

An Introduction to Hùnyuán Medicine: Part 1 - Basic Theory

Abstract

Hùnyuán (混元) medicine is an approach to Chinese medicine based on ancient, classical and more recent Chinese medical and philosophical texts that was developed by Yaron Seidman. This article is the first in a two-part series that introduces the basic theory and clinical practice of Hùnyuán medicine. After initially discussing the concept of 'heaven's principle' (tiānlǐ, 天理), its implications in human physiology are explained, including how a human being's length and quality of life depend on the body's ability to attract heaven's principle from nature and conceal it within in order to recharge the body. The body does this, on the one hand, by synchronising with the rhythms of nature and, on the other, by following the impulse of emotions expressed by the Heart. Yet, whilst a pure Heart, the emotional activity of which is regulated by the 'Centre' (zhōng, 中), benefits and supports life, a selfish heart polluted by selfish dictates releases chaotic emotions that are harmful to the body's capacity to recharge. Being healthy and the continuation of life thus requires that people understand the role of Centre, connect with their 'true nature' (xìng, 性) and conquer the selfish Heart by practising self-cultivation. Health, it will be shown, is the result of alignment of the human outwardly with the rhythms of nature and inwardly with a Heart regulated by the Centre. Part two of this series will explain the Hùnyuán approach to diagnosis and treatment, including illustrative clinical case studies.

By: Yaron
Seidman & Vita
Revelli

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Introduction

The process that led to the formulation of Hùnyuán medicine started with the need to find answers to crucial questions such as 'From where does life originate?', 'What are the principles underlying it?' and 'How does life function?'. The aim was to help practitioners to understand Chinese medicine in greater depth and in the process increase the quality of their treatment. The very name Hùnyuán, 'primordial', declares the author's concern with the 'origin of origins' - the very first life spark - and the search to understand the fundamental dynamic of living. This line of enquiry involved a long search into the roots of ancient Chinese culture - of which medicine is an integral part - marked by intense study of the relevant primary sources. It involved years spent analysing medical and philosophical texts, chewing over this material rationally and intuitively in order to select the writings that might best provide insight and direction. Questions similar to those above were the focus of many Chinese philosophical and medical works compiled throughout the ages. In these texts, both philosophers and erudite Chinese doctors set the foundations for a 'medicine of life', aimed primarily at fostering health whilst at the same time addressing disease. These texts have been, and still are, valuable companions and sources of inspiration

in the formulation and development of Hùnyuán medicine, its clinical application and the provision of an approach to healthcare that is different from anything else currently available in both conventional and alternative medicine.

The roots of medicine

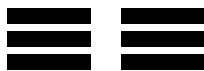
Over 3,000 years ago, the *Zhōuyì* 周易 (*Book of Change*)¹ proposed that the origin of life was to be found in the marriage between two absolutes: heaven (qián, 乾, absolute yáng) and earth (kūn, 坤, absolute yīn). Zhèng Qīn'ān (鄭欽安, 1824–1911), the founder of the Huǒshén (火神, Fire Spirit) school of thought² explained this process as follows:

'As far as people's life is concerned, its foundation is the one qì of qián (heaven) origin sliding into the palace of kūn (earth). This makes two qì unite into one and then give birth to six children, each residing respectively in the upper, middle and lower positions. Although each one of them has a clear position, if they did not totally rely upon the endless cycle of the movement of true qì they would only be dead instruments.'

‘夫人身立命，本乾元一氣，落於坤宮，二氣合一，化生六子，分布上、中、下，雖有定位，卻是死機，全憑這一團真氣運行，周流不已’³



Heaven, qián, 乾



Earth, kūn, 坤

The six archetypal children referenced by Zhèng, containing characteristics of both qián (yáng, 陽) and kūn (yīn, 陰),⁴ are thus capable of multiplying endlessly. They give birth to the myriad forms of living matter, which contain both yáng life coming from qián (heaven) and yīn inert matter provided by kūn (earth). Resonating with the former statement of the *Zhōuyì*, the *Dào Dé Jīng* (道德經) stated that:

'Dào gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, and three gives birth to the myriad things.'
 '道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物'⁵

Here, too, we see a similar understanding of 'one source' - *Dào* (道) - pervading the multiplicity of life. Adding his voice to the debate, in the fifth century BCE the Chinese philosopher Confucius (Kǒng Fūzǐ, 孔夫子) also suggested that:

'Dào creates through oneness.'
 '吾道一以貫之'⁶

On the medical front, the *Huángdì Nèijīng – Sìwèn* (黃帝內經素問, Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic – Basic Questions) constructed its discourse along the same lines of thought as the above texts and showed how aligning oneself with *Dào* was necessary not only to maintain health, but also to defeat the natural limitations imposed by aging on a person's physiology:

'Huángdì asked: "Can those who follow Dào and live to be one hundred years have children?" Qǐbó (岐伯) answered: "Indeed, those who follow Dào can age and still preserve their appearance. Thus, although their body has lived to be old, they can still have children."'
 '帝曰：夫道者年皆百數，能有子乎？岐伯曰：夫道者能卻老而全形，身年雖壽，能生子也。'⁷

This text provides numerous examples of how the cultivation of Virtue (dé, 德), *Dào*'s intrinsic expression, can help people to live their allocated hundred heavenly years in good health.⁸ Thus, being attuned with the 'one origin' (*Dào*) and acting accordingly is said to support the ability to generate life (mìng, 命) and continue the thread of ancestors-descendants.

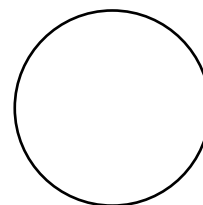
From all that has been said above, it is possible to infer that one of the tasks of the medical practitioner involves seeking the 'oneness' that pervades life, both with reference to oneself and one's patients.

Questions concerning the 'principle of life' or, in other words, the penetration of qián-heaven into kūn-earth, have

remained central to the discourse of medical authors and philosophers up to the present day.⁹ In the 18th century CE, Liú Yuán (劉沅, 1767 - 1855), the founder of the Huái Xuān (槐軒, Pavilion Tree Canopy) school of thought¹⁰ added a new dimension to the debate when he stated that:

*'There is nothing outside of Tàijí. More so when in making a picture of Tàijí, we simply draw one empty circle. This is the image of complete pureness ... Only after this realization can there be harmony, as without this Center there is never, and will never be true peace.'*¹¹

In Liú Yuán's view, the life-giving ('heaven's') principle is represented by the eternal primordial Tàijí (太極). Interestingly, Liú Yuán's symbol of Tàijí is represented by a simple circle, indicating the unity and continuity yīn and yáng, rather than their opposition.¹²



The same author brings together all the arguments presented so far, explaining that:

'Dào is the path, the 'one principle' ... the common origin of Heaven, Earth, people ... This is why it is called Dào.'
 '道 猶路 也，止此一理，天地人神所共由，故曰道'¹³

He also adds that:

'Heaven's principle, also known as heavenly heart, Tàijí is that which is true. When people obtain it, it is called true nature (xìng, 性).'
 '天之理即天之心，太極極也，誠也，人得此理為性'¹³

Thus, *Dào*, the principle from qián (heaven) that gives life to kūn (earth), and Tàijí are one and the same thing.

Drawing on the teachings of antiquity and especially on his reading of Zhāng Zhòngjǐng's (張仲景)¹⁴ *Shānghán Lùn* (傷寒論, Treatise on Cold Diseases¹⁵), Zhèng Qīn'ān, a disciple of Liú Yuán, proposed a medical discourse also based on the oneness and circularity of yīnyáng. In his book *Yīlǐ Zhēn Chuán* (醫理真傳, The True Transmission of Chinese Medicine's Principles) he states that:

'People today do not know the meaning of "one origin Qì" and, therefore, because of the pulse moving at the cùn position of both hands, they have come to see yīn and yáng as having two separate pathways. Don't they know that, although left and right are divided into yīn and yáng, the two Qì are merely one Qì that can never be divided into two pathways?'

‘今人不識一元之義，以兩手寸口動脈，將陰陽分作兩道看，不知左右固有陰陽之分其實二氣渾為一氣，何嘗分為二道也？’¹⁶

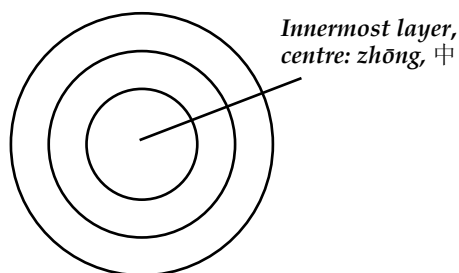
Circles, layers and Centre (zhōng, 中)

In order to grasp the one principle underlying all life, Confucius in *Dàxué* (大學, Great Learning)¹⁷ states that one should be willing to shift through various layers of meaning and go beyond appearance:

‘The ancients who wished to become clear of life’s virtue under heaven, first governed their own state well. Wishing to govern well their own state, they first put in order their families. Wishing to put in order their families, they first cultivated their own self. Wishing to cultivate their own self, they first made their hearts proper. Wishing to make their hearts proper, they first brought sincerity to their thoughts. Wishing to bring sincerity in their thoughts, they first reached to (true) knowledge. Reaching (to such true) knowledge comes only from removing selfish desires.’

‘古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國；欲治其國者，先齊其家；欲齊其家者，先修其身；欲修其身者，先正其心；欲正其心，先誠其意；欲誠其意者，先致其知，致知在格。’¹⁸

This approach can be expressed graphically by drawing an outer circle symbolising the variability and multiplicity of the visible, tangible world, and within it other concentric circles expressing more subtle levels of existence. All these circles are drawn around the same centre.



The innermost layer, Centre (zhōng, 中), is the site of the all-pervasive heaven’s principle, the ‘one’ and unchangeable constant (cháng, 常). Here, the noise of multiplicity subsides, leaving the stillness and truth of oneness. An approach that looks for one principle within disparity stands in sharp contrast with a positivist perspective that sees reality as made up of fragments needing to be pieced together by a logical ‘nexus’ before a whole can be created. The problem with such a perspective is that, as it focuses on a great number of details, it enslaves the mind to the apparent chaos of multiplicity, difference and appearance. In order to research the one principle penetrating all life, it is important to shift one’s vantage point to seek oneness in all forms. In this way, one is not caught in a web of

phenomenological details and their relationships, as can happen with an exclusively positivistic approach.¹⁹

Changing one’s perspective to look for oneness instead of multiplicity leads to a new set of conclusions. Hùnyuán calls itself ‘circle’ medicine, as its style of medical research - involving textual studies, meditation, contemplation and self-cultivation²⁰ - looks inwards to the one principle pervading all life. Conversely, it calls the style of medical research that looks outwards, analyses differences, focuses on details and looks for their nexus, ‘square medicine’.

Physiology: body, emotions and Centre

Being born entails a process of separation and individualisation or, in other words, the transition from a state of symbiosis with the mother to a state of separation from her. In fact, a condition of constant unity with the mother would not foster life, but would rather entail the immobility of death. Indeed, in order to survive outside the womb, a baby needs lungs to take its first breath, a stomach to eat and digest food, and legs to eventually walk to a tree and pick a fruit. Generalising, the whole body seems to have the primary function of taking in whatever it needs from the world at large for the purpose of sustaining life - an instrument of exchange with nature. The function of each of its parts contributes, each in its own way, to the accomplishment of this main purpose.

This understanding of physiology is not just a prerogative of Hùnyuán medicine. The *Huángdì Nèijīng* – *Sìwèn* itself explained that the body resonates with the rhythms of nature and exchanges with it constantly. The quote below shows how winter impacts on the human body and how people should live at this time of the year:

‘The three months of winter are called closing in and concealing. [This is the time when] water freezes and earth cracks open. Do not make the yáng agitate, but go to sleep early and wake up late, at sunlight. Let purpose be hidden and concealed, as if your intentions were secret and you had already made your gain. Stay away from cold, keep warm and avoid sweating as this causes Qì to be stolen away to an extreme. This is the Dào for supporting and recharging the Qì of winter.’

‘冬三月，此謂閉藏，水冰地坼，無擾乎陽，早臥晚起，必待日光，使志若伏若匿，若有私意，若已有得，去寒就溫，無泄皮膚使氣亟奪，此冬氣之應養藏之道也。’²¹

The same text showed also how this exchange happens according to a precise mechanism regulated by the *liùjīng* (六經, six confirmations / stages): *tàiyáng* (太陽), *yángmíng* (陽明), *shàoyáng* (少陽), *tàiyīn* (太陰), *juéyīn* (厥陰) and *shàoyīn* (少陰). More specifically, the text states:

‘Tàiyáng is the opening, yángmíng the closing and shàoyáng the pivot. Therefore, the three yīn also open and close; tàiyīn is the opening, juéyīn the closing and shàoyīn the pivot.’

‘太陽為開，陽明為合，少陽為樞。是故三陰之离合也，太陰為開，厥陰為合，少陰為樞。’²²

The three yáng confirmations are the body’s ‘outer gate’. This gate opens to allow qián/yang/heaven’s principle from the outer world²³ to enter and, by closing, conceals it within. More specifically, tàiyáng opens (kāi, 開) to connect with the exterior and allow entering, and yángmíng closes (hé, 合) to hold in. The opening and closing of this gate depends on the smoothness of shàoyáng - the hinge (shū, 樞).

The three yīn confirmations are the body’s ‘inner gate’. By taking in and facilitating movement inwards, this gate allows qián/yang/heaven’s principle from the outer world to be concealed inwards. More specifically, by opening, tàiyīn allows post-heaven yáng in from the outside world and moves it into the interior to recharge the person’s innate (pre-heaven) yáng. After this recharging has happened, juéyīn facilitates the smooth circulation of yáng back to the periphery so that it can be used for daily activity, and closes the inner gate. The opening and closing of this gate relies on the smoothness of shàoyīn, the hinge. The clinical theory of Zhāng Zhòngjǐng’s *Shānghán Lùn* was constructed on these premises.

In Hùnyuán medicine the phase of opening outward to connect that starts with juéyīn and ends with tàiyáng, is termed ‘separation’ - the place of maximum external connection. Conversely, the phase of concealing inwards, starting with yángmíng and ending with shàoyīn is called ‘unification’ - the place of maximum internalisation or recharging. These functions will be explained in more detail below.

As described above, the body has the task of connecting with nature and bringing yáng inwards. This process, which allows the mingling of qián-heaven-yáng with kūn-earth-yīn from birth and for the whole of one’s life, can be expressed in the language of the lines of the *Yi Jing* in terms of a yáng line from qián sliding into kūn to create ‘kǎn’ (坎, water).²⁴



In *Yǐlǐ Zhēn Chuán* (The True Transmission of Chinese Medicine’s Principles), Zhèng Qín’ān describes this process as follows:

‘Heaven carries action, the earth moistens and only then is water connected. One qì contains three and this is nature’s work. The myriad things form as they follow this principle. Endless creation bathes in the midst of time ...’

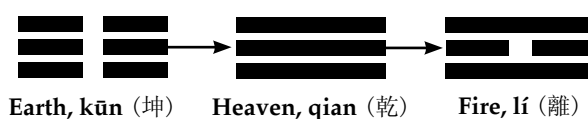
‘天施地潤水才通，一氣含三造化工。萬物根基從此立，生生化化沐時中。’²⁵

The trigram water shows the yáng, fire line (i.e. heaven’s principle) submerged within kūn, inert earth, or in other words, heaven’s principle makes the earth alive.

Water here is an archetype with multiple layers of meaning, including: a. earth becoming alive and changeable; b. the body/matter/form (earth) being activated; and c. the place where heaven’s principle recharges earth/physical form over and over again so that life can continue.

As the living body is the part of a person that exchanges with the world at large through breathing, eating and responding to seasonal changes, in Hùnyuán medicine the trigram kǎn (water) is associated with the most superficial of the concentric circles mentioned above, and is thus called the ‘outer water circle’. Along this circle the shàoyīn-Kidney (at the bottom of the circle) is the place where heaven’s principle taken in from the external world (or post-heaven) is concealed within in order to recharge the pre-heaven aspect during sleep. Also along this outer circle, the tàiyáng-Urinary Bladder (at the top) is the place where heaven’s principle emerges at the surface to give the body vitality to be active and connect with the outside world during the day. Thus within one day the living body, or ‘outer water circle’, changes its function and state of being according to the cycle of the sun.

The body and its ability to exchange with nature is, however, not sufficient to explain the complexity of human existence. When reflecting on how movement in general - and of the body specifically - comes about, it becomes clear that emotions and thoughts and desire and motivation are its initiators. The newborn is not an exception: in an environment different from that of its mother’s womb, the baby’s first actions of breathing and feeding not only follow a biochemical impulse, but are also a response to an emotional state of ‘dislike’ caused by a perception of ‘lack’ and its associated need.²⁶ Because emotions dwell within matter, within the body, they do not pertain to the ‘outer water circle’ but to another circle within that is hidden from the external world. This inner realm is represented by the trigram lí (離, fire), that has two yáng, fiery lines at the periphery and one yīn line in the middle. This trigram indicates an upward and outward impulse that creates movement and action at the periphery, like the concentric ripples created by a stone thrown into a pool of water. Thanks to this impulse, the body can move, reach out and connect with the world at large.



In Hùnyuán medicine the trigram fire is associated with the ‘inner fire circle’. The shàoyīn-Heart pertains to it, because Heart is the site from where the fuelling power of emotions, guided by purpose and motivation, makes the body spring into motion.

Referring to the handling of emotions, Confucius said:

'When joy, anger, sorrow and pleasure are not discharged this is called Centre; when they discharge and are all regulated by the Centre this is called harmony.'

‘喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和’²⁷.

The above quote suggests that the harmonious expression of emotions depends on another - even more hidden - place, that common to both the ‘outer water circle’ and the ‘inner fire circle’: Centre (zhōng, 中) - the very core of the human being.

But what does ‘Centre’, mean in this context? Does it merely describe a location? This question can be answered by summarising the view expressed by Liú Yuán in his *Sùyán* (俗言, Customary Words²⁸), where he states that Centre is heaven’s principle and that, as heaven’s principle it is also life itself. As for heaven’s principle within the Heart, this is a person’s ‘true nature’ (xìng, 性) and refers to the virtue of heaven or the innate goodness within a person. Given the above, Centre is not a location, but rather the signifier of the all-pervading heaven’s principle and its virtue.

Cultivating Centre allows the emotions, expressed through the ‘inner fire circle’, to be harmonious and impact harmoniously on the body. For life to exist, Centre, the ‘inner fire circle’ and the ‘outer fire circle’ form a continuum that must never be broken. According to Hùnyuán medicine theory this situation is termed ‘proper’. In addition, when the body is in harmony with the natural rhythms of nature, in Hùnyuán medicine it is said that it is ‘on time’. Thus, the continuum of Centre, the ‘inner fire circle’ and the ‘outer water’ circle form a continuum with the rhythms of the world at large. When this continuum is not harmonious, diseases occur. If, for instance, the discharge of emotions is excessive, they will have a strong impact on the body that may end up ‘speeding it up’, causing it to lose its synchronicity with the natural rhythms. Centre is the place from which emotions emerge to activate the body from within. It is also the place from which the first impulse that stimulates the gradual development of form and its differentiation originates (for instance, the specialisation of cells and tissues). Centre is thus the nucleus and initiator of new life and its function is that of regulating both the physical (outer water circle) and the emotional (inner fire circle) realms and ensuring their continuation.

Unification and separation

In Hùnyuán medicine, the concealing and recharging mode that culminates in a person merging with nature during sleep is termed ‘unification’. Conversely, when a person wakes after sleep and uses energy to go to meet the world and take in the heavenly principle of nature, Hùnyuán medicine calls this ‘separation’. As will be

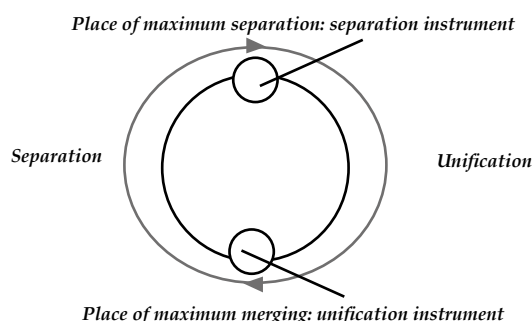
shown below, unification and separation, as well as the condition of a person’s recharging ability and Centre form the background against which Hùnyuán medicine examines the patient and the basis upon which principles of treatment are formulated.

In the language of the lines of the *Yi Jīng*, unification happens when the yáng line of qián-heaven submerges into kūn-earth to create kǎn-water - the living body; separation happens when the yáng line of qián-heaven emerges from kǎn-water where it has been submerged, and moves upward and outward to create lí-fire.

Unification and separation form a continuum through which life occurs, from being awake and in action to being asleep and recharging. As the sun goes down heaven’s principle-yáng conceals inside so that the body can recharge, and as the sun comes up heaven’s principle-yáng moves upwards and outwards so that the body can connect with nature.

In Hùnyuán medicine the turning points at which the process of heaven’s principle begins to submerge into or move out of earth are termed ‘unification instrument’ and ‘separation instrument’ respectively. The word ‘instrument’ is used because these two points - tàiyáng (the point of maximum outer connection) and shàoyīn (the point of maximum inner recharging) - are instrumental in facilitating the progression from maximum unification to the beginning of separation and from maximum separation to the beginning of unification.

In the graphic below the process of unification starts at the point of maximum separation, at the top of the circle, through the action of concealing inwards; this process is finally accomplished in the lower part of the circle, the point of maximum unification. From here, separation starts with an upward and outward movement that culminates at the top of the circle, from where the concealing starts again.

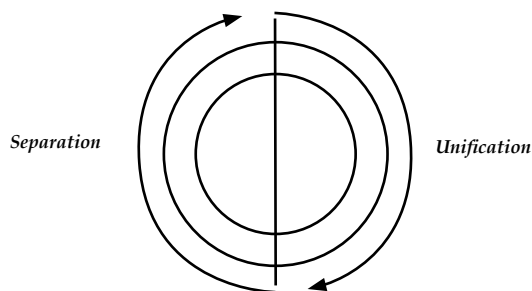


Unification and separation are initiated by the newborn’s first breath (and every subsequent breath): by breathing in it ‘unifies’ and by breathing out it ‘separates’. As unification implies that the yáng is kept within, the manifestations of unification are emotional/mental stillness and a body fully abandoned to the forces of nature, merging with the motions of heaven and earth in the quiescence of sleep.²⁹ As separation implies that yáng moves to the surface to be

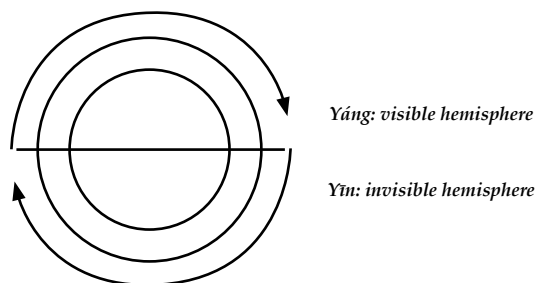
used for activity, its manifestations are the desire to fulfill one's needs fuelled by a variety of emotions and thoughts and a body able to reach actively and consciously out to nature. When the continuum between unification and separation is unbroken, recharging and activity alternate harmoniously. It is important to underline that unification contains aspects of separation and vice versa. Breathing is an example of this: one breaths in during times of separation and also breaths out during times of unification. People have breaks to rest during activity and the heart keeps on beating also during sleep.

The six stages of unification and separation

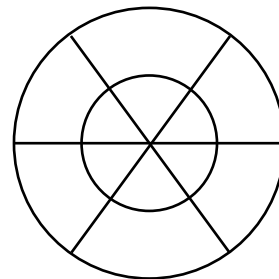
Drawing a vertical diameter that crosses the 'outer water circle' and 'inner fire circle' divides them into two halves, the one on the right symbolising the process of unification, and one on the left expressing the process of separation.



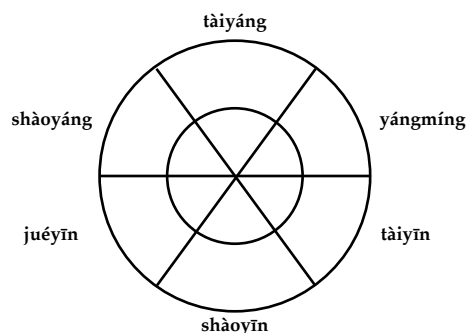
Drawing a horizontal diameter that crosses the centre of this circle divides it into two halves, one in their upper half, the yáng phase of revealed action, visible from outside, and one in their lower half, the yīn phase of concealed action, not visible from outside. In the drawing below, the arrows indicate respectively a 'visible' half circle going from sunrise to sunset and an 'invisible' half circle going from sunset to the next sunrise.



By further dividing the upper and lower halves into three, the section of visible yáng is subdivided into three yáng subsections and the section of concealed yīn into three yīn subsections.



These divisions and subdivisions make it possible to establish specific sections within the unification-separation continuum and to observe the role each plays in their unfolding. Knowing these positions and functions helps practitioners to evaluate the smoothness of unification and separation in a person, their impact on proper recharging, and whether particular sections might be creating a problem either by using heaven's principle too fast (separation) or by causing recharging to be too slow (unification).



In the upper sextant of the circle, the tàiyáng or 'separation instrument' has the task of separating water through urination and perspiration, and of facilitating the connection between the body and nature. Next to it, in the top right sextant of the circle, yángmíng or 'separation concealed inward' accomplishes the task of taking the heaven's principle to which tàiyáng has connected into the body, so that it gradually moves to unification (where it finally becomes 'mine'). The next stage, tàiyīn or 'concealed movement inwards' in the lower right sextant, facilitates the movement of heaven's principle to the lower part of the circle, where it submerges into the domain of shàoyīn or 'unification instrument', the innermost aspect of the body. The task of shàoyīn is to hold the submerged yáng in unification for the purpose of recharging. After unification in sleep, heaven's principle, fiery and yáng in nature, gradually separates from kǎn water and moves upwards to the lower left sextant of the circle, juéyīn or 'concealed separation outwards', gradually stirring the person out of sleep. Just like an army general who estimates the appropriateness of his action in relation to the good of the whole, juéyīn calculates the appropriateness of the speed at which yáng moves out of yīn, as well as the speed and smoothness of the whole process of unification and separation. Therefore, juéyīn impacts significantly on the

mechanism of 'being on time' and 'proper'. At the top left sextant of the circle, Shàoyáng or 'revealed separation', continues the separating action of juéyīn, so that the fire emerges from water, informed by emotions and the desire to fulfill the person's needs and promote action in the world at large. The circular motion continues again with tàiyáng and so forth for the whole of one's life.

It is important to note that the three stages of separation work together to culminate in maximum connection with nature in tàiyáng and that the three stages of unification work together to accomplish maximum unification and recharging in shàoyīn. As night-time does not change abruptly into daytime and daytime does not change abruptly into nighttime, yángmíng is the point in the visible hemisphere where heaven's principle starts moving inwards (beginning of sunset) and juéyīn the point in the invisible hemisphere where heaven's principle, now recharged, starts moving outward (the beginning of sunrise).

Unification and separation gradually unfold and alternate as the above six stages rotate in accord with seasonal changes. Juéyīn and shàoyáng encompass the time from midnight or from the winter solstice, when the yáng starts to increase, up to midday or the summer solstice, expressed by tàiyáng. Yángmíng and tàiyīn correspond to the time from midday or the summer solstice to midnight or the winter solstice, expressed by shàoyīn, in which the yáng decreases to leave room for the concealing and recharging of yīn.

Observing the functioning of the body from the point of view of unification and separation in general and the six stages in particular allows for a precise assessment of whether or not a person's body is in harmony ('on time') with nature's cycles. When unification and separation through the above six steps are 'on time', the body is able to recharge properly at night and be active in the daytime. By way of a clinical example, if unification is too slow, the treatment of choice would aim to increase the speed of the sextant where the slowdown has occurred in order to allow recharging to happen on time (see part two for illustrative cases).

Recharging ability, aging and lifestyle

In order to recharge constantly for the whole of one's potential hundred heavenly years, the body must be endowed with a perfectly functioning recharging instrument that is able to hold heaven's principle within and make it 'mine'. The recharging capacity is a very important asset, as without the ability to connect to and hold in the input from the outside world, life cannot continue. Stronger in younger people, this capacity seems to wane with the passing of time. Youngsters can be very active and live fairly well even with very little food and sleep. When they become tired, unless they are ill, a few good meals and proper sleep usually help them to recover quickly. As long as they can recharge adequately, this situation will not have

severe consequences on their health in later years. Older people, on the contrary, not only cannot do what they did in their youth, but also frequently feel not fully restored by good food and sound sleep. The *Sùwèn* describes this situation in terms of the seven- and eight-year reproductive cycles of women and men:

'When a woman is 7 years old, the qì of her kidneys is abundant, the baby teeth are replaced and the hair grows lush. When she is 14 years old, the tiānguī (天癸) arrives and both the Rèn (任) and Tàichōng (太衝) Vessels are full. Then the affairs of the moon (the menstrual cycle) come on time and she can bear children. When she is 21 years old, the qì of the kidneys is balanced, the permanent teeth are out and she stops growing ... When she is 49 years old, the Rèn vessel decreases and the Tàichōng Vessel becomes deficient. Tiānguī also wanes and the Dào of earth becomes obstructed. Thus, her body shrinks and she becomes barren.'

‘女子七歲，腎氣盛，齒更髮長；二七而天癸至，任脈，太衝脈盛，月事以時下，故有子；三七，腎氣平均，故真牙生而長極；……七七，任脈虛，太衝脈衰少，天癸竭，地道不通，故形壞而無子也。³⁰

The waxing and waning of a person's strength is also described in *Língshū*, when Qíbó explains that a man's physiological curve of growth and decline follows a 10-year cycle:

'When a person is 10 years old, the five zàng (五臟) stabilize, the blood and qì circulate and, as qì is in the lower limbs, he can move with ease. When he is 20 years old, the blood and qì are abundant, the muscles grow, and he can move fast with ease. When he is 30 years old, the five zàng are well set, the muscle and the flesh are firm ... and he can march. When he is 40 years old, the five zàng, the six fǔ (腑) as well as the 12 vessels are vigorous and come even. This is when the tissues below the skin start becoming thin ... When he is 50 years old, the qì of his liver starts declining ... and he starts not seeing well. When he is 60 years old, the qì of his heart starts declining ... and he feels comfortable loves to rest. When he is 70 years old, the qì of his spleen is empty ... and the skin withers. When he is 80 years old, the qì of the lungs is consumed, the pò (魄) starts leaving and the speech becomes confused. When he is 90 years old, the qì of the kidneys is charred and the other four zàng and the vessels are empty. When he is 100 years old, the five zàng are totally deficient, both the shén (神) and the qì leave ... and death comes.'

‘人生十歲，五臟始定，血氣已通，其氣在下，故好走；二十歲，血氣始盛，肌肉方長，故好趨；三十歲，五臟大定，肌肉堅固，……故好步；四十歲，五臟六腑十二經脈，皆大盛以平定，腠理始疏；……五十，肝氣始衰……目始不明；六十歲，心氣始衰……故好卧；七十歲，脾氣虛，皮膚枯；八十歲，肺氣衰，魄離，故言錯誤；九十，腎氣焦，四臟經脈空虛；百歲，五臟皆虛，神氣皆去，……而終矣。³¹

Whereas the ageing process that leads to the decline of one's recharging ability is unavoidable, retaining heaven's principle by leading a healthy life style is a choice everyone can, more or less, make, even in these hectic times. Most people can decide to eat slowly and chew well, learn to breath properly and sleep enough hours in order to recharge. Most people can choose to live an active life, whilst also cultivating Centre in order to respond more harmoniously to external events. Most people can choose healthy meals rather than fast food, walk a little everyday and be in touch with nature. Cultivating the Centre and the harmonious expression of emotion, preventing excessive expenditure of energy and facilitating the unification-separation process by making conscious lifestyle choices helps maintain the strength of one's recharging ability and prevent disease. Treatment with Hùnyuán medicine always involves explaining to patients why making changes to their lifestyle helps to restore the recharging ability and, in turn, bring about a significant part of the healing.

Conclusion

This article has presented the theoretical foundation for the practice of Hunyuan medicine. The philosopher Xunzi said 'Learning extends to its practical application and there it ends' ('學至於行之而止矣'). Hunyuan medicine is a practical medicine that emphasises clinical applications and efficacy. However, its applications are derived from contemplation and investigation of principle and not from trial and error in the clinic. The second article in this two-article series will demonstrate how this theoretical framework converts to become a practical clinical method.

Dr. Yaron Seidman D.A.O.M. is a scholar of Chinese Medicine, international teacher, writer of seminal texts on Chinese Medicine as an associate researcher at Harvard, and founder of the Hunyuan system of medicine and the Hunyuan Research Institute. A native of Israel, Seidman began his studies in modern Chinese medicine in 1989 in Israel, and then in New Zealand. Recognising the deficiencies in the contemporary TCM biomedical approach, he began digging into the Classics of Chinese Medicine. In 1994 he moved to Freiburg, Germany to study classical Chinese language and literature, and began making frequent trips to the People's Republic of China to explore the Classics. Among his mentors were celebrated physicians and Masters such as Liu Lihong, Feng Zhiqiang, Chen Zhonghua and Liu Baigu. In his decades of medical research Seidman immersed himself in the Fire Spirit and Huai Xuan schools of Western Sichuan, giving birth to the Hunyuan system of Chinese medicine.

Vita Revelli graduated in 1982 from the College of Acupuncture (Leamington Spa) directed by J. R. Worsley. From 1984 to 1989 she lived in Beijing where she studied TCM gynaecology and herbal medicine at the Beijing College of TCM and privately with master Pang Yiwu. After returning to the UK, she taught herbal medicine at the London College of Herbal Medicine and in 1992 she moved to Greece, where in 1996 she founded AOM (Art of Oriental Medicine). Between 1989 and 2004 she travelled extensively to teach Chinese medicine in various European countries. She holds a BA in Chinese & Social Anthropology (SOAS). Fascinated by authors of the Ming Dynasty (Zhao Xianghe, Sun Yikui, Zhang Jiebing) and their discourses on how life comes about, she has spent years researching and translating their work, which led to her embracing Hunyuan medicine, which she now practices and teaches. She lives and works in Athens (Gr).

References

- 1 The *Zhōuyì* 周易 or *Yì Jīng* 易經 (Book of Change) was compiled in the Western Zhōu dynasty (1000–750 BCE). Originally intended for divination purposes, in later times it came to be considered a cosmological text.
- 2 The *Huǒshén* (火神, Fire Spirit) School was founded by Zhèng Qín'ān. Zhèng's medical theory was influenced by the teachings of the school of thought founded by Liú Yuán (劉元) known as 'Huái Xuān' (槐軒, The Pavilion Tree Canopy). Some of the key concepts of both schools are: a. Fire yáng, called 'heaven's principle' (Dào), engenders all life; b. Qì is one and resonates with the indivisible Dào, thus the duality of yīn and yáng pertains only to the mechanics of the world of living bodies, but not to that of heaven. To them Zhèng added, for instance, that: a. Illness is the result of lack of fire, heaven's principle; b. Treatment always requires supporting fire and 'one origin qì'.
- 3 Zhèng Qín'ān, trans. Seidman, Y. & Revelli, V. (2015). *The True Transmission of Chinese Medicine's Principles* (醫理真傳, Yīlǐ Zhēn Chuán). Hùnyuán Group Inc.: Greenwich, Scroll 4, p.277
- 4 In the following pages the term yáng will be used instead of 'qián' and the term yīn instead of 'kūn'.
- 5 *Dào Dé Jīng* (道德經, 8 th - 3rd century BCE), 42. Available at: <<http://cext.org/dao-de-jing>>
- 6 Confucius (475 BCE–221 BCE). *The Analects* (論語里仁, *Lúnyǔ Lǐrén*). 4:5. Translation: Revelli, V. Chinese-English text available at <<http://cext.org/confucianism>>
- 7 *Huángdì Nèijīng – Sùwèn* (黃帝內經素問, Yellow Emperor's Inner Classics-Basic Questions, (1982). People's Medical Publishing House (人民衛生出版社, Rénmín Wèishēng Chūbǎnshè): Beijing, 1:7
- 8 Ibid. 1:6/7
- 9 Especially interesting are the writings of the Míng Dynasty authors Sūn Yīkuí (孫一奎), Zhào Xiàn Kě (趙獻可) and Lǐ Shí Zhēn (李時珍), whose line of questioning reflects the *Zhōuyì* understanding that life comes about at the merging point of qián and kūn, whose clearest expressions are the two children 'water' (Kǎn, 坎) and 'fire' (Li, 離). These authors, each one in their own way, grappled with providing an answer to the origins of life and its primary mechanisms.
- 10 Liú Yuán (劉元), courtesy name Zhǐ Táng (止唐), was born in Sìchuān (四川) and was one of the great Confucian scholars, educators, religious thinkers and medical philosophers of the Qīng dynasty. His students collectively named his teachings Huái Xuān (槐軒) doctrine.
- 11 In Seidman, Y. & Jeansch, T.A. (2013). *Hùnyuán Xīnfǔ*. The Lost Heart of Medicine. Hùnyuán Research Institute for Chinese Classics: Greenwich. See the appendix of this book for the Liú Yuán text in Chinese.
- 12 This differs from the one proposed by Zhōu Dūnyí 周敦頤 (1017-1073) author of *Tàijí Túshuō Jiě* (太極圖說解, Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Polarity) available in Chinese at <<http://cext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=969011>> and in English at <<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Writings/TJTS-Zhu.pdf>>. Translation by Adler, J.A., Kenyon College. For a fairly comprehensive

- discussion of the Tàijí symbol see Louis, F. (2003). "The Genesis of an Icon: The Tàijí Diagram's Early History", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 63(1), 45-196
- 13 Liú Yuán (1850). *Guidelines for Disciples* (下学梯航, *Xiàxué Tī Háng*). Trans. Revelli, V. (2015). Unpublished. 13 Ibid.
- 14 Zhāng Zhōngjīng (张仲景, 150 - 219 CE), a doctor of the later Hàn Dynasty, contributed greatly to Chinese medicine by clarifying the theory of the six jīng (經, confirmations/divisions), already formulated in the *Huángdì Nèijīng*.
- 15 In the *Shānghán Lùn* - full title *Shānghán Zāběng Lùn* (傷寒雜病論, Treatise on Cold Attacks and Miscellaneous Diseases, probably written before 220 CE) - Zhāng Zhōngjīng explains the clinical application of the theory of the six jīng (confirmations/divisions) and their associated stages of disease.
- 16 Zhèng Qīn'ān (1869). *The True Transmission of Chinese Medicine's Principles* (醫理真傳, *Yīlǐ Zhēn Chuán*). Trans. Seidman, Y. & Revelli, V. (2015). Hùnyuán Group Inc.: Greenwich, Scroll 4, p.277
- 17 Confucius, *Dàxué* (大學, *Great Learning*) (5th century BCE). One of the four Confucian classics, Rearranged by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130 - 1200), who lived between the northern and the southern Song dynasty (宋朝, 960- 1126 & 1127-1279). Zhu Xi was the leader of the School of Principle and the most influential Neo-Confucian rationalist of that time.
- 18 *Dàxué* 大學 (Great Learning), Verse 2. Available online at <<http://ctext.org/liji/daxue>>.
- 19 This is not an exclusively modern perspective. For example Zhu Xi (see endnote 17) was criticised by Liú Yuán as follows: 'Zhu Xi studied external natural phenomena ... as vast as a river without banks. This was never the main purpose of the sages' ('朱子所以补格物 ... 浩无涯涘, 则非圣人之本旨也', in Liú Yuán (1850). *Guidelines for Disciples* (下学梯航, *Xiàxué Tī Háng*). Trans. Revelli, V. (2015). Unpublished.
- 20 According to the Huái Xuān School, self-cultivation cleanses the heart from misleading or negative emotions and thoughts and allows people to see truth more clearly.
- 21 *Huángdì Nèijīng - Sùwèn* (1982), chapter 2, line 6
- 22 *Huángdì Nèijīng - Sùwèn* (1982), chapter 2, line 21
- 23 Qián, yáng or heaven's principle that is taken in could be seen as post-heaven, (hòutiān, 後天 - a term that refers to everything that is not innate). Thus, not only yīn solid enter the body from the exterior and can be seen as hòutiān: fragrances that enter through the opening of the nose, images that enter through the opening of the eyes, sounds that enter through the opening of the ears. If, as it has been shown earlier, heaven's principle is Dào, and Dào is the origin of everything and is in everything, then it is also in food and air. When referred to heaven's principle, hòutiān has thus a yáng nature.
- 24 The trigram kūn (Earth) is composed of three yīn, or broken, lines. Yīn indicates stillness. Thus, three yīn broken lines together also deliver the meaning of stillness.
- 25 *The True Transmission of Chinese Medicine's Principles* (醫理真傳, *Yīlǐ Zhēn Chuán*), 1:14
- 26 For a modern perspective on this see the work of Dr T. Berry Brazelton at <http://www.brazelton-institute.com/intro.html>. In the word of Liú Yuán: 'When the baby is in the mother's womb it cannot smell or hear, it does not yet have the physical body, it is entirely a lump of principle Qi, and therefore Mencius says: "True Nature is goodness." When the human physical body is formed and the baby exits the mother's abdomen, the nine orifices open, the seven emotions discharge, the center Qi of pre-heaven is now scattering, having difficulty to come back together, it separates and has difficulty to merge back together, and at this point the pure True Nature changes into a human heart which is diverse and confused. Now, after birth, the human heart is all about desire disposition, the attraction to material things, and therefrom it loses its properness. Thus Confucius said: "True nature, it gets close to it.'" - in *Complete Compendium of Huái Xuān* (1931). *Sùyán* (俗言, Customary Words), Trans. and commentaries Seidman, Y. (2016). Ebook, p.37
- 27 *Zhōngyōng* (中庸, The Doctrine of the Mean). Available online at: <<http://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong>>
- 28 *Complete Compendium of Huái Xuān* (1931). *Sùyán* (俗言, Customary Words), Trans. and commentaries Seidman, Y. (2016). Ebook.
- 29 However, the division between unification and separation is artificial. In fact, it is one continuous and undivided action. In the daytime, in the midst of action there are continual moments of unification, like eating, drinking, inhaling and meditating, whereas in the midst of unification there are aspects of separation like digesting, breathing out and dreaming, to mention just a few. Unifying with and assimilating that which is not 'me' is 'recharging'.
- 30 *Huángdì Nèijīng - Sùwèn* (1982), Chapter 1, lines 6 & 7
- 31 *Huángdì Nèijīng - Língshū* (皇帝內經 - 靈樞, Divine Pivot) (1984). People's Medical Publishing House (人民衛生出版社, Rénmín Wèishēng Chūbǎn Shè). 54:102,103

Erratum

In issue 109 (October 2015) of the *Journal of Chinese Medicine* the reference list was not included for the article entitled "Early Chinese Perspectives of the Mind: An Evolutionary Account of the 神 Shén in Chinese Medical Psychology" by Qu Lifang and Mary Garvey. This has been amended in the online version and our sincere apologies go to the authors for this omission.