

Development of the Social Psyche: A *Jing Luo* Perspective - Part I

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There are many conflicting commentaries about the "Secondary Channels" of acupuncture. Are they separate from the Primary Channels, or part of them? Are they channels ("*Jing*") or collaterals ("*Luo*")? This debate is most evident with the Divergent Channels. Some call them "Distinct Channels," seeing them as "*Jing*" (channels), separate from the Primary Meridians. Others consider them to be "Channel Divergences," a type of "*Luo*."

A similar debate also exists with the *Luo* Vessels. Certain traditions speak of the *Luo* Vessels as physiological channels involved with blood circulation. Other traditions see them only as pathological channels that maintain latency.

Debates also exist about progression within the *Luo* Vessels. Chapter 10 of the *Ling Shu* presents the *Luo* Vessels as traveling from the yin and yang arm vessels into the yang and yin leg vessels, suggesting *Luo* Vessel pathology begins in the chest and moves to the shoulders and head, before moving into the abdomen, lumbus and genitals. 19th Century Military Doctor *Wang Qing Ren* used this theory as basis for his cardiovascular model.

Later theories expanded the understanding of *Luo* Vessels, differentiating those that externalize as "Longitudinal *Luo*," and those that internalize as "Transverse *Luo*."

Still another theory discusses *Luo* Vessels in relation to psycho-social development. This theory utilizes Confucian philosophy to describe early childhood development, represented by the Primary Channels. *Luo* Vessels are seen as disturbances to normal development. Within this theory, development and progression follow the Primary Channel elemental sequence.

To better understand *Luo* Vessels as outgrowths of the Primary Channels, it is important first to gain an appreciation of the Primary Channels, as presented by Chapter 10 of the *Ling Shu*.

All Chinese medical theories are based on philosophical traditions. Clinicians and scholars created herbal formulas and acupuncture theory to present their philosophies. The order in which channels are organized, as well as their role and significance are representations of philosophical theory.

During the *Tang* Dynasty, Chinese medical philosophy became fully integrated, comprised of three major traditions: Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. These three philosophies were themselves integrations of the "100 schools" in existence prior to the Han Dynasty. Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism are traditions that survived the famous burning of the books during the *Qin* Dynasty, beginning in 213 BCE. The merging of these three traditions has created the philosophical base of Classical Chinese Medicine: the *Nei Jing*.

Chinese Medicine is traditionally presented in somatic language. However, the somatic is frequently a metaphor for the psychological: an often overlooked area in Chinese Medicine. Many of the most important contributions to understanding the mind within Chinese medicine come from

Confucian commentary of classical theory.

The *Jing Luo* (channels and collaterals) present a continuum of physiological and pathological progression. The theory of psycho-social development is highly influenced by the pediatric tradition of *Chen Zi Ming* who lived during the *Jin-Yuan* period (1115-1368 A.D). Ming contributed to theories about psychosocial development occurring during early childhood. The Primary Channels are seen to govern physiological and psychological development within this theory. The *Luo* Vessels are the manifestations of traumas, disturbances and distractions to development.

Both the Primary Channels and *Luo* Vessels are conduits of *ying qi*. The Primary Channels create and distribute *qi* and blood to support the physiology of the body. *Luo* Vessels however are commonly acknowledged to be pathological channels. They are created as needed, utilizing blood and fluids to translocate issues the Primary Channels are unable to resolve.

Blood is the mediumship of the mind. It is a ying level humor that circulates internally. *Luo* Vessels manifest as blood stasis, philosophically seen as stasis of the mind. Blood stasis is "*Shen* stasis": fixation of the mind. The *Luo* Vessels are in-depth studies of the various aspects of the mind as they become fixated, and ultimately weakened.

According to the Imperial Medical Academy of the Song Dynasty, mental illness was seen first and foremost as resulting from a "weak mind." It is the point of view of the *Nan Jing* that excess leads to deficiency. Fixation of the mind will progress to weakness of the mind. This theory is supported by that of the *Luo* Vessels.

The *Luo* Vessels travel into only two zang organs: the heart and pericardium. According to *Wang Qing Ren*, the heart is responsible for peripheral blood circulation, while the pericardium governs internal circulation. *Luo* Vessel pathology begins at the level of the chest, as established by the *Ling Shu*, manifesting disruption to the axis of *qi* and blood. *Qi* is often defined by Jeffrey Yuen as "relationship" or action; blood is the residence of the mind and spirit. *Qi* and blood have an intimate relationship. Problems with one affects the other. *Luo* Vessel pathology can disrupt our relationships, intentions, and ability to act in the world.

Jeffrey Yuen has described the two states *Luo* Vessels can manifest: "fullness" and "emptiness." Fullness of a *Luo* Vessel refers to a sense of fixation or over-involvement in an aspect of life; "emptiness" is usually lack of ability, interest or capability, often resembling a state of deficiency.

The Primary Channels can be viewed as a series of "odes," presenting Confucian philosophical statements about life. Confucianism is considered a "social" philosophy, promoting virtues to be cultivated within society. The highest level of achievement is becoming truly human: a "Zhen Ren," Discussion of the unnamable spirit is largely avoided. It's better to focus on that which the mind is able to grasp, teaches Confucianism, instead of that which the mind can never understand.

The Confucian reading of the Primary Channels explains physiology of the mind using the virtues and functions associated with the organs and channels as they manifest via socialization. Their sequence is important; the sequence details the priorities associated with being human: the building blocks of the social self.

Post natal life begins at the stomach, where the lung channel originates. *Qi* and blood are created by the stomach, which is supported by the kidneys. They are ascended by the spleen into the chest where "*gu qi*" (food *qi* from the center) is combined with "*da qi*" from the air. The resulting "*wei qi*" is circulated and diffused to the exterior of the body. This process is represented by the points "Central Receptacle" CV-12 "*Zhong Wan*" moving into "Heavenly Pivot" ST-25 "*Tian Shu*." From

there, *qi* ascends into "Central Warehouse" LU-1 "*Zhong Fu*," and finally into the external branch of the Lung Primary Channel.

The lung channel cycles into the large intestine channel, which also has a strong relationship to the exterior. At LI-20, the large intestine cycles into the stomach channel, which travels to all the sense organs of the face before going internal at the chest and abdomen. The spleen channel ends at "Da Bao" SP-21 "The Great Wrap," where *qi* and blood are brought inward to the chest. *Gu qi* is brought into the heart as it forms *ying qi*, which is circulated by the heart peripherally and the pericardium systemically.

Post natal life begins in the stomach. It is through the lung channel that we reach out towards the exterior to receive nourishment that will sustain us. That which we bring in is separated and sorted, we "chew" on that which we ingest from the world. Perceptions from the outside form our perspective, first on an instinctual *wei* level, and later on a conscious *ying* level. This eventually becomes our view of the world: that which we use to solidify our personalities and construct our lives.

Jeffrey Yuen divides the Primary Channels into three levels: survival, interaction and differentiation. These three levels represent the three stages of post natal existence. We must first and foremost survive before we can interact. We must interact in order to form our perceptions and beliefs.

There is a philosophical reason the channels are organized as they are. To Confucianism, it is through society that we learn about ourselves and cultivate the virtues. This is the reason we live, represented by the 12 "*Jing*" (channels). However, life is not a straight line from innocence to virtue and wisdom. There are side-roads and diversions along the way. We frequently get distracted from the primary direction of our lives. There are traumas, desires, disappointments, setbacks. These are the "*Luo*" collaterals.

The most fundamental physiological process in life is respiration. Metabolic processes are introduced in a specific order in the Primary Channel progression: lung comes before stomach and heart: digestion and circulation are dependent on respiration. Jeffrey Yuen has said that "respiration is what creates triple heater" and subsequently the form and function of the body.

The creation of the body is represented through the theory of the Mu points. Triple Heater is the process by which the grace of functionality is bestowed upon the organs. Essential *qi* from the kidney is distributed into the organs via the Bladder *Shu* points. From the Bladder *Shu*, essential *qi* is brought into the channels at the source point, enlivening them with *qi* from the source.

Essential *qi* is also distributed into the Mu points. The Mu points follow the Five Element cycle (Metal to Earth) as they create the yin structural aspect of the body. This process is described in Taoist cosmology as the fetus "swallowing the Mud Pill," which is a depiction of Jing Essence as its disseminated throughout the body via triple heater.

The Mu point progression begins with Metal: LU-1 and ST-25 moving into Water: GB-25 and CV-3, showing respiration to be vital to dissemination of the essence. It is respiration via Metal that begins this process. The combustion of Kidney Essence occurs initially from respiration to create the body's form.

In the *Nan Jing*, the Influential Points are discussed as emerging from the Mu points. The Mu points of Earth: LR-13 and CV-12 are also the Influential Points for the *zang* and *fu*. The Influential Points for the sinews, bones, blood vessels and marrow follow. The Mu points and Influential Points

depict the body's manifestation into form: elemental creation giving birth to the body's various physical structures.

In addition to stoking the fire of creation from within, the lungs are also the organ by which we continually pull life into our bodies. They are connected to the kidneys through their internal branch, via ST-25. The kidneys are understood to physiologically "grasp" the *qi* gathered by the lungs from the exterior.

As established by the discussion on the Mu points, the lungs and kidneys have a strong relationship. For life to exist and be maintained, there must be "*zhi*" or will to live. The lungs are the way the kidneys grasp the world and pull it inside, allowing the combustion of Ming Men fire and the continual unfolding of "*Ming*," the destiny of our life.

Healthy lungs allow engagement with the world, the willingness to be touched and the ability to embrace the world. They manifest through the skin. Their energy is one of sensuality. We require touch to survive. We must bond and connect with our mothers. They need to want to pick us up and feed us. Just as we are dependent on air from the exterior, we are also dependent on the breast. The bonding process is as much about survival as it is about love. It is through our lungs that we are able to make contact. It's interesting to note, later in history, when "opening points" for the Extraordinary Vessels were being created, *Ren Mai* "the sea of yin" (and bonding) was said to be opened by a lung point. Life, which is essentially the manifestation of energy into form, is understood as reliant on the lungs.

Luo Vessel symptoms can be seen as the result of being overly involved or fixated with an aspect of a Primary Channel through "fullness," or lack of interest or ability when "empty." The classical symptom for *Lung Luo* fullness is "hot palms": the constant need for stimulation and engagement; being overly engaged with the world. Emptiness is described as frequent boredom or the lack of interest in life.

When the psycho-social aspects of the channels are considered, it transforms seemingly simple physical *Luo* symptoms into complex developmental disorders. For example, later in the sequence, the symptoms of "inability to urinate and defecate" and "sharp pain in the lumbus and genitals," associated with the *Luo* of the kidneys, become metaphors for obsessive compulsive behavior and paranoia disorder, usually of a self-destructive nature. Such mental-emotional disturbances are understood to be within the arena of the ying level of blood and fluids. Mental illness is commonly associated with phlegm, internal wind, blood stasis, blood and yin deficiency in Chinese Medicine: all of which relate to the ying level.

The Large Intestine channel involves the teeth. It involves sensing and perception. Beyond the pure acceptance of the lungs, the large intestine empowers the ability to tear things apart and associate. This is not yet the type of differentiation associated with the third level of energetics. This is still within survival; a more basic, instinctual ability to understand the difference between two things: recognizing that there is difference between an apple and a pear.

The mental aspect of the large intestine becomes activated during the teething process, where a child moves beyond pure acceptance of what it's being given as food, as they are weaned from the breast or bottle. The child now has the ability to assimilate and "chew" on things.

This channel allows assimilation of internal information, such as why we are feeling the way we do. There is a sense of manipulation within the large intestine; the realization that we don't have to accept everything we are given. We can make things happen through manipulating our environment.

Large intestine is the beginning of movement away from being solely survival-based beings. The innate desire to become independent becomes activated. The child begins to understand how to communicate its needs to its mother. The child begins to understand his power to manipulate the environment through learning to manipulate his own body: gaining control over the sphincter muscles and the jaw. This also represents the peristaltic process: gaining a certain amount of control over eating, swallowing and defecating.

Disturbance within this level of development manifests through the Luo Vessel of the large intestine. Fullness involves hypersensitivity, feeling the world too strongly; "chewing" the world, in the attempt to assimilate it, yet feeling it's more than we can handle. This causes the need for repetition, of thought and possibly action. Emptiness involves the inability to feel, perceive, and express sensation, or mental difficulties with association. The dissociative personality, as well as the obsessive compulsive need to do things over and over are part of this level. The obsessive compulsive nature of the large intestine, however is not usually the self-destructive type associated with the kidney Luo.

Lung and large intestine are part of the initial unit of human existence: survival. The remainder of this unit, stomach and spleen move from perception (represented by metal) into feeling. Heart and Kidney (Fire and Water) describe the second level of human existence: interaction. Part two of this series will continue exploring the first level of energetics as it moves into the second: survival into interaction.

MAY 2012