances of life and all I must do according to my nature to follow the right way, which is the way of authenticity. If I realize my nature I become authentic and I become a celestial being."³¹

4. *Wei Qi*

The *wei qi* is the body's first line of defense against external, and some say even internal, pathogenic influences. Kidney forces are involved at two levels in the process of the formation of *wei qi*.

The first involves the combination in the Lung of *guqi* (from food) and *daq* (from the cosmos) to form *zhong qi*, which under the influence of *yuan qi* (Kidney essence) becomes the active True *qi*. This in turn becomes both *wei* (defensive) *qi*, which enters the channels, and *ying* (nourishing) *qi*, which enters the zang.

The other source comes through the Internal Duct of the Triple Burner when the impure aspect of the Spleen's first separation of food into pure and impure in the Stomach enters Kidney *yang*-essence where it is transformed into *wei qi* that is stored in the Liver. Larre and de la Vallee note:

"...because you know that the defensive Breaths, *wei qi*, take their *yang* power from the Lower heater which is the *yang* of the Kidneys, *mingmen*."³²

5. *Metabolism*

Water Metabolism: Kidney *yin*-essence controls the water aspects of Kidney function in conjunction with the Triple Burner and the Internal Duct which the latter controls, and the Bladder which stores and excretes the impure fluids and is a part of the system. From food, the Spleen separates the pure from the impure. The impure fluids divide again in the Small Intestine and the impure goes to the Bladder while the pure goes to Kidney *yin* where they are again divided into pure and impure {see below}. The pure Spleen *qi* is again divided into the pure (tastes) and the impure, which are fluids that rise to the Lungs and then descend to Kidney *yin* where they are again divided into pure (*ching*-dry [*wei qi*] and *i*-wet [*ying qi*]) and impure (saliva, mucous, sweat, tears).

"Whereas the Heat of Kidney *yang* controls Water by 'misting' it to other parts of the body, Kidney *yin* is the Water itself. Since we are over eighty percent water and since water is an essential part of every metabolic process, the importance of Kidney *yin* to every aspect of the organism is obvious. The working of all body systems always involves the Kidney especially when any system is overworking. As a consequence Kidney *yin* energies are among the first to give way with age." And finally, "Kidney *yin* and Kidney *yang* give, respectively, the 'life' and 'force' to the 'life-force'."³³

6. *Triple Burner (Warmer)*

The Triple Burner is, as we see above, importantly associate with the Kidneys through its role in controlling the Internal Duct, with water metabolism, in the formation of *wei qi* and *ying qi* and with the Fire of *mingmen*. Larre and de la Vallee state that:

"...the Triple Heater is connected with *mingmen* on the right, and we know from the *Nan Jing* in particular that the Triple Heater can be considered like a messenger or servant of *mingmen* for the distribution of Original Breath, *yuan qi*, through the body."³⁴

The following excerpt from *Dragon Rises* presents a different view of the Triple Burner in terms of its place in the pantheon of Fire energies.

"We subsume Pericardium, Triple Warmer, and Small Intestine energies under the with Conception Vessel 12 (*zhongwan*) aegis of the Fire element, in which the Heart is

the emperor, the supreme commander to whom all other energies are subject, to whom they minister and are therefore known as ‘ministers.’ The Heart energy provides the inspiration and communication of higher thought and emotion. The Pericardium provides the communicative energies for defense and defined, focused assertion of this inspiration as well as the ‘reason’ necessary for the achievement of enduring creation.

“The term Triple Warmer is a misleading translation of the original term *sanjiao*. *San* means three, and *jiao* may be translated as level, sometimes referred to as ‘warming spaces.’ Here, the *sanjiao* refers to the three ‘warming’ levels of the body, upper, middle, and lower. The relationship of *sanjiao* energies to ‘heat’ or ‘warmth’ is only one aspect of its principal functions, which more importantly are ones of distribution, integration, balance, and homeostasis.

“During embryonic development, the Triple Warmer correctly distributes the ‘Yuan,’ or original inherited energy, from the Kidney Organ system to the source points of each meridian, and thence to the entire being. Later, the Triple Warmer, or *sanjiao*, is the ‘secretary of the interior,’ which is located in the Stomach wall. Controls for the upper level are in the cardia, the middle level in the fundus, and the lower level in the pyloric atrium. Triple Warmer 10 (*tianjing*) and Conception Vessel 17 (*shanzhong*) are responsible for the Upper Warmer; Triple Warmer 7 (*huizong*) with Conception Vessel 12 (*zhongwan*) are responsible for the Middle Warmer; and Triple Warmer 2 (*yemen*), Bladder 39 (*weiyang*) and Conception Vessel 7 (*yinjiao*) are responsible for the Lower Warmer. Conception Vessel 5 (*shimen*) is the *mu*, or ‘Alarm,’ point of the Triple Warmer.

“These three ‘energy reactors’ draw heat from the Kidney *mingmen* to the Spleen for the digestion, absorption, transformation, and processing of physical as well as intellectual food into energy usable on both planes of existence.

Through the ‘interior duct’ of the Triple Warmer, ‘impure’ energy flows to the Kidney *yang*-essence to be further separated into *Wei* energy and the pure and impure fluids. It is also said to be the ‘official who plans the construction of ditches, sluices and creates waterways,’ assisting the Spleen energies to regulate Water distribution. (*Yemen*, Triple Warmer 2, means ‘fluid’s door’ and is the central Water point of the body.)

“The Triple Warmer has, therefore, a unique relationship to both Kidney *yin* (Water) and *yang* (Fire of the *mingmen*), and, since we are 80% water, which depends on heat for metabolism, the Triple Warmer energies permeate the entire chemical environment. The Triple Warmer occupies a strategic position to control the correct flow, balance, and harmony of all energy between the upper, middle, and lower parts of the body; as well as through the source points and Stomach, the outside and the inside. Precise direction and movement, integration and dynamic stability characterize Triple Warmer energies at any level of function.

The Triple Warmer’s close relationship to the digestive system and its position as a *yang* Organ lend it well to important mental ego duties. These tasks are principally in the areas of accurate flow, integration, harmony, and perception. Integration of the three levels of the mind, the medulla, midbrain, and cortex through a free and balanced flow of energy is fundamental to mental equilibrium. Integration of the two sides of the brain through the corpus callosum is necessary for the effective blending of the creative (right brain) and the logical (left brain), concomitants of innovation, invention, and original conception.

"*Zhongzhu*, Triple Warmer 3, also known as 'middle islet,' is simultaneously the controlling acupuncture point of the 'internal duct' and of the sensory organs, especially the eyes and ears. Since the Triple Warmer is an integrating force between the three levels of the brain, as well as between the two cranial nerves that control seeing and hearing, the suggestion is strong that it is also involved with the sensory process at cortical levels of perception. Some say that the Triple Warmer is the 'politician' who can 'sense and read the pulse of the outside world.' It has also been characterized as a 'receiving station and transmitter.' All of this implies a strong investment in contact with the outside world, with relationships, and through its involvement with perception, in the integrity of boundaries which are so vital in human relations. As a mediator of warmth and an orchestrator of harmony, as the integrator of the families within, these energies would seem to be crucial to all close social bonds, especially with friends and family.

"We will confine ourselves to considerations of deficiency since it seems difficult to imagine a person having too much of what Triple Warmer energies mediate, except perhaps an overemphasis on form at the expense of content. . . .

"The subject will have difficulty integrating the inevitable discordances of his or her being. . . . Coldness, hardness, and arrogance fluctuate indiscreetly with softness, humility, and flexibility. Since one part of the personality is out of touch with another, neither can serve to ameliorate the other's more drastic qualities. The tendency is to go rapidly and unqualifiedly to extremes. The attendant disharmony has obvious far-reaching and fathomless consequences on the entire fabric of existence.

"This lack of integration will reveal itself in disparities between verbal and performance skills. On psychological examinations, verbal and performance scores will be widely divergent. Some can take apart and put back together an engine without learning to read or write, and others who excel in many verbal faculties can barely unwrap a package. . . . The subject may have the brilliant vision of the Wood element and the inadequate execution of the Fire element, or just the opposite, leading in either instance to endless frustration.

"The subject may also suffer from a lack of smooth and harmonious flow of thoughts and feelings, often becoming 'stuck.' An example would be 'writer's block,' or the mind that 'goes blank'; overall achievement would be uneven. If the flow between the two sides of the brain is impeded, a full articulation of what the creative and logical sides of this person could produce in unison will never be realized.

"In relationships there will be, at best, a lack of warmth and withdrawal, and at worst, suspicion, estrangement, and the rupture of kinship and friendship due to misperceptions.

"The Triple Burner deficient person... is therefore a person who seems unbalanced, poorly integrated, and coordinated, with wide variations in performance, problems with perception, and seriously disrupted personal relations, especially as pertains to the exchange of warmth and the strength of bonds.³⁵

A further link to Kidney *yin*, *yang* and *qi*-essence is by way of Wang Shu-He's pulse model (*The Classic of the Pulse*, Jin dynasty, c. 280 AD), which places the Triple Burner at the superficial depth at the right proximal (Kidney *mingmen*) position.

In the system of pulse diagnosis I espouse, there is no position for the Triple Burner system. Its connection to water metabolism can associate it with the Bladder/Kidney, but since, according to Dr. Shen, its function is found in all three Burners there is

no single position for it. Students report associations to the right proximal position, which makes this a reasonable area for exploration. For example, one Five element practitioner treating a patient, whom she believed had a Triple Burner Causative Factor, was unable to make therapeutic progress until she found extreme activity in the Gall Bladder position and right proximal positions. At this point she resolved the pulse and clinical picture by using the exit-entry points for Gall Bladder and Triple Burner.

In the next phase of the development of this model of pulse diagnosis, the issue of the Triple Burner system will be explored further. For now, I discern Triple Burner issues in the congruence of qualities in the various positions. If there is a great discrepancy in qualities in the same burner between left and right side, or between the burners, I believe that the Triple Burner system is deficient if the qualities are indications of deficiency or excess if the qualities indicate stagnation. The condition in which there is a wide discrepancy between all positions and with deficient qualities is one that I find frequently in autoimmune diseases. This is akin to the "*Qi Wild*" condition.³⁶

7. Blood

Blood is primarily a body fluid consisting largely of water and whose ultimate physiology depends on Kidney *yin*-essence.

The literature is inconsistent in terms of the physiology of Blood. In *The Foundations of Chinese Medicine*, author Giovanni Maciocia quotes the *Spiritual Axis* and Tang Zong Hai, concluding that:

"Blood is derived mostly from the Food-*qi* produced by the Spleen. The Spleen sends Food-*qi* upwards to the Lungs, and through the pushing action of Lung-*qi*, this is sent to the Heart, where it is transformed into Blood."³⁷

The other source of Blood is from the Marrow through Kidney *yin* and *yang*-essence and Original *qi*.

On the other hand, in *The Web That Has No Weaver*, Kaptchuk states:

"... The Spleen *qi* then transports this essence upward to the Lungs. During the upward movement, Nutritive *qi* begins to turn the essence into Blood. The change is completed when the essence reaches the Lungs, where the now-transformed food combines with the portion of air described as 'clear.' This combination finally produces Blood."³⁸

Unfortunately, Kaptchuk gives no source for this description.

In a personal communication, Van Buren supplied me with a very detailed description of the Triple Burner system, which controls these transformations. He clearly stated that Blood is made in the center of the Stomach, where "*Yong (chen) qi* and *ching-i [jin ye]* combine to make Blood." Maciocia refers to this transformation when he says:

"Body Fluids constantly replenish the Blood and make it thinner so that it does not coagulate or stagnate."³⁹

Van Buren's description of the Triple Burner system concerning the Lungs and Heart refer only to the combination of *gu qi* (Spleen-Food) with *chong [zong] qi* from the cosmos, (in the Lungs) with the help of *yuan qi* (Ancestral *qi*) to make *chen qi* (*yong*, Gathering *qi*), which then becomes *ying* (Nourishing) and *wei qi*.

From the above we see a confusing picture of Blood being made in the Heart, the Lungs and the Stomach, as well as the "marrow." The sense I am left with is that no one is certain.

My own reading is that the *qi* aspect of Blood is made in the Lungs and Heart, and that the final product, since Blood is fluid, is when this *qi* aspect of Blood combines with Fluid (*jin-ye*) in the Stomach. The contribution to this process by Kidney and *yang*-essence are the variety of blood cells which are manufactured in the bone marrow.

8. Metabolic Heat

Kidney *yang*-essence is the metabolic heat which mists the water from food which ascends to the Lungs, creates Spleen *yang* which cooks the food and moves the tastes to the *yin* organs, and is the force for the general upward movement of Spleen *qi* to nourish the brain. As indicated below under the aegis of "endocrine" function, in biomedical terms, Kidney *yang*-essence controls the function of the thyroid (and parathyroid) glands. According to Larre and de la Vallee, chapter 2 of the Su Wen states that:

"Too much sweating or sexual emission in the Winter would be worse than in Summer because you lose essence and through them the basis for Breath. Losing Breath, you lose warmth, and in Winter you need this inner warmth of life against the cold and darkness or else you die."⁴⁰

9. Endocrine

According to Van Buren, Kidney *yin*-essence controls the pituitary gland and Kidney *yang*-essence controls the thyroid and parathyroid glands. The adrenal medulla is a function of Kidney *yang* and the adrenal cortex is a function of Kidney *yin*. Kidney *yang* supports Spleen *qi* and, therefore, is indirectly in control of the enzyme function of the pancreas.

The endocrine function of the pancreas, insulin production, was not specifically cited. Logic would dictate that this insulin function is associated with the *yang* function due to its relationship of glucose to basal metabolism, but logic and truth are not necessarily the same. [I have some problem with the endocrine formulation concerning the pituitary since the same source tells us, I believe correctly, that the *yang* Extraordinary meridian, *yang qiao*, directly affects the pituitary. This suggests that it is the *yang*-essence function rather than the *yin*-essence function of the Kidney which controls the pituitary.]

10. Storage

The spreading, upward and outward, moving forces of the Kidney are primarily due to the *yang*-essence aspects. Storage is more closely connected with the *yin*-essence, which has a downward and inward movement towards the center of gravity, or *dantian*, where storage is said to occur.

According to Larre and de la Vallee, after some debate about translation and implication, both male and female store *jing* which is the essence and have *bao* which are essentially the organs (ovary-uterus and testes), where these are stored⁴¹ for all of the other *zang* and *fu*.

11. Sexual Function

Whereas the actual substance of essence is *yin* (sperm, egg, fetus), the movement of essence is a *yang* function. Thus, the erection and discharge of sperm and vaginal fluids, the movement and activity, here is Kidney *yang*-essence. Larre and de la Vallee state that:

"To thesaurize the essences is the most important function of the Kidneys. It is undeniable that the proper growth and development of the body, as well as a healthy constitution, are related to the Kidney's role of thesaurizing the essences.

and,

"The essences, *jing*, are the fundamental substance of vitality (of each particular life)...

and there are

"...essences, *jing*, of the sexual union between male and female, which is the trunk and root of reproduction."⁴²

12. Central Nervous System

Kidney *yin*-essence is traditionally presented as nourishing and controlling the central nervous system (Marrow) throughout life. This concept is not in concordance with my own clinical finding.

It is my impression that until birth the parenchymal aspects of the central nervous system are a function of the Kidney *yin*-essence aspect of the *Yuan* force. The postnatal development of the central nervous system (CNS), (as with all postnatal human development), is controlled by the combined forces of *yin* and *yang*-essence, which I refer to as Kidney *qi*.

However, my experience indicates that, after birth, maintenance and function of that system are controlled by Kidney *yang*-essence. All of my patients with chronic central nervous diseases, even in their early stages, were profoundly Kidney *yang* deficient. It is my impression that the pure essence of prenatal development directs the formation of the central nervous system

However, the paradigm of Kidney *yin*, *yang*, essence and *qi* is insufficient to explain and more importantly therapeutically guide us in the utter complexities of the central nervous system known to Western physiology. For example, how do we find our clinical way using Kidney *yang*-essence within the context of attention deficit disorder (ADD), which is an almost endless series of subtle defects peculiar to that individual and no other? Even incorporating "Phlegm confusing and disturbing the orifices of the Heart" does little to deal with these fine differences in central nervous system function.

Furthermore, in using these Chinese medical concepts, how can one explain that a singular aspect of the central nervous system malfunctions while the rest is intact? For example, how do we explain a Neils Bohr, one of the great quantum mechanic physicists of the 20th century, who could not write!?! How can the "idiot savant" who can recall the entire dictionary be otherwise totally inept, even in remembering where they live? How can a person born with such obvious Kidney essence deficiency as spina bifida have a powerful will, good teeth and bones, an intact endocrine system, good fertility and sexual function, and be a genius?

How can we explain the person who experiences profound deep chill, impotence and an empty feeling at the top of their head, all signs of Kidney *yang*-essence

deficiency, and yet who has an extraordinary will and drive and a great deal of courage? I have known many of these people.

Kidney *yang*-essence must be as complex as the human central nervous system with its trillions of cells; there must be an almost infinite variety of *yang*-essence functions, each to its own aspect of that nervous system" However, there is no traditional literature to guide us through this complexity. Summing it up as Kidney *yang*-essence deficiency is a massive oversimplification. We have no model of Kidney *yang*-essence which matches this biological complexity. There must be many Kidney *yang*-essences not yet described.

(Note: Liver *yin* (Blood) nourishes and Liver *yang* is the moving aspect of the peripheral nerves.)

13. Hemopoiesis

It is said that Kidney *yin*-essence (*jing*) controls the development of bone and bone marrow, and therefore is an important aspect of hemopoietic function. My clinical experience points elsewhere. Using moxa on the back shu points and *yang-qi* tonics, I have successfully treated severe agranulocytosis with a count of 22,000 platelets and less than 1,000 white blood cells. (One can argue that since the back is *yang*, and that we are organized with the principle of balance, that the points on the back are primarily serving *yin*. At the same time, others say that the shu points treat acute illness, which is *yang* in nature.)

Again, as with the central nervous system, I believe that the prenatal development of the Marrow is a function of the Kidney *yin*-essence aspect of *Yuan* energy; postnatal human development is controlled by the combined forces of *yin* and *yang*-essence which I refer to as Kidney *qi*.

The same conundrum occurs with Kidney *yin*-essence with regard to the hemopoietic aspect of Marrow as occurs with the *yang*-essence and the central nervous system. How can we differentiate Kidney *yin*-essence to explain and treat the complexities of the products of the bone marrow, including white cells in their infinite variety (polys, lymphs, mono- and basophils), red cells, platelets, etc.?

14. Spiritual, Mental, Emotional

In summary, and to again quote from *Dragon Rises*:

"Kidney *yin* provides the substance, the basic grounding material, upon which we must all face when we go down, and the fundamental stored essence (*jing*) that is the principal reserve with which to bounce back after defeat. It provides us with the capacity for rational evaluations of our limits so that we can make strategic retreats (in conjunction with Liver *yin*) in situations where advance would lead to major defeat and subsequent grounds for depression. Kidney *yin* endows the spiritually evolved person with the capacity for the Divine Love needed to 'forgive us our trespasses' when we falter. Kidney *qi* endows us with the ability to live in the present, to confront issues now, to live with our feet on the ground even when we are dreaming, all qualities which stand us well in the face of defeat and the inclination to withdraw into depression. Kidney 'Fire' is the functional Heat energy that 'drives' the entire physical plant to provide the force behind the 'will to live.' Without this will, the inclination is to collapse well before retreat is expedient."⁴³

II. KIDNEY PATHOLOGY ACCORDING TO CHINESE MEDICINE

A. Etiology

Since Kidney *qi*, *yin*, *yang* and *jing* are the foundations of the functions of all the other Organ systems, they are quickly exhausted in a life marked by abuse. If the etiology is not constitutional and begins at a later stage of development one can delineate the habits which create the excesses and the symptoms about which the patient complains. Changes in addictive- and ego-based lifestyle patterns are then the focus of the treatment. Here, there is usually more resistance to change.

The ancient Chinese literature admonishes us to observe moderation in all things. While too little of some things like food and warmth will damage Kidney *qi*, excesses are the principal problem. For example, excessive sex during an attack by an external pathogenic factor is a very important determinant to the outcome of that event. (According to Dr. Shen, a woman who exposes herself to Cold during sex can become very ill and even die, especially if she eats very "cold" foods at the same time such as pomegranates.)

Kidney *yin*-essence is exhausted by excessive use of the mind and overworking of the nervous system, and by the effect of emotional shock on the Heart and daily frustrations and repression on the Liver and the general accelerating pace of life on all systems including digestion (Spleen-Stomach). Chronic fear is listed in the literature as causing the sinking of *qi* and weakening the Kidney's ability to store essence and control urination. Stimulant drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines create Heart Fire which drains Kidney *yin*; sedative drugs such as heroin and marijuana drain Liver and Kidney *yang*. Excessive exercise beyond one's energy drains Liver and Heart *qi*, which must be supported by Kidney *qi*. Increased exposure to parasites, due to travel and the influx of immigrants from areas of the world where they are endemic, has led to a new chronic drain on our stored essence and on the Kidney.

Our "body condition" is increasingly affected by the lack of nutrients in the soil depleted by agribusiness with its chemical fertilizers and insecticides. The disappearing ozone layer has been seriously linked in some studies to immune deficiency. Milk has been shown recently to destroy beta cells in the pancreas and is linked to childhood-onset insulin-dependant diabetes. Our air, our soil and our water are polluted and we are all threatened by the problem of waste storage, especially of radioactive wastes. So many of the pulses I have taken over the years reveal blood toxicity (Blood Unclear). We are all responsible because we have been too happy to accept the trade-off; the fast easy life for the slow painful death of the planet and our soul.

It is clear from my work with pulse diagnosis that these energies are increasingly depleted in younger and younger people.⁴⁴ What are some of the abuses of this basic energy accounting for the ever-increasing Kidney deficiencies across the spectrum and including Kidney *yang* deficiency and finally the separation of Kidney *yin* and *yang* ("Qi Wild")? What accounts for the regrettable increasing frequency of pulses deficient in Kidney *qi*, especially in the very young?

Our birthing techniques, drugs and medications during pregnancy and delivery, have a direct impact on Kidney energies and have created a generation of attention deficit

disorders (minimally brain damaged children) with great learning deficits. While there has been a growing trend of amelioration of these tragic prenatal and birthing practices, they continue to flourish for the majority of pregnant women. The problem of learning disorders, which I directly observed as the director of a child guidance center, is avoided by school systems. The cost of correcting the damage would exceed the current cost of education. Traumatic delivery, which is an automatic insult to the Kidneys, has been statistically associated with adolescent depression and adolescent suicide.^{45,46} In summary, consider the Kidneys (the foundation) (and the Liver), living as we do in a chemical and electrical environment hostile to a healthy safe pregnancy and childbirth, with the lack of active mental stimulation to the central nervous system due to television, calculators and computers, and the essence crumbling with the fragmentation of family and community: or the Spleen living in a nutrient bowl of chemically altered fast food, contaminated water and weight loss diets; the Heart existing as we do in the cyber-world of e-mail and the Internet where there is little warm human contact and relationships are digitalized, and when the pace of life (again the Liver) has increased exponentially every decade; or the Lungs living as we do in a sea of poisonous air. (In Italy I saw a young man with testicular cancer whose brother had Kidney cancer and father had a lymphoma, all of whom lived together for five years under the confluence of several very high voltage electrical power lines. Previously, for generations, there had been no cancer in the immediate or extended family.)

B. Neurological

All of the patients I have treated with central nervous system disease have been generally severely *yang* deficient, especially Kidney *yang*-essence deficient. Primarily I saw multiple sclerosis. They responded best to treatment of Kidney *yang*-essence (with other treatments aimed at assisting with specific symptoms such as Blood stagnation in the lower body). (I have tentatively come to associate the Doughy quality at the neuro-psychological position of the pulse with deficiency of Kidney *yang*-essence. Research concerning the relationship of this position to disease is being developed.)

As I indicated above in my discussion of the central nervous system, the concepts of Kidney *yin*, *yang* and *qi*-essence does not suffice to understand or manage the infinite possible insults to the brain and spinal cord. Perhaps rather than repair, the application of these concepts creates or opens new lines of communication between neurons.

C. Psychological

1. Thought Disorders

Deficiency or disorder of the *Yuan*-essence is the genetic or *in-utero* origin of thought disorders associated with the propensity to schizophrenia. Here, the critical issue is boundaries, or the ability to distinguish between the external and internal environment. Boundaries before birth are set by the Kidneys and after birth by the Earth element in the making and breaking of maternal bonds.⁴⁷

2. Mood Disorders

Depression: It is my impression that the propensity towards all unipolar depressions is rooted in Kidney *yang*, especially the "endogenous depression." In fact, with any kind of mental stagnation, the role of Kidney *yang*-essence, in terms of the "Will," should always be considered. This has been found to be the case clinically with even a type of stagnation which I call "resignation," communicated on the pulse in the form of the Cotton quality.⁴⁸

In *Dragon Rises*, I discuss the relationship of various types of depression including:

- . Anaclytic and cyclothymic (Earth)
- . Agitated (Wood)
- . Hysterical-reactive (Fire)
- . Dysphoric (Fire Triple Burner)
- . Narcissistic (Earth, Metal, Fire)
- . Secondary anaclytic (Metal, Earth)
- . Grieving for Self (Metal, Fire)
- . Involutional (Metal-Fire)
- . Loneliness (Fire: Heart, Triple Burner , Small Intestine, Pericardium)
- . Depression of the soul (Fire)
- . Depression of the spirit (Water, Metal)⁴⁹

Bipolar Disorders: I believe bipolar disease is often a constitutional defect in the thermostatic control of the Wood-Fire-Water cycle by the Triple Warmer system. Supporting the Triple Warmer system's ability to regulate the consumption of Wood by Fire may avoid this psychological and physiological catastrophe. When sufficient Kidney *yin* is depleted one finds oneself in the manic phase. Eventually when the *yin* can no longer nourish the yang, Kidney *yin* deficiency transforms into a profound Kidney *yang* deficiency and an almost treatment resistant depression can result. In either case it is the effect of these deficiencies on the Heart which controls the mind that leads to the symptoms.

The following is excerpted primarily from *Dragon Rises*.

"Interference with the development of creative expression on the verbal cognitive level will also adversely affect the Fire element, primarily the Heart Organ system. The agitated depression associated with inhibition in the 'no' and psychomotor (Wood) era develops, with similar inhibition in the 'positive' (Fire) stage of self-expression, into the bipolar disease that we formerly designated as manic-depressive. It is the repression of both assertion and creativity, stagnation of the *qi* of both the Liver and Heart that brings Heat and burns the Wood and builds the Fire, that Water is eventually unable to control. Bipolar episodes may be precipitated by stress in another vulnerable energy sphere such as abandonment on the Spleen energies or separation on the Metal energies. The intervals, when the Fire is still being quenched by the Water, are observable periods of quiet reasonableness, restriction and exaggerated quiescence in the areas of verbal, intellectual, and artistic creative assertion.

"These energies are irrepressible. The manic phases are episodic breakdowns in this inhibition when the Water is sufficiently depleted to allow the Fire to burn out of

control. The Triple Warmer, one of whose functions is to regulate temperature, is pushed beyond its capacities. The Heart 'qi is wild,' and the Heart *yin* cannot control the *yang*. The 'mind,' which the Heart superintends, is now in a state of havoc and highly vulnerable to other adverse pathogenic factors such as Phlegm or Damp from the Spleen. In people with strong Wood, the manic phase may be longer and more pronounced than the depressive phase. The person may report anxiety during the non-manic phase rather than depression. The crash into the depths of depression occurs when the Wood is burned past the point where it can continue to feed the Fire."⁵⁰

3. *Fear and Anxiety*

In Western psychology, fear is defined as that "distinctively unpleasant felt experience that occurs when a person" consciously recognizes an immediate real threat to their being. And in the West, anxiety is that "...distinctively unpleasant felt experience that occurs when a person unconsciously perceives a threat to his or her 'becoming' in the process of the evolution of his or her being."⁵¹

In Chinese medicine, fear is a term which coincides with the above definition of anxiety, especially chronic anxiety.

The ontogenetic separations from one stage of development to another including conception, birth and death, and all the great transitions between, concern themselves always and inevitably with the "unknown" and are signaled by fear. Fear is that natural atavistic emotion aroused when faced by the more fundamental cosmic unknowns of our existence, the consciousness that we do not know who we are, where we came from, where we are, where we are going or why.

To again excerpt from *Dragon Rises, Red Bird Flies*:

"The first and perhaps most ubiquitous form of anxiety is the 'fear of the unknown.' It is the natural 'rite of passage' through each transition, from one stage to the next in the 'evolution of being': an inherent, unavoidable condition of life that we must all find the courage to face and pass through, either alone or with others. The alternative is to remain behind and live what Emerson referred to as 'a life of quiet desperation.'

"This anxiety will also be experienced whenever a person is faced with a situation that is dystonic to his personality organization. For example, the Kidney *yin* deficient personality centers on the premise that the world is a hostile environment, and is thus prepared for the 'worst' but unprepared for expressions of friendship, which when pressed upon him may precipitate an acute state of anxiety.

"The Water element energies normally manage the primordial archaic fear of the unknown and its most profound manifestations in terms of our cosmic identity and ultimate fate beyond death. These energies are most closely associated with the exigencies at the thin barrier between life and death, both in the beginning of life and at the end. We denote the anxieties associated with these issues as cataclysmic in scope and terrifying by name. People who go through life with chronic terror as a constant companion, both night and day, but especially by night, are those who suffered damage to the Water element through some basic insult in the intrauterine era. Many have been documented as having survived attempted abortions.

"It is my impression that damage to the Water element predisposes people to anxiety and fear in any and all of its manifest forms. It is the substrate, the prerequisite

for the chronicity of anxiety, however it arises, and whatever its etiology in the distortions of the natural functions of the other energy systems.

"Kidney *yin*, Kidney *yang*, and Kidney *qi* energies guide us respectively through the Death of the Body, the Death of the Ego, through Divine Love, Divine Power, and Divine Spirit, to resurrection. Thus the 'red bird' self-immolates and 'flies' again and again until the Water energies lead us, with faith, beyond the fear of the unknown, to salvation (Nirvana).

"The second form of anxiety I wish to discuss is Separation Anxiety, a special form of 'the fear of the unknown' marking the several transitions from one stage of life to another. Each of these stages is described in detail in that part of the text which deals with the element most involved. However, just as the Kidney energies (Water element) are involved with all chronic fear and anxiety, so in my opinion is the Metal element involved with all separations, less obviously at the beginning of life and more so later. The Metal element energies, for their own reasons, always lend themselves to accepting and letting go, whenever the other elements are engaged in this process.

"Thus, while the impetus for letting go of the old and taking in the new is the unfolding of the 'life force,' the capacity comes from Metal element energies. The substance for the new bond is from the Earth, the passion from Fire, the direction from Wood, and the power, as ever, from the Water. This is the basic format for, and integral part of, all of the transitions. Within the sea of endless bonding and disengagement are roughly ten major separations during life."⁵²

1. Mitosis
2. Birth
3. Assertion (the "no" stage)
4. Oedipus/electra complex
5. Transition to surrogate parent
6. Forming peer relationships
7. Investing authority in oneself
8. Love of others
9. Exploring one's self, and
10. The great departure.

Faith and hope are the antidotes to fear which have nourished and sustained the drive to "become."⁵³ Life is organized as a template of change by Kidney energies beginning with conception and mitosis, the prototype of union and separation, to the separation from life and the union with God. While I consider Metal *qi* as the fundamental engine of change, Kidney *qi* is the source of the drive towards the realization of our destiny.

Other Sources: Larre and de la Vallee consider fear in relation to the Kidneys in three contexts; the first is "shivering," the second is will power, and the third is "reflective thought prevails over fear." With regard to "shivering" they say:

"We can shiver because of cold or fear, both are linked with the Kidneys...always pathological because it is a reaction pathological attack on the *zang*...a reaction which wakes up the *yang* power of the defence."

They go on to say shivering can occur when:

"there is a weakness in the Breath of the Kidneys, in the Kidney *yang*, and consequently the defence of all the body is weakened, because you know that the defensive Breath, *wei qi*, take their *yang* power from the Lower heater which is the *yang* of the kidneys, *mingmen*.... A great fear also injures the power of the Kidneys... as a result have blockage in the circulation, particularly between Lower and Upper heaters, the Kidneys and Heart."⁵⁴

They add within their discussion of "willpower" and fear that:

"...when there is Fear, the essences withdraw and as a result the Upper Heater completely closes, which means that the Breath returns below and there is a swelling in the Lower heater. For this reason, Breath can no longer circulate. What this means is that Fear realizes the separation of *yin* and *yang*, of the Upper and Lower Heaters, of top and bottom, and so on, because all the *yin* goes to the bottom and the *yang* is blocked in the upper part with no way for exchange or communication between them."⁵⁵

Concerning "reflective thought" they continue:

"As a result of the injury to Spirits from Fear and Fright you can lose possession of yourself. *Si*, Reflective Thought, represents the movement of the Center, or turntable, which is able to re-establish all exchanges between the upper and lower parts, and to restart communication and permutation, and to re-center the individual who has lost possession of himself. We can see that reflection or thought means to see all the circumstances of the situation and the way to adapt, and this is the best way to overcome Fear."⁵⁶

Comment

The power of "reflective thought" is in my experience typically an Oriental, perhaps Chinese, solution to all emotion, reflecting the power of aphorisms in that culture and the preaching of Confucius. In my experience, certainly as a psychiatrist, reflective thinking was rarely able to allay fear, and in the end I would have to reassert that "faith and hope are the antidotes to fear," at least in the West.

D. Kidney-Heart Disharmony

Any consideration of the Kidney would include its relationship to the Heart which is one of the critical polarities in Chinese medicine.

Dr. Shen says that the Heart is "on top" and the Kidney "on the end." If the "top" and the "end" are balanced "the entire body is balanced." These correspond to the left distal (*cun*) position and the proximal (*chi*) positions on the radial pulse. Larre and de la Vallee state that:

"...the Heart masters the *biao*" and "the Kidneys are said to govern the *li* [interior, deep-seated], the intimate structuration. Therefore the Heart and Kidneys form a couple in this relation of *biao li*. In this context this is because the Heart is a *yang zang* and master the Fire which flames up and goes everywhere in an expanding movement, so the Breaths which come from the Heart can reach to the *biao*. In contrast, the Kidneys govern the *li* and the movement which gathers together all the elements for the internal structuring of life. The Kidneys are a *Yi zang* and

master Water, which by nature is cold and condensed and has a downward movement."⁵⁷

However, the situation is less simple than it appears, since the Kidneys are a double *zang* including both Water and Fire, "...the Fire of life. We can see how in later centuries this idea gets transformed into this aspect of the Fire of life at the level of the Heart, like servant of the Heart. But originally this Fire of life was at the level of the Kidney and it was the connection of animation of life rising up until reaching the heart, and the Heart beginning the mastering of life through Imperial Fire which is proper to the Heart."⁵⁸

The Heart and the Kidney correspondingly control the mind and the brain. If the Water of the Kidney cannot control the Fire of the Heart, the mind will become restless. If the Fire of the Heart cannot warm the Water (*yin*-essence) of the Kidney it cannot rise and nourish the brain, and normal patterns will be disrupted. The Triple Burner mediates this relationship and should always be considered in management. The symptoms of this disharmony, or "*shen*" disturbance, are palpitations, insomnia, irritability, fatigue, depression, being easily startled, and anxiety.

The literature of Chinese herbal medicine usually considers and treats Kidney-Heart disharmony as a Kidney-Heart *yin* deficiency. However, according to Dr. Shen, Kidney-Heart disharmony occurs as, or more, often when both the left distal and left proximal positions are both Feeble-Absent. One confusion is that in either case, *yin* or *yang* deficiency, one can have a Rapid Rate. The symptoms are insomnia, anxiety, palpitations and fatigue. The Kidney-Heart disharmony with both positions Feeble-Absent is probably more of a constitutional etiology, while the disharmony with both positions Tight can come more from life experience.

In my own practice, which also bears out Dr. Shen's observations, the Kidney-Heart disharmony can also appear with other combinations of qualities on the left distal and proximal positions. One position or the other could have a Feeble-Absent quality and the other a Tight quality as described below.

Both the Feeble-Absent and Tight qualities are signs of deficiency. With the Feeble-Absent qualities this is more obvious. It is important to reiterate that despite the hard sensation of the Tight quality, it is just as much a sign of deficiency as the Feeble-Absent quality. (The Feeble-Absent quality is a sign of *qi* and *yang* deficiency and the Tight quality is a sign of *yin* deficiency.)

E. The Separation of Yin & Yang & the Kidney

As already mentioned, the Kidneys are profoundly affected by constitutional and congenital factors. Defects which begin at conception, (at the first cell divisions, within the frameworks of pregnancy and delivery), leave a person vulnerable to varying degrees and an endless variety of forms for life. All of the other stages of development are impaired to a lesser or greater extent. Congenitally induced Kidney Organ system deficiencies are similar to but somewhat less profound and widespread as those induced at conception or during pregnancy. Therefore, any early insult to Kidney *qi*-essence has a profound effect on all physiology.

We have also already said that the abuse of any organ system throughout life also profoundly depletes Kidney *qi*-essence, which is the foundation and source of all the stored essence (*jing*). Therefore it follows and it is my clinical experience that deficiency of the Kidney Organ system, more than any other, is frequently present with the separation of *yin* and *yang* in the other four *yin* organs. The separation of *yin* and *yang* of the Kidney represents the most profound insult to the organism and is associated with the most pernicious chronic illnesses, including all of the degenerative central nervous illnesses and auto-immune diseases. The most severe separation of *yin* and *yang* is known as the "*qi* is Wild."⁵⁹

Larre and de la Vallee state that:

"...Kidneys are responsible for the binding together of *yin* and *yang*..."

and that...

"Fear realizes the separation of *yin* and *yang*, of the Upper and Lower Heaters, of bottom and top and so on, because all the *yin* goes to the bottom and the *yang* is blocked in the upper part with no way for exchange or communication between them."⁶⁰

Symptoms and signs of approaching separation of *yin* and *yang* include deep-seated coldness, severe depression with loss of motivation along with a loss of sexual energy, fatigue on exertion, early morning diarrhea, tinnitus, a feeling of emptiness at the top of the head, asthma with difficulty on inspiration and on exertion, low back pain, increasing menstrual irregularity with long and short periods alternating with each other, and infertility. Bone degeneration in cervical and lumbar discs, and knee joint degeneration as well as arthritis, endocrine problems such as thyroid and pituitary deficiencies are common.

The separation of Kidney *yin* and *yang* manifests itself physically with severe chronic nephritis, nephrosis, kidney failure, central nervous system diseases such as multiple sclerosis, brain tumors, bone diseases including tumors, bone marrow diseases such as agranulocytosis and leukemia, deficient erythropoiesis, thrombocytopenia, the autoimmune diseases such as systemic lupus, and primary cancer of the Kidneys as well as exhaustion of the adrenals such as Addison's disease, and other endocrine disorders.

The "*Qi* Wild" disorder, which occurs when the *yin* and *yang* of the entire organism have lost contact with each other based on a collapse of Kidney *qi*-essence, will sometimes express itself as some of the more dangerous disorders just listed, or with the loss of the ability of the organism to clearly distinguish the outer from the inner world in a disorder we call schizophrenia. Its most profound deterioration is found with hebephrenia.

Kidney *qi*-essence is always involved with the courage to live, with the essential challenges of life which at their most significant moments involve the "rites of passage," the journey into the unknown. Kidney *qi*-essence is the source sustaining all human activity against the forces of entropy throughout life and the ultimate separation of *yin* and *yang* which is death, and paradoxically the *qi* which restores us to final grace.⁶¹

III. SUMMARY

We have reviewed the relationships between Kidney *yin*, *yang* and *qi* with the essences and with the *mingmen* in their various functions and manifestations. These

include Will, Power, Destiny, Virtue, Polarity (Kidney-Heart disharmonies), Unity (Centering), Fear, Water metabolism, endocrine function, embryology, storage, sex, *wei qi*, the Marrow (central nervous system and hemopoiesis), neurological and psychological disorders and the separation of *yin* and *yang* .

While the original intention was to limit the discussion to Kidney *yang*, it soon became clear that this intention was not compatible with the inherent paradox of all Chinese thinking which is rooted in the reality of a unified centering source, a potential, manifesting as a duality in the service of the movement which is life. It is this paradox and duality which have dictated the final form and subject matter of this paper.

Endnotes

¹ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. The Monkey Press, Cambridge (England), 1989, p.14.

² Ibid. p. 15.

³ Ibid. p. 24.

⁴ Ibid. p. 21.

⁵ Ibid. p.7.

⁶ Porkert M: *The Essentials of Chinese Diagnostics*. (Zurich: Chinese Medicine Publ., 1983) p. 244.

⁷ Van Buren JD. Personal communication, 1973.

⁸ Townsend G, Y De Donna: *Pulses and Impulses*. Thorsons, Wellingborough 1990, pp. 73-74.

⁹ Veith I: *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Chinese Medicine*. Univ. California Press, London, 1972. p.209.

¹⁰ Larre C, E. Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press, Cambridge, 1989, p 13.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 11.

¹² Ibid. p 14.

¹³ Ibid. p. 15.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 15.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 15.

¹⁶ Li Shi-Zhen: *Pulse Diagnosis* (Hoc KH. Seifert GM [trans]). Paradigm Publications, Brookline, MA, 1981, p.7. Li Shi-Zhen (1518-1593 AD), a noted physician was author of a dozen books including Bin Hu Mai Xue (Bin Hu's Pulse Studies).

¹⁷ Hammer L: *Contemporary Chinese Pulse Diagnosis*. Eastland Press, Seattle, forthcoming, ch.16.

¹⁸ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press. Cambridge. 1989, p 33.

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²⁰ Willmont D: Fire of life in ancient acupuncture, part 1: The evolution of will, destiny and wisdom. *Oriental Med J*, 1999; 7(3/4).

²¹ Li Shi-Zhen: *Pulse Diagnosis*. Paradigm Press, Brookline, MA 1981, p.7.

²² Ibid. p. 30.

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²⁴ This forward motion in time and space is not only a talent, but, for some, also an actual state of mind. Those of us who are concerned about the future consequences of the impulsive, easy, and profitable practices of the present are generally known as conservationists. What we have

- is too highly valued to be squandered with abandon; and the standards generally acceptable the majority are rarely sufficient for those whose sensitivities about the future are highly developed. Modern conservationists have fared less well than modern prophets of science, with whom they may, paradoxically, often be at odds. The misuse of science has narrowed the time-space gap between the present and the future. Their virtual coincidence has created the modern psychological catastrophe of Future Shock. (A. Toffler, *Future Shock*, (New York: Random House, 1970.)
- ²⁵ Bunyan J. *The Water of Life*. Swengel, Reiner, 1967.
- ²⁶ Hammer L: *Dragon Rises Red Bird Flies*: Station Hill Press, Barry town NY, 1990, pp.108-110.
- ²⁷ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 26.
- ²⁸ Ibid. p. 84.
- ²⁹ Ibid. p. 43.
- ³⁰ Hammer L: *Dragon Rises Red Bird Flies*: Station Hill Press, Barry town NY, 1990, p.26.
- ³¹ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press. Cambridge. 1989, p. 33.
- ³² Ibid. p. 70.
- ³³ Hammer L: *Dragon Rises Red Bird Flies*: Station Hill Press, Barry town NY, 1990, p. 105.
- ³⁴ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press. Cambridge. 1989, p.21.
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- ³⁶ Hammer L. The unified theory of chronic diseases. *Oriental Medicine*, 1998: 6(3 & 4): 42.
- ³⁷ Maciocia G: *The Foundations of Chinese Medicine*. New York. Churchill Livingstone, 1989, pp. 48-49.
- ³⁸ Kaptchuk T: *The Web That Has No Weaver*. New York: Congdon & Weed, 1983, 41-42.
- ³⁹ Maciocia, 48-49.
- ⁴⁰ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press. Cambridge. 1989, p. 45.
- ⁴¹ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press. Cambridge. 1989, pp. 17-19.
- ⁴² Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press. Cambridge. 1989, pp. 82-3.
- ⁴³ Hammer L: *Dragon Rises Red Bird Flies*: Station Hill Press, Barry town NY, 1990, pp. 302.
- ⁴⁴ Hammer L: *Contemporary Chinese Pulse Diagnosis*. Eastland Press, Seattle, forthcoming, ch.16.
- ⁴⁵ Salk L, L Lipsitt, W Sturner, et al: Relationship of maternal and perinatal conditions to eventual adolescent suicide. *Lancet*, March 1985m pp. 624-7.
- ⁴⁶ Hammer : The unified theory of chronic diseases. *Oriental Medicine*, 1998: 6(3 & 4): 42.
- ⁴⁷ Hammer L: *Dragon Rises Red Bird Flies*: Station Hill Press, Barry town NY, 1990, p. 227.
- ⁴⁸ Hammer L: *Contemporary Chinese Pulse Diagnosis*. Eastland Press, Seattle, forthcoming, ch.16.
- ⁴⁹ Hammer L: *Dragon Rises Red Bird Flies*: Station Hill Press, Barry town NY, 1990, pp.229-309.
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- ⁵² Ibid. pp. 284-285.
- ⁵³ Allport G: *Becoming*, Yale University, New Haven, 1955.
- ⁵⁴ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press. Cambridge. 1989, pp. 69-70.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 73.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 75.
- ⁵⁷ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press. Cambridge. 1989, p.9.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid. pp. 17-18.
- ⁵⁹ Hammer L: The unified theory of Chinese medicine. *Oriental Medicine J*, 1998: 6(3 & 4):17.

⁶⁰ Larre C, E Rochat de la Vallee: *The Kidneys*. Monkey Press. Cambridge. 1989, pp. 40, 73..

⁶¹ Ibid. pp. 44-45.

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